



Missionary Oblates  
– Always Close to the People

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# Oblate Connections

Oblate Connections – No.45, 8th December, 2019

Welcome to our Advent issue. If I was to try and describe a theme for this issue it could be summed up in one word: gratitude. At the Mass for our deceased Oblates in November we gave thanks for the commitment of so many people to God’s mission. In his homily Fr. Ollie Barry asked the question “Who can unite us with the love of Christ?” Those we remember can do that for us. They remind us about the important things like the meaning of our lives, what’s important and what isn’t.”

This theme of focusing on what is important is picked up by Fr Séamus Finn as he reminds us that each of us has a responsibility to care for what has been called our “common home.” This responsibility to hear the cry of those who are suffering through our neglect of the gift that God has given us was repeated by Pope Francis at the closing of the recent Synod on the Amazon. He told the assembled gathering: “In this Synod we have had the grace of listening to the voices of the poor and reflecting on the precariousness of their lives, threatened by predatory models of development. Yet precisely in this situation, many have testified to us that it is possible to look at reality in a different way, accepting it with open arms as a gift, treating the

created world not as a resource to be exploited but as a home to be preserved, with trust in God. Let us pray for the grace to be able to listen to the cry of the poor: this is the cry of hope of the Church. The cry of the poor is the Church’s cry of hope.

Elsewhere in this issue you will read the story of two young Oblates from Australia and Zimbabwe who share part of their own journey towards the priesthood with us. Together with stories such as those from Dublin, Birmingham and other parts of our Oblate mission we realise that we truly have a lot to give thanks for.

This is the 45th issue of Oblate Connections since it was launched in 2009. This newsletter walks in the footsteps of the Lourdes Messenger/Oblate Missionary Record. It continues a long tradition of sharing the many stories of how the Kingdom of God is being built in the present moment. In the coming months Fr Brian Maher will take over responsibility for this newsletter and we wish him well in this new ministry. Finally, I want to thank all those who have contributed to the newsletter over the last ten years and to wish all our readers a blessed journey towards the celebration of Christmas.

– Fr. Lorcán O’Reilly OMI

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# The Double Message of Christmas

– Fr Ron Rolheiser, OMI

**I've never been happy with some of my activist friends who send out Christmas cards with messages like: May the Peace of Christ Disturb You! Can't we have one day a year to be happy and celebrate without having our already unhappy selves shaken with more guilt? Isn't Christmas a time when we can enjoy being children again? Moreover, as Karl Rahner once said, isn't Christmas a time when God gives us permission to be happy? So why not?**

Well, it's complex. Christmas is a time when God gives us permission to be happy, when the message from God speaks through the voice of Isaiah and says: "Comfort my people. Speak words of comfort!" But Christmas is also a time that points out that when God was born two thousand years ago there wasn't any room for him to be born in all the normal homes and places of the day. There was no room for him at the inn. Peoples' busy lives and expectations kept them from offering him a place to be born. That hasn't changed.

But first, the comfort of his birth: A number of years ago, I participated in a large diocesan synod. At one point the animator in charge had us divide into small groups and each group was asked to answer the question: What's the single most-important thing that the church should challenge the world with right now?

The groups reported back and each group named some important spiritual or moral challenge: "We need to challenge our society towards more justice!" "We need to challenge the world to have real faith and not confuse God's word with its own wishes." "We need to challenge our world towards a more responsible sexual ethos. We've lost our way!" Wonderful, needed challenges, all of them. But no group came back and said: "We need to challenge the world to receive God's consolation!" Granted, there's a lot of injustice, violence, racism, sexism, greed, selfishness, sexual irresponsibility, and self-serving faith around; but most of the adults in our world are also living

in a lot pain, anxiety, disappointment, loss, depression, and unresolved guilt. Everywhere you look, you see heavy hearts. Moreover, so many people living with hurt and disappointment do not see God and the church as an answer to their pain but rather as somehow part of its cause.

So, our churches, in preaching God's word, need first of all to assure the world of God's love, God's concern, and God's forgiveness. Before doing anything else, God's word is meant to comfort us; indeed, to be the ultimate source of all comfort. Only when the world knows God's consolation will it accept the concomitant challenge.

And that challenge, among others, is to then make room for Christ at the inn, that is, to open our hearts, our homes, and our world as places where Christ can come and live. From the safe distance of two thousand years we too easily make a scathing judgment on the people at the time of Jesus' birth for not knowing what Mary and Joseph were carrying, for not making a proper place for Jesus to be born, and for not recognizing him as Messiah afterwards. How could they be so blind? But that same judgment is still being made of us. We aren't exactly making room in our own inns.

When a new person is born into this world, he or she takes a space where before there was no one. Sometimes that new person is warmly welcomed and a cosy, loving space is instantly created and everyone around is happy for this new invasion. But that isn't always the case; sometimes, as was the case with Jesus, there is no space created for the new person to enter the world and his or her presence is unwelcome.



