

OBLATE CONNECTIONS

February 2026 | Nº67



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OBLATES
ALWAYS CLOSE to the PEOPLE

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200 YEARS
CONSTITUTIONS AND RULES
1826 - 2026

OMI

The Missionary Oblates
of Mary Immaculate

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CONNECTIONS

This year the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the whole Oblate Family have great cause to celebrate. On February 17, 1826, Pope Leo XII approved the Congregation and its Constitution and Rules. This year is our Birthday!

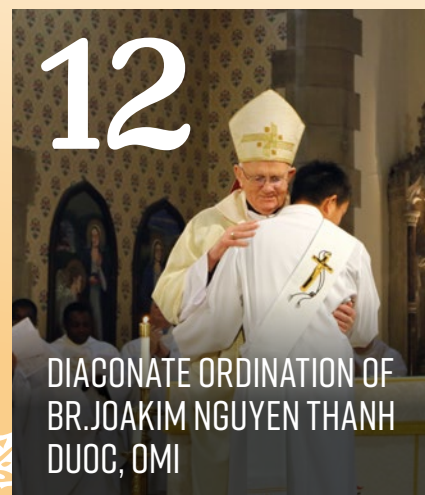
Each of our own families have their own unique history and traditions. For Oblates and those who share our charism and mission, it is the same. We can look back over the last 200 years with pride and thankfulness for all that God has done through the Congregation. Countless Oblates and, more recently, members of the Oblate Family have carried forward the vision and charism of St. Eugene, proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel to the poor through their many faces and voices. We are not simply remembering an historical date, we are remembering the ongoing and vibrant vision that St. Eugene had which is very much alive all over the world.

This year, we are remembering our past and from where we have come, we are honouring our rich tradition and are called to look to the future with faith, courage and hope. In 2016 Pope Francis said, 'as your religious family enters its third century of life, may the Lord allow you write the new chapters that are as fruitful as those Oblates who over the past 200 years have borne witness...'



May Mary Immaculate continue to bless, lead and inspire us as we continue to make St. Eugene's dream a reality.

- Br. Michael Moore, OMI



A word from Fr. Lorcan O'Reilly, OMI

This month will see many different celebrations taking place around the world, including a gathering with Pope Leo XIV on February 21st, to mark the 200th anniversary of the approval of the Oblate Constitutions by Pope Leo XII on February 17th, 1826. Writing a few years later in 1831, St Eugene reminded his brother Oblates, "Let us hold this precious Rule in high esteem, have it always before our eyes, and even more in the heart, let us continually nourish our souls with the principles it contains".



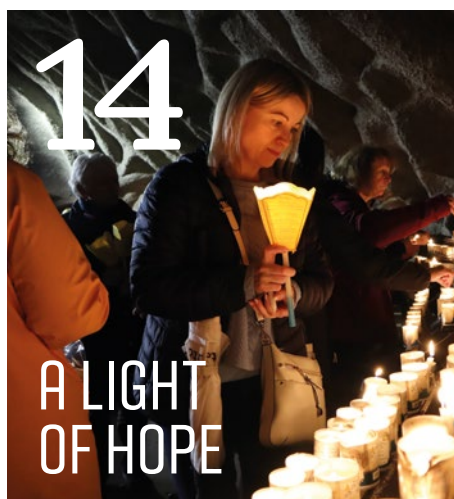
In Psalm 146 we recall a God of mercy who brings justice to the oppressed, gives bread to the hungry, frees the captives, opens the eyes of the blind, supports the orphan and the widow, protects the stranger, and loves the righteous. Is this not a good description for the dream of St Eugene? Indeed, over the last 200 years many Oblate missionaries tried to realise this dream and have helped the poorest to discover their dignity and to transform sadness into joy, comforting the most dejected. For this let us give thanks to the Lord.

Fr Chicho, the successor to St Eugene today, notes that as we reflect with gratitude for the last 200 years, "we must also acknowledge our failings. We have not always responded with our lives to the wonderful vocation God has given us... We want to continue our pilgrimage with all of God's people and seek ways to do so together, guided by justice and integrity." He also reminds us that as members of the Oblate family, "Our mission is to prepare the way of the Lord so that we may welcome the manifestation of his Kingdom. We are called to embody the signs of the presence of that Kingdom, as Jesus did: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor."