We see this today (and this will constitute a judgment on our generation) in the reluctance, almost all over the world, to welcome new immigrants, to make room for them at the inn. The United Nations estimates that there are 19.5 million refugees in the world today, persons whom no one will welcome. Why not? We are not bad people and we are capable most times of being wonderfully generous. But letting this flood of immigrants enter our lives would disturb us. Our lives would have to change. We would lose some of our present comforts, many of our old familiarities, and some of our securities.

We are not bad people, neither were those innkeepers two thousand years ago who, not knowing what was unfolding, in inculpable ignorance, turned Mary and Joseph away. I've always nursed a secret sympathy for them. Maybe because I am still, unknowingly, doing exactly what they did. A friend of mine is fond of saying: "I'm against more immigrants being allowed in ... now that we're in!"

The peace of Christ, the message inside of Christ's birth, and the skewed circumstances of his birth, if understood, cannot but disturb. May they also bring deep consolation.

*No Room – An Approach*  
The door is closed. There is no room.  
Our Brother Christ is born outside the inn.  
O God our life, you found yourself excluded,  
crowded out, out to the edge of life,  
where folk who do not have the powerful  
passwords that open doors  
struggle to make do with almost nothing,  
and yet bear love and hope amid the straw.  
And as we, misguided, seek you where we'd  
like to find you,  
open our eyes to the star that still shines to lead  
us out of our comfortable churches  
out beyond the closed doors of our hearts  
to the darkness where the star will come to rest.  
And there, where people feel themselves  
redundant to requirements  
unwanted at the party  
left out in the cold  
we will find you, bearing love  
making your centre at the edge  
room where there is no room.

– Poem by Kathy Galloway



# A Connection Between St. John Henry Newman and the Oblates



Saint Anne's is one of the oldest Missions in Birmingham. Founded in 1849 it was given into the charge of the Oratorian Fathers, with John Henry Newman (later Cardinal) as the first parish priest. Born in 1801, in the City of London, he was the eldest son of pious Anglican parents.

On 9th October 1845, John Henry Newman was received into the Catholic Church by Father Dominic Barberi who was visiting Littlemore. He was confirmed in the Oscott Chapel on 1st November 1845 by Bishop Wiseman. He was ordained a priest in Rome in May 1847 by Cardinal Franzoni and celebrated his Christmas Mass in London. Newman arrived in Alcester Street, the location of St. Anne's, on Friday 26th January 1849. On 2nd February 1849 John Henry Newman preached at the opening of the new Oratory in Alcester Street which was to be his home for the next three years. Fr Newman spent some of his time in parish work, but most of his time was spent giving sermons and lectures in Birmingham and elsewhere. This Oratory was a large building in Alcester Street. Formerly a gin distillery, it was bought and fitted up as a Chapel to accommodate five hundred people. It was in this building that John Henry Newman delivered some of his famous sermons on Anglican questions.

The failure of the Potato Crop in Ireland caused the great famine of 1847. Thousands of Irish men and women were forced to leave their native land, in search of work and food in England. Many of them settled in Birmingham and particularly in Deritend. They became the Congregation of John Henry Newman, when he set up his church in the disused Gin Distillery. St. Anne's Church was then and is today totally surrounded by factories, warehouses and office blocks.

It is interesting to note that the Oblates of Mary Immaculate took possession of Maryvale House in Kingstanding in May 1849, soon after Newman left for Alcester Street. Maryvale became a Novitiate for

the French Oblate Fathers until 28th August 1851. The founder of the Oblate Fathers, Bishop de Mazenod, visited Maryvale during that time. He ordained Claude Sallaz to the priesthood on 21st July 1850, Brother Babel and Brother McMonagh to the diaconate, and Brother C.J. Dunne to the sub-diaconate.

On a pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1938 the Oblate Provincial, Fr Michael Ryan OMI, was introduced to the Archbishop of Birmingham, Dr Williams. He made it known to His Grace that the Oblates would be very willing to open a house in the Archdiocese of Birmingham if a vacancy occurred. As a result, St Anne's parish was placed in the care of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

## **Irish Welfare**

During the 1950s and 60s immigration from Ireland was massive. Very many came to Birmingham. Often, they came with no contact, no accommodation and no job. This was a problem for the Irish in Birmingham. The priests at St. Anne's realised the situation and through the Legion of Mary and others, they organised pairs of volunteers to meet the 6.10 am boat train at New Street Station. They were wearing armbands and when they found people with no place to go they brought them first to St. Anne's and later to the Irish Welfare Centre at Moat Row. There they would get something to eat, and the priests would try to find them accommodation and a job. From this beginning the Irish Welfare and Information Centre began.

## **St. Anne's Hostel**

Around St. Anne's there were many, far too many, homeless men. One of the priests from St. Anne's, Fr. Paschal Dillon, realised that they needed some sort of decent accommodation. Eventually he found a building at the back of the Paragon Hotel and acquired it for the purpose of feeding and accommodating the homeless. This developed over many years of struggle, and now the social services of Birmingham City Council run it in a very professional way.

### Oblates who have served at St. Anne's:

D. Bagnall	S. Connellan	M. Doyle	D. Houlihan	M. Moran	M. O'Dwyer	P. Sheridan
M. Bagnall	F. Connolly	C. Dunne	S. Hynes	H. Morrison	N. Ormond	J. Sherlock
O. Barry	R. Cormican	J. Hickey	C. Kelly	J. Morrison	M. Phelan	D. Sorohan
H. Bromley	G. Cronin	J. Fitzsimons	E. Kenny	J. Mulvany	L. Philomin	J. Staak
M. Buckley	J. Curti	B. Flanagan	E. Maher	A. Murphy	E. Quinn	J. Taaffe
J. Byrne	P. Danagher	T. Flanagan	E. McCauley	C. Murphy	P. Ratajczyk	K. Thorson
J.C. Byrne	J. Delaney	N. Garcia	R. McDonagh	J. Murphy	F. Ryan	G. Tunney
P. Byrne	P. Dillon	J. Hannigan	E. McMahan	R. Murphy	M. Ryan	J. Wall
T. Clarke	L. Dowling	J. Hardiman	E. McSherry	F. Murray	T. Scully	

# Maroua Counselling Centre

The city of Maroua is the capital of the Far North region of Cameroon. This region is often a victim of Boko Haram Islamic terrorism. The city of Maroua hosts many Internally Displaced People (IDP's) with refugees from Nigeria as well. There are also displaced people from the English-speaking regions of North-West and South-West Cameroon. These two regions are victims of the violence of the political crisis, which has already caused more than 2,000 deaths and more than 6,000 displaced, according to the local press.

Maroua, therefore, is now transformed into a large centre for victims of war and poverty. Most of these people have often undergone various types of physical and psychological abuse. There are children and women who have been raped, beaten, maimed, and deprived of their families, schooling, and even food. There are parents who have lost their children, and children who have lost their parents.

Passionate about the poor, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate of the Province of Cameroon have opened in August 2019, a Counselling Centre in Maroua. The centre is an initiative of Fr. Edouard Dagavounan-sou, provincial superior. Fr. Thomas Bang has been appointed as its first director. The centre works in collaboration with psychologists, a medical doctor, a lawyer, and the police officers of the city.

Father Thomas listens to each victim and refers him or her to the collaborators according to the person's need. The centre welcomes victims of abuse and violence in all its forms. So far, the majority of victims are children and women.

The main difficulty we face is that the demand is much more than what was expected. Listening to a victim can sometimes take more than 2 hours. Apart from Father Thomas, the centre has no permanent staff due to the lack of financial means. The director



of the centre also has other responsibilities parallel to the centre, which makes his availability limited at times. Some people come to the centre for material assistance, like school fees for children, medical bills, food and even housing.

One of the many positive aspects of the centre is that the victims of abuse tell us how they already feel relieved just by being listened to. They are happy that there is finally a place where they can go to share and express their feelings freely, thanks to the goodwill of our volunteers and collaborators!

We also have some future projects to accomplish. Having a refectory, and utilizing it to offer at least one meal a day to those most desperate victims, is one of those projects. Further, the centre needs to be equipped with more toilets and showers for the victims for the time they spend at the centre. We also wish to have two or three resource persons as our permanent staff, so that we could serve more people a day. These are our dreams, but in faith, we believe that it will soon be a reality.

– Originally published in omiworld.org

# Sharing The Joy of God's

**M**y name is Phillip Anesu Zimora. I am 31 years old and I am from Zimbabwe and currently studying Theology at St Joseph's Theological Institute in South Africa. I joined the Oblates in 2012.

In his homily to the young people gathered at St Louis, USA on January 26, 1999, Pope St John Paul II said, 'each one of you belongs to Christ, and Christ belongs to you. At baptism you were claimed for Christ with the sign of the Cross: you received the Catholic faith as a treasure to be shared with others. In Confirmation, you were sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and strengthened for your Christian mission and vocation'. This part of his homily summarises my experience as a missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate.

As part of Oblate training, every member in formation is given a year of pastoral engagement and it is known as the regency year. I was assigned to St. Mary's Star of the Sea in Leith, Scotland which is part of the Anglo-Irish Province of the Oblates for my regency year.

As Socrates says, 'man know thy self', being in touch with one's feelings is of great importance. When I was given my obedience by my superiors, it was really not easy for me. The move from South Africa to Edinburgh, Scotland forced me to have so many questions, doubts, fears and confusion. This was my first time to move out of my comfort zone. It meant embracing a new environment, culture, people, weather and even food. Yes, we belong to one Catholic Church but the dynamics and forms of our liturgies differ. Moving out of my context meant also the change of those liturgical dynamics.