As we look to the future with hope let us recall Jesus' words of encouragement to us all in the Gospel: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."

As we celebrate this anniversary let us ask Mary, the patron to our Oblate family, to help us to be ministers of God's mercy and with her as our guide may we walk humbly together as pilgrims of hope committed to sharing God's healing comfort to those in need.

- Fr. Lorcan O'Reilly, OMI
Province Leader



SEEING SPRING

– Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

In my mid-20s, I spent a year studying at the University of San Francisco. I had just been ordained a priest and was finishing a graduate degree in theology. Easter Sunday that year was a particularly gorgeous, sunny, spring day, but it didn't find me in a sunny mood. I was a long way from home, away from my family and my community, homesick, and alone. Almost all the friends I had made during that year of studies, other graduate students in theology, were gone, celebrating Easter with their families. I was homesick and alone and, beyond that, I nursed the congenital heartaches and obsessions of the young and restless. My mood was far from spring and Easter.

I went for a walk that afternoon and the spring air, the sun, and the fact that it was Easter did little to cheer me up, if anything they helped catalyze a deeper sense of aloneness. But there are different ways of waking up. As Leonard Cohen says, there's a crack in everything and that's where the light gets in. I needed a little awakening and eventually it was provided. At the entrance of a park, I saw a blind beggar sitting with a cardboard sign in front of him that read: it's springtime and I am blind! The irony wasn't lost on me. I was as blind as he was! For what I was seeing it might as well have been Good Friday and raining and cold. That day, sunshine, spring, and Easter were wasted on me.

It was a moment of grace and I have recalled that encounter many times since, though it didn't alter my mood at the time. I continued my walk, restless as before, and eventually went home for dinner. During that year of studies, I was a live-in chaplain at a convent that had a youth hostel attached to it and the rule of the house was that the chaplain was to eat by himself in his own private dining room. So, even though that wasn't exactly what a doctor would have ordered for a restless and homesick young man, I ate dinner alone that Easter Sunday evening.

But the resurrection did still arrive for me on that Easter Sunday, albeit a bit late in the day. Two other graduate students and I had made plans to meet on the ocean at nightfall, light a fire, and celebrate our own version of the Easter vigil. So, just before dark, I caught a bus to the ocean and met my friends (a nun and priest). We lit a large bonfire (still legal in those days), sat around it for several hours, and ended up confessing to each other that we'd each had a miserable Easter. That fire did for us what the blessing of the fire the evening before at the Easter vigil hadn't done. It broke the spell of restlessness and self-absorption which had us blind to everything outside ourselves. As we watched the fire and talked of everything and nothing, my mood began to shift, my restlessness quieted, the heaviness lifted. I began to sense spring and Easter.

In John's account of the resurrection, he tells the story of how on the morning of the first Easter the Beloved Disciple runs to the tomb where Jesus has been buried and peers into it. He sees it is empty and that all that remains are the clothes, neatly folded, within which Jesus' body had been wrapped. But since he is a disciple who sees with the eyes of love, he understands what this means; he grasps the reality of resurrection and knows that Jesus has risen. He sees spring. He understands with his eyes.

Hugo of St. Victor once famously said: Love is the eye. When we see with love we not only see straight and clearly, we also see depth and meaning. The reverse is also true. It is for a good reason that after Jesus rose from the dead some could see him and others could not. Love is the eye. Those searching for life through the eyes of love, like Mary of Magdala searching for Jesus in the garden on Easter Sunday morning, see spring and the resurrection. Any other kind of eye, and we're blind in springtime.

AND EASTER

When I took my walk that Easter afternoon all those years ago in San Francisco, I wasn't exactly Mary of Magdala looking for Jesus in a garden, nor the Beloved Disciple fired by love running off to look into the tomb of Jesus. In my youthful restlessness I was mostly looking for myself, and meeting mostly my anxious self. And that's a blindness. When we are caught inside ourselves, we're blind, blind to both spring and the resurrection. I learned that lesson, not in a church or a classroom but on a lonely, restless Easter Sunday in San Francisco when I ran into a blind beggar and then went home and ate an Easter dinner alone.