With all these changes, questions and fears, I had to be optimistic and trust the one who called me. The words of St JP II strengthened me, 'you were sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit and strengthened for your Christian mission and vocation'. This is my mission, to be an Oblate, to be close to the people, to live nothing undared. I knew that moving out of my comfort zone can be a moment of Grace, moment of learning and experiencing and this is what I got from Scotland.

I have learnt a lot about myself as a person and as a religious. My world view has been broadened, my understanding of the Oblate way of life has been enriched and so is my prayer life. Special thanks to the Anglo-Irish province, the people of sunny Leith and St Mary Star of the Sea parish. St Mary Star of the Sea, pray for the wonderer, pray for me. Amen.

– Br. Phillip Anesu Zimora, OMI

Over the last number of years Oblate students from different parts of the world have joined us to share in the Oblate Mission here in Britain and Ireland. In this article two of these students share with us their reflections and experience of the time they are spending with us.

# Calling



As a part of my seminary formation with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, I have been undergoing a mission placement; firstly in Lourdes from June to September and now in London until the end of January. And so, this is a tale of two cities. Not very far from one another. On the surface they appear so different; but underneath very much the same. In Lourdes, I worked as a part of a youth evangelization team, a new project for the Sanctuary. But as summer faded, the pilgrims left and so I now find myself in the hustling and bustling of London city, braving the cold and rainy days, and immersed in a whirlwind of pastoral activity.

Lourdes is known as the place where heaven touches earth. Its blue skies encircle you like Mary's mantle and the peaceful silence of the grotto provides for its pilgrims an escape from their hectic lives. In stark contrast, London's grey, dreary days epitomise the feelings of nihilism that mark this city. London screams of desperation as loud as the underground train screeches along its metallic tracks. Although London may sound like a nightmare, and Lourdes like a dream; they really are not that much different.

Lourdes is a place of encounter. The Virgin Mary, like any good mother, has made Lourdes a home; a place where you can feel comfortable and safe. London, in striking contrast to Lourdes, is a place of faceless anonymity. You can stand on the tube with hundreds of other commuters and never look anyone in the eye. But, even within this fast-paced and faceless landscape, people are still searching. In fact, they yearn. They yearn for peace, for connection, for love. They yearn for God. These are the same faces you see in Lourdes; people who come seeking an experience of the divine.



When it comes down to it all, it doesn't matter what a place looks like on the surface. The reality of a place is not found in its buildings, but in its people. If Lourdes is the place where heaven touches earth, and London is a place on earth devoid of heaven, then isn't it our job to bring a slice of that heaven here?

I have learnt that to be a missionary does not always mean having to go long distances; but to make the distances between us shorter. It is up to all of us to reach out and help create moments of true Christ-like encounter. It is right in the midst of places like London where we need to act consciously with faith to break down walls, to build bridges, to connect to one another and in that encounter see the face of Jesus, who is in each and every one of us. It is in that way that we can help bring heaven to earth.

– Br. Josh Nash, OMI



REST IN PEACE

# Mass for Deceased Oblates

November is the month in which we remember in a special way our deceased family and friends. During his Angelus message on Sunday November 10th, Pope Francis reminded us of Jesus' teaching. "As we face the reality of death, Jesus is clear: our God is the God of Life and our God is faithful. In this month in which we pray for and celebrate the memory of the Faithful Departed, Jesus' words fill us with consolation and hope as we ponder the mystery of life after death. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit journey with us and desire to bring us to the fullness of life, where every tear will be wiped away. Alleluia!"

Each year a Mass is held in Inchicore to remember those Oblates who have died over the previous year. Also, during the Mass this year family members of many Oblates brought forward a candle to remember them. The following is the homily given by the Provincial, Fr. Oliver Barry:

Today we have come to make a connection a connection with those in this journey of life who have gone before us. It is one of the great truths of our Faith that "life is changed not ended". Those whom we have come to remember are present with us in a very special way as we gather around the Eucharistic table. The first reading describes how the Lord prepares "a banquet of rich food for all people". Today we gather around two tables. This table, the altar. Around this table Christians disciples of Christ have gathered for two thousand years in the event which



unites Heaven and Earth. Around this table we are united with all who have gone before us. Through Christ we are united with God. Those we remember today have stood around this table with the people of God from places as diverse as London, Australia, Brazil, the Philippines, South Africa and many other places. They have shared the rich banquet of the Eucharist at weddings and funerals at all life's celebrations and invited people to experience the great mystery of Eternal Life shared with us by Jesus Christ.

Later we will gather around another table. We will share food and drink together as one family united by our love for those that we have come to remember. Our Remembrance today can also be important for our own journey. After all we are all on the same journey as those we remember. That journey has its ups and downs. The readings give us some important points



to ponder about our journey. In the Psalm we have a beautiful prayer about our relationship with God. God is compared to a shepherd who “leads me beside quiet waters who refreshes my soul”. Today, can I allow myself to come a little closer to that God, the God whose goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life? The ones we have loved can help us to connect with the God whose life they now share. An important question is asked in the second reading: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”. Sometimes it can feel like our relationship with Christ is very weak. The cares and realities of daily life can create for us a sense of separation of alienation. I would like to ask a different question “Who can unite us with the love of Christ?” Those we remember can do that for us. They remind us about the important things like the meaning of our lives, what’s important and what isn’t.

Our Gospel Reading takes us back to the farmyard with talk of sheep and goats. The image is used to distinguish different ways of living. We can be generous or greedy. Today we give thanks for the generosity of those we have come to remember. They gave their lives to the Mission of Christ. They did great things but the important things are the acts of generosity the reaching out to people who were poor the hidden things that will never be known. The greatest tribute we can pay to them is to continue the Mission to which they dedicated their lives. Can we generous to the poor, welcome the stranger, take care of the sick. If we can we will be truly united we those we have loved.

What we do may not be remembered except by the one who really matters. St. John Henry Newman tells us:

We seem to live and die as the leaves; but there is One who notes the fragrance of every one of them, and, when their hour comes, places them between the pages of His great Book.





# Looking Back on Planet Earth

- Fr. Séamus Finn O.M.I.

The 50th anniversary celebration of the Apollo 11 moon landing is an observance for all of us to consider the significance of this event and consider both the discoveries and questions that this historic achievement has occasioned. The numerous video and print commemorations that have been rolled out in recent weeks have also awakened many recollections and reflections for the more than 600 million people who are reported to have watched on TV.

One insight highlighted by even the astronauts themselves is not only that we were able to land on the moon, but that for the first time we were able to look back on our planet earth and realize, perhaps for the first time in a visible format, that we are part of a vast interdependent solar system that is responsible for the orchestration of the ebb and flow of tides and oceans, governs the cycles of light and darkness and the delicate process of photosynthesis that renews the air we breathe.

By coincidence, amid the Apollo celebrations, we also marked the fourth anniversary of the publication of the papal encyclical by Pope Francis. In the encyclical the Holy Father places “care for our common home;” “Mother Earth,” within a religious context and explores in depth themes such as interdependence, fragility, climate change and biodiversity, all themes that have been studied with increased intensity since the first lunar landing.

Pope Francis reminds us that all creatures are connected. “Each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another”. He explains, “everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others”.

The encyclical goes on to highlight the urgency of the response that is needed by people across the world,

and for believers, places that response squarely within their religious vocation. The document has been studied and taken up by leaders from across different religious traditions, by governments, corporations and institutions as they consider their responsibilities to address some of the most pressing social and ecological crises that we face. A good example of the extensive reach of the encyclical was a two-day conference at the UN headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, jointly organized by UN departments, the Vatican and other regional organizations. In her opening remarks, the Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, Joyce Msuya, expressed hope “in the young women and men around the world who are drawing on both faith and science to campaign for change and to raise awareness about how to live more sustainably.”

The recent Synod of Bishops on the Pan-Amazon region provided an opportunity for us all to learn about this privileged region on our planet, the threat that it is under, and the destructive exploitation that the indigenous who live there face. Reflecting on the synod, Fr Louis Lougen writes “We hear the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth in unison, calling for concerted pastoral, social and economic efforts for the life of the people and the ecology of the region. Of the 8 countries and French Guyana that constitute the Pan-Amazon Region, we Oblates are in six of those countries and in French Guyana.”

Many dioceses and parish communities have established committees to coordinate responses to the encyclical at a local level. Numerous retreats, conferences and study groups have also been established to help deepen our understanding of the challenges we face and to support strategies and projects that have been created to help us all to care more responsibly for our common home.



First lunar footprint  
projected on Washington Monument  
– Photo: Sr. Emily Tekolste, SP

**The following resources might be help us to identify specific activities and actions that we can embrace and thereby live more sustainably.**

#### **In the House**

- Do not use single-use products, especially plastic.
- For daily use of plastic bags, use biodegradable ones.
- Shut off lights, PC, TVs and appliances when not in use.
- Unplug mobile phone and laptop chargers when not in use.
- Reduce, reuse, recycle for a less wasteful life style.
- Put the electricity, water, gas bills etc. on the bulletin board of your community.
- Print only when necessary. Print on both sides of the paper.
- Adjust your thermostat lower in winter.
- Donate or recycle used clothing or appliances.
- Keep curtains closed at night to cut down on heat loss.
- Install solar panels for electricity or hot water.
- Get yourself removed from catalog and junk mailing lists.