**“Love is the eye.
When we see with love
we not only see straight
and clearly, we also see
depth and meaning.”**

Lenten Weekend Retreat

WISTASTON HALL OBLATE RETREAT
AND SPIRITUALITY CENTRE

Fri 6th Mar 6:30pm - Sun 8th 2:00pm Suggested donation - £195

Led by Fr Oliver Barry, OMI and Sr Janet Audu, DHS

Lent is a sacred time of preparation for Holy Week and Easter, a season of spiritual renewal as we journey with Christ toward the Resurrection.

Our Lenten retreat invites you to pause and reflect on the final days and death of Jesus, preparing your heart to joyfully welcome the Risen Christ on Easter morning. The weekend will include reflective inputs, prayer, quiet time, and the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

For Information or Booking

Contact Rachel: +44 01270 568653 or email: rachel.challoner@oblateretreatcentre.org.uk
Oblate Retreat Centre, Wistaston Hall, 89 Broughton Lane, Crewe, CW2 8JS

Download a booking form or book online: www.orc-crewe.org

CELEBRATING 200 YEARS OF THE OBLATE CONSTITUTIONS AND RULES



Two hundred years ago, on February 17, 1826, the Church formally approved the Constitutions and Rules of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. While it may have seemed like a quiet moment in the life of the church, for our Congregation, it was a defining grace because it was when the Church fanned the flame already burning in the heart of Eugene de Mazenod. Today, as we mark this bicentenary, we are called to rediscover The Rule as a living gift that continues to define our identity, our fraternity, and our mission in a changing world.

A Rule Born from a Founder's Passion

For St. Eugene, The Rule was never a bureaucratic formality. It was a spiritual blueprint, designed to form missionaries whose very lives would “speak Christ” long before they uttered a word, a way of living the Gospel. Writing to Henri Tempier in 1822, Eugene expressed a conviction that still carries a prophetic weight today:

“I found it worthy... its ministry seemed awe-inspiring to me... I found in it a sure, even infallible, means of salvation.” (Cf. St. Eugene de Mazenod, Letter to Henri Tempier, 15 August 1822.)

This stands as perhaps the most audacious claim Eugene ever made regarding The Rule and the Congregation. For him, The Rule was not merely a text but a roadmap to lead his companions to sanctity. Eugene recognised that this rule would be the “connective tissue” of the Congregation. His simple affirmation “We form a family,” expresses the heart of the Constitutions and Rules.

The Rule provided the necessary structure to their fraternity, their shared rhythm of prayer, and their common passion for the mission. However, Eugene knew that The Rule had to remain open to the promptings of the Spirit. His conviction that “charity includes everything; with fresh needs it invents new means” reminds us that The Rule was never meant to be a cage. It was designed to guide a living body into the heart of the world rather than to imprison it.

A Living Interpretation of the Charism

Throughout the decades, the Superior Generals have served as stewards of this charism, ensuring that The Rule is rediscovered within the shifting contexts of the modern world. Fr. Marcello Zago, OMI, who served as Superior General from 1986 to 1998, often emphasised that The Rule is the Congregation’s living memory and the place where the charism is continually interpreted. In his conferences and circular letters, he insisted that the Constitutions and Rules are not simply historical documents but a spiritual compass for today’s missionaries.

Zago frequently reminded the Oblates that fidelity to The Rule was not a matter of legalism but of openness to the Spirit. He taught that The Rule helps the Congregation remain rooted in the Founder’s intuition while creatively responding to new missionary challenges. His writings consistently highlight CC&RR as a source of unity, identity, and missionary renewal.

Fr. Fernand Jetté, OMI, another influential Superior General, expressed the same truth in his own way. In *The Apostolic Man*, he reflects on The Rule as a persistent call to authenticity and conversion. He insists that The Rule is meant to be lived, not admired from a distance. Jetté’s reflections continue to guide Oblates seeking to integrate The Rule into their daily lives and ministry.

These voices remind us that The Rule is not something we keep on a shelf. It keeps us authentic, grounded, and open to the Spirit.