#### **In the Kitchen, Bathroom & Laundry**

- Install a fuel-efficient stove where people use fire wood.
- Shut off the tap while brushing your teeth.
- Collect water from laundry to clean floors and flush toilet.
- Bring your water bottle, do not buy bottled water.
- Use the microwave instead of the oven.
- Use bio-friendly soaps and cleaners.
- Wash laundry in cold water. Only run full loads.
- Keep the dryer filter clean. Hang clothes to dry if possible.

#### **In Your Garden**

- Plant trees and vegetables.
- Collect rain water to use for watering the garden.
- Use compost and natural fertilizers instead of yard chemicals.

#### **At the Shop**

- Do not get plastic bags. Bring your own bag.
- Purchase locally made products whenever possible.
- Buy items that are made from recycled materials.
- Buy fair trade, sustainable products.

#### **On the Road**

- Walk or ride a bike for short journeys.
- Use public transportation.
- Keep your tires properly inflated.
- Drive a high mileage or hybrid vehicle.
- Take direct instead of connecting flights if possible.
- When traveling, turn down your thermostat and water heater.

#### **Social life**

- Participate in elections.



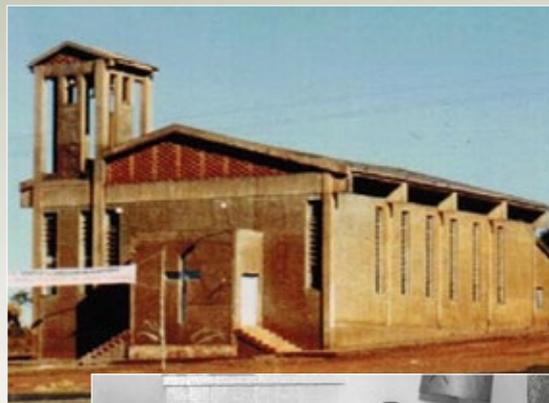


# Brazil – A New Oblate Mission (Part 2)

## – From the Archives

**In the last issue we looked at the beginning of the Oblate mission in Brazil. In this second article we look at how the mission expanded in the following years. We will see how the seeds of the early years gradually bore fruit as the mission grew and flourished.**

In 1968 the second Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) took place in Medellin, Colombia. The question in Medellin was: “How can one be Christian in a world of marginalized people, of poor, of those little ones without a voice? With Medellin the church reinforced and made explicit its option for the poor, for the forgotten of this world. In Medellin the Theology of Liberation was born, which provided the theological underpinnings and support of the pastoral action of the Church in the following years. Medellin also provided significant support for the emergence of basic Christian communities (CEBs). These communities would nourish and strengthen the protagonism of the laity, and would introduce a new way of being church. Medellin was a new Spring, a new Pentecost for the church in Latin America! The Oblates embraced Medellin with enormous enthusiasm. In fact the conclusions of Medellin coincided with our Oblate motto, with our charism, which is to evangelize the poor.



### Ceres

The decision to assume the mission in Ceres in 1975 can be attributed to the conclusions of Vatican II. Vatican II had declared that the church is “the people of God”: “a sacerdotal people”(LG9-10). This concept of church was reinforced in Medellin, where basic Christian communities were chosen as a priority for the Latin American church.

At the first diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of Goias in 1968, the Diocese, following on the conclusions of Medellin, chose basic Christian communities and the concept of collegiality as priorities.

Parishes were decentralized, parish assemblies were encouraged, lay participation was promoted. In addition, bible formation, bible reflection, catechesis, youth groups, were established. Under the leadership of Dom Tomas Balduino option for youth was included as a priority for the Diocese.

The option for the poor resulted in the option to make the St. Pius X hospital an instrument of evangelization, thus putting into practice God’s love for the poor and needy, thus guaranteeing a Christian ambience and humane treatment for God’s little ones.

## Cacu

Within the southern part of the Diocese of Jatai, a new mission, Cacu was established in 1970. This new parish comprised all the towns and municipalities in this diocese. Over the following years both Fathers Colm O'Flanagan and Ciaran Early with the support of the Sisters of Joseph established a new parish community. It was a time of great social conflict connected with questions of land.

A sad event marked the ministry of the Oblates in Cacu. A young man, Vilmar Jose de Castro was murdered. An active member of the community, he was active in the defense of the small landowners of the region. One day as he walked along the dirt road to teach in a rural school he was struck and killed by a truck. The murderers are known. However to this day they have never been brought to trial, and walk freely. The Oblates supported fully the cry of the poor for justice and developed a pastoral strategy in view of the poor. In 1978 Fr. Dan McCarthy replaced Fr. Colm O' Flanagan as pastor. He remained in Cacu until 1982 when the parish was returned to the Diocese.



## Ituiutaba

Situated between Paranaiguara and Uberlandia, Ituiutaba was a growing city with very few priests. A chapel of ease, Our Lady of the Abbey, was raised to the status of a parish, and the Bishop of Uberlandia offered the new parish to the Oblates. Frs. Tom McGrath, Martin Byrne, and Michael Brady moved in to the parish and initiated a very interesting ministry. Youth ministry became a priority, basic christian communities, bible reflection groups were formed, great emphasis was placed on the protagonism of the laity. Much work was accomplished in creating communities of faith, of solidarity in the peripheries of the parish. The Oblates created vibrant communities of evangelization.

## Duque De Caxias

A BBC Documentary in 1986, brought the full impact of the pastoral work in Duque De Caxias, a suburb of Rio de Janeiro, which was being carried out by Fr. Bernard Colgan in one of the most socially deprived, poor and violent areas. He was supported in the early years by Fathers Michael Brady and Jerry Spillane.

In the documentary Bernard was asked what he could accomplish in the midst of so many social problems - injustice, mindless violence, extreme poverty. He answered that he considered his mission as one of trying to give hope to those without hope, to those who have no prospect of a better and more human life. Bernard continues to work in the "Baixada: without a doubt it is one of the most difficult and challenging missions in the world.



## Itacoatiara – Amazonas

The diocese of Itacoatiara is mainly concerned with riverside communities. Fr. Dominic Houlihan volunteered to work here. His parish consisted for the best part of riverside communities that necessitated the use of a boat. Dominic made an important contribution to that mission, and was much appreciated by the Bishop D. Jorge Marskell, for his dedication to the poor communities.

## Garavelo – Aparecida De Goiânia

The mission in Garavelo was started in February 1984. At that time the area comprised various sectors. Although huge in area, the population was relatively small. One of the reasons for moving to Goiania was the need to open a house of studies for Oblates students. The first priests to work in Garavelo were Frs. Aiden McGarrigle, Joao Altino, & Tom Murphy. Dom Fernando welcomed us with the words: "Now roll up your sleeves and get to work"!

The parish was also the house of formation for our candidates, who studied in the Goias Institute of Philosophy & Theology. Frs. Colm O'Flanagan, Pat McGrath and Tom Murphy became members of the Governing Body of the institute.



Garavelo grew at an enormous rate. The Archbishop Dom Antonio chose not to create new parishes but invested in the creation of a network of pastoral communities within one parish. Within a short time, the communities mushroomed. Various Fathers arrived in Garavelo and with the original team formed a formidable missionary group. Over the years many Oblates have contributed to the pastoral development of Garavelo.

Fr. Tony Boyhan organized the communities and distributed the various activities, all of which resulted in a pastoral approach that was very attractive. At one point there were 65 communities in the Network of Communities, with a total population of almost two hundred thousand people. It was a difficult mission but most rewarding. Among the many pastoral initiatives developed were: preparation and celebration of the Sacraments, basic Christian communities, prison chaplaincy, bible circles, legion of Mary, a social ministry that provided food and support for the needy.



### AN INVITATION

Fr. Jeremiah Donovan will launch his Memoirs of his many years working in the Brazil Mission on Thurs. 12th Dec at 7.00pm in the Annexe, House of Retreat, Inchicore, Dublin 8.  
All are welcome!

### Aragoiania

In accepting the parish of St. John the Baptist in Garavelo, they also accepted the invitation of the Archbishop of Goiania, Dom Fernando Gomes to assist in the parish of St. Lucy in Aragoiania. Fr. Aiden McGarrigle was the first Oblate pastor, and during the six years he remained there he gave of himself unstintingly to the people of that parish. Unfortunately Fr. Aiden died in 1990. As he was much loved by the people, the community of Aragoiania asked that his body be buried in the sanctuary of the Parish church. His family in Ireland very generously agreed to the petition, and Fr. Aiden is buried in the sanctuary of the parish church in Aragoiania. Dom Antonio archbishop of Goiania asked that the Oblates continue the work of Fr. Aiden, and in 1991 Tom Murphy began his ministry in Aragoiania. He remained until May 2000 when he returned to Ireland to take up the role as Provincial for six years. In 2007, on his return to Brazil, he resumed his ministry in Aragoiania, at the request of the Archbishop.

### Cassilandia

Fr. Joao Altino Barbosa ministry began in Cassilandia, Mato Grosso do Sul in 1987. Welcomed by Bishop Dom Isidoro he rendered services in the Diocese in the areas of basic christian communities, bible studies as well as sacramental ministry. He has also accompanied the indigenous people Ofaie in their struggle to keep their lands. He has also worked with the workers who possess no land and has accompanied them in their struggle for a better and more dignified life.



Oblates from Ireland continue to work in Brazil and today after 57 years of missionary endeavour they can see the fruit of their hard work in the emergence of established Catholic communities and ordained Brazilian born priests, who continue the evangelization and pastoral activities of their ministry.

# Three Golden Jubilee Celebrations

Over the past number of months, three Irish Oblates ordained in 1969 celebrated 50 years of mission



Photos: Asia News

## Charles Burrows OMI marks 50 years of Mission in Indonesia

Fr Charlie Burrows OMI, a native of Dublin, or 'Romo Carolus' as he is known in his community of Cilacap marked his Golden Jubilee in a celebration which was organised by members Catholics and Muslim community.