A Compass for Mission Today

The landscape of modern mission has shifted significantly since the Province of St. Eugene. Issues of migration, secularism, and ecological crisis present a complexity that the Founder could not have envisioned. However, The Rule remains an astonishingly effective blueprint. It does not provide a rigid set of solutions, nor ready-made answers. Instead it established a spiritual posture necessary for discerning God's call in a changing world. This structure anchors the missionary in the Gospel while propelling the entire Congregation out toward the poor.

A Shared Invitation to Read, Pray, and Live The Rule

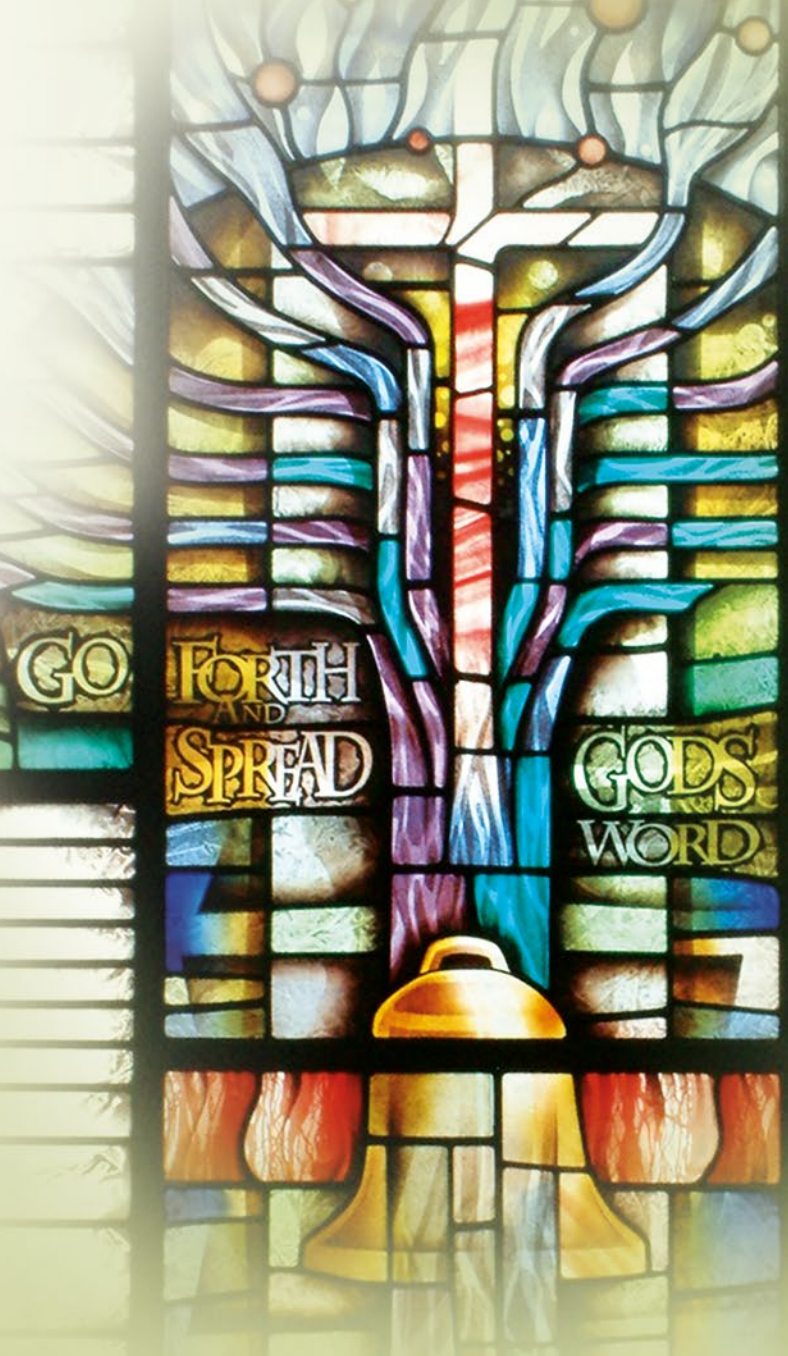
As this bicentenary of papal approbation draws near, the invitation to the Congregation is not merely to remember, but to encounter. The conviction St. Eugene shared with Henri Tempier regarding The Rule as a means of salvation finds a modern echo in the leadership of the current Superior General. In the animation materials formally endorsed by Fr. Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso, OMI, the Oblate family is called to a deeper relationship with the CC&RR: "Reading, praying, and providing animation on the Constitutions and Rules helps us to live out these texts and ensure that they inspire, encourage, and guide us as a united missionary body evangelising the poor and the most abandoned." (Cf. Pilgrims of Hope in Communion – Animation Material for the Constitutions and Rules, 2024.)

This shared invitation transcends mere historical remembrance. As the Superior General, Fr. Chicho, consistently emphasises, it is a call to return to the very essence of our vocation. Reading The Rule helps us reclaim our identity. Praying The Rule allows its spirit to shape our longings. Living The Rule opens our communities and our mission to the renewing work of the Spirit. In this jubilee moment, the entire Oblate family, vowed members, Associates, and partners in mission, is encouraged to rediscover The Rule as a living gift, one that sustains our missionary identity and unites us as pilgrims of hope in communion.

A Gift for the Whole Oblate Charismatic Family

Today, the spiritual richness of the CC&RR is shared not only by vowed Oblates but also by lay people, Associates, and partners in mission. The Rule expresses a spirituality of closeness, compassion, and missionary boldness that resonates far beyond the Congregation. It is a heritage that unites the wider Oblate family.

Two hundred years on, the call has not softened. We pause to give thanks for Eugene's vision, for the generations who lived The Rule with courage, and for the Spirit who has sustained this family. But this anniversary also asks for a response. To celebrate this jubilee is to say again, with Eugene, with those who came before



us, and with those who will come after us, "We want to be saints!" let the CC&RR keep shaping our hearts, our communities, and our mission. And it is to trust that the same Spirit who inspired the beginning continues to lead us forward.

- Fr Bonga Thami OMI, Communications Director of the Oblate General House

Thank You

To all who supported our MAMI December 17th draw. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Congratulations to our winners:

1st Prize: €400 – Fr. N. Barrett

2nd Prize: €200 – A. Begley

3rd Prize: €100 – L. Shanahan

GREENLAND

THE LORD'S

Greenland, which contains 12% of the world's total ice mass, is home to 42,000 people of Inuit origin called Greenlanders and 11,000 others, mostly Danes. The vast majority of the population are members of the Danish State-supported Evangelical Lutheran Church.



Fr. Paul Marx is a U.S.-born Oblate who served as a missionary in Greenland and the Faroe Islands and is now a member of the Anglo-Irish province of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Denmark. Ordained in 1965, he was sent to Denmark and Greenland, where he learned a difficult language, adapted to extreme conditions, and ministered to a small Catholic minority within a largely Lutheran society.

For nearly 24 years, Fr. Marx travelled Greenland's remote western coast serving scattered Catholic communities, often in dangerous conditions. As journalist Luke Larson recalls, one baptismal journey meant to last three weeks stretched into seven when shifting icebergs trapped his boat at sea. Fr. Paul recently marked his Diamond Jubilee, celebrating 60 years of priesthood and we thank him for sharing the following abridged article with Oblate Connections readers.

The story of the Oblate mission started in 1956. Copenhagen's bishop at the time, Teodor Suhr, OSB, needed priests. He wanted, particularly, American Oblate priests. And Greenland, was his trump card. He knew that the Oblates, who were ministering to the Inuit people in Arctic Canada, strongly desired to set up a mission in Greenland. With this knowledge, Bishop Suhr went to the Propagation of the Faith in Rome, to

ask the Cardinals to recommend to the Superior General of the Oblates to send missionaries to Greenland, knowing full well that in order to serve a mission there, the Oblates had to have a base in Denmark. Bishop Suhr got his wish.

The first Oblates arrived in Copenhagen in late summer of 1958, John Taylor, Urban Figge and Michael Wolfe. While John Taylor and Urban Figge established the Oblates in Denmark, Michael Wolfe went to Greenland in 1959. In 1960 he moved permanently to Nuuk and thus became the first resident Catholic priest in Greenland since the time of the Vikings.