Over the 46 years he spent on mission in Cilacap, Fr Burrows worked with local authorities and ordinary people: fishermen, peasants, street vendors and anyone who needed practical help to improve their economic situation. He has led several successful humanitarian projects there which have earned him the recognition and the deep affection of the local people.

In his homily, Fr Charlie urged those present to do good deeds and engage in humanitarian works for the benefit of others. "Entering paradise will be your main reward," he said.



## Louis McDermott OMI celebrates 50 years of Mission as an Oblate Priest

The Parishioners of St Michael's parish, Inchicore, held a joy-filled celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Fr Louis McDermott OMI. Louis has served as pastor to parish communities in England (Liverpool and

Southampton) and Ireland (Darndale and St Michael's). He has also led a special project in Liverpool that worked very closely with poor communities in their struggles for justice and a better future.

Speaking about Fr Louis on the day, parishioner Helen Scott had the following to say on behalf of the community: "Louis' presence among us is truly a blessing... The hallmark of Louis' ministry is his passion for Justice and his desire that the inherent worth and dignity of each person is recognised and valued. The words of the prophet Micah certainly run true in Louis's case when he speaks of "acting justly, loving tenderly and walking humbly".



Photos: Pat Fitzgerald



## Fr Michael Morrissey in his native Croom marks 50 years as an Oblate Priest

St Mary's Church was packed to capacity when Fr Michael Morrissey OMI, formerly of Islandmor, celebrated the golden jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood. He celebrated his fifty years in the priesthood in the church where he was baptised, made his First Holy Communion and Confirmation and said his First Mass.

Assigned after ordination to South Africa, Michael worked in pastoral ministry and as part of the formation team guiding young Oblate students. His background in psychology has not only helped with this work, but also with the wider counselling services that he provides.

After serving as his province's leader for some years, he became director of a popular retreat and counseling centre at Hartbeespoort Dam, south of Johannesburg, and continues in that role today.



# Christmas Quiz

- 1) John the Baptist is often referred to as Jesus' cousin. Which of them was the older one, according to Luke?
- 2) According to the Bible, which animals were specifically mentioned as being present in the stable when Jesus was born?
- 3) Which Christmas carol contains the following words: "Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exaltation"?
- 4) Who spread the news about baby Jesus throughout Bethlehem?
- 5) How many verses are there in Away in a Manger?
- 6) According to the Gospel of Luke why did Joseph have to travel to Bethlehem?
- 7) When the angels announce to the shepherds the birth of the Saviour, they say, in Luke 2:11, "For there is born to you this day in \_\_\_\_\_ a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." How do they identify the place where Jesus has been born?
- 8) All of these events took place to fulfil the word of the prophet who said, that a virgin shall give birth to a son called Immanuel. (which means, "God with us.") What was the name of the prophet who foretold this great wonder?  
1). Ezekiel 2). Jeremiah 3). Samuel  
4). Isaiah
- 9) The Gospels of Matthew (chapters 1 and 2) and Luke (chapters 1 and 2) give us the most detail concerning the birth of Christ. How many angelic encounters total are mentioned in these two accounts?
- 10) What reason did the wise men give for coming in search of the babe?
- 11) According to the bible what animal did Mary ride on during the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem?
- 12) Who originally wrote the lyrics for Hark! The Herald Angels Sing?
- 13) Once in Royal David's City was originally written as a poem by Cecil Frances Alexander, but who wrote the music?
- 14) What is the meaning of the word "Noel," as in the carol line, "Noel, Noel, / Born is the King of Israel"?
- 15) Where does the Bible tell us that Jesus was born on December 25th?
- 16) As well as being a gift from the wise men, at what other time was "myrrh" associated with Christ?
- 17) Referring to the English custom of ringing church bells on Christmas morning, what carol says, "Then pealed the bells more loud and deep" / 'God is not dead: nor doth He sleep'?"
- 18) Who was the governor of Syria at the time of Jesus' birth?
- 19) Who are the four women named in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus?
- 20) Use the following clues to identify the three following Christmas Carols  
A) Eight P.M. to Six A.M. without Noise  
B) Assemble, Everyone Who Believes  
C) Hollowed Post Meridian

new dates

**Lourdes 2020 – 19-24th September**

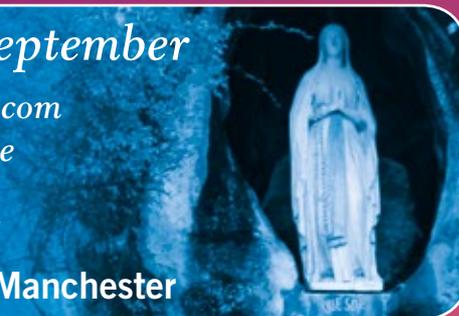
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