It was a sensitive matter to live in Greenland as a Catholic priest. The Lutheran clergy were not happy. They feared that the monolithic Catholic Church would overrun the country with its highly educated clergy, backed up by lots of money, disturbing and confusing the Greenlanders in their simple Christian faith in an all out attempt to convert them to the Catholic Church. There was strong resistance from the Lutheran clergy who warned their congregations about the dangerous Catholic priests, who would come in long soutanes and broad-rimmed hats and go from door to door to entice the simple Greenlanders away from their Christian faith. Fr. Mike decided to keep a low profile. It would take some time for the people to get use to having a Catholic priest in their midst. While quietly going about contacting the few Catholics and forming them into a little parish, Fr. Mike established himself as an amateur archeologist. In 1961 Tom Killeen arrived. He immediately settled in a little village to learn Greenlandic and to fish and hunt with Greenlanders. Both Fr. Mike and Fr. Tom went about uncovering Norse ruins, catching cod dressed in overalls and thick woolen sweaters with dirt under their fingernails. No soutanes, no broad-rimmed hats and no going from door to door. These were ordinary men not afraid of work and the smell of dried fish.

"ICE" VINEYARD



Why were their clergy so afraid of them? wondered the ordinary Greenlanders. These Catholic priests believed in Jesus Christ and the salvation he had won for all peoples through His suffering, death and resurrection. The Greenlanders couldn't understand how their clergy could speak so unkindly about these fellow Christians. The ordinary people had no trouble accepting the Oblates. And when Fr. Alex Kons came in 1963 and began driving around Nuuk on a motorcycle with a sidecar, the Greenlanders were fully convinced that these priests were not "dangerous" at all, but exciting, and brought new life to the town. The priests were accepted and the Catholic Church sitting on top of Kutaa Hill became an integral part of the town.

Although the people had a positive attitude towards the priests, they didn't rush to become Catholic, because the Inuits are loyal to the Church of their baptism. In the nearly 40 years the Oblate mission has existed only a handful of Greenlanders have asked to be received into the Church.

Many Oblates have been involved in the mission during the years. They have tried many things to involve themselves in Greenlandic society. The many forms of involvement, from running a youth club in the parish hall, to opening the house to many socially disadvantaged young people, to being in charge of the city's

children's summer camps, to placing the house at the disposal of the Battered Women's Crisis Center as a hiding place, to translating and publishing good Catholic and other Christian books in Greenlandic, have been some of the ways they were the yeast in the dough of Greenlandic society.

During the first years there was a community of three Oblates. But by 1976 it was reduced to one, and has been a one Oblate mission since. This is not an ideal situation, but one of necessity. This being the case why keep the mission, especially when the number of Catholics is so few? There are two important reasons. The first is that it's important and necessary for the Church to be present in that part of the world. The second is the need of the Greenlandic people to become conscious of the universal Church.

The Little Sisters of Jesus have since the summer of 1980 been a very important element in establishing the Catholic Church in the consciousness of the people.

– Paul Marx, OMI

PS

This article was written in 1999. In January 2009 the last Oblate left the mission after turning it over to the Diocese. The Little Sisters of Jesus had to close their mission in Nuuk in April 2017.

Inner Peace as the Pathway to Peace and Justice

Mindfulness

Some individuals seem naturally inclined toward peace. They possess an inner sensitivity that draws them toward harmony, compassion, and fairness. However, the reality is that not everyone is born with these virtues fully developed. Factors such as birth circumstances, family background, social environment, political realities, parental formation, and personal experiences can leave many people untrained in living and working for peace and justice.

Such individuals, who form the majority, must first work on themselves—learning to become more fully human and more deeply rooted in the divine—before they can meaningfully contribute to building a just and peaceful world.

The Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) mission in the UK and Ireland is firmly rooted in this understanding. Its direction focuses on promoting peace, justice, and care for creation, with special attention to local and personal levels. JPIC initiatives encourage individuals to cultivate an inner environment of peace, which then naturally extends outward into families, communities, and society at large. People are invited not only to learn these values but also to live out what they learn in daily life.

As part of these efforts, the JPIC team organised a seminar on “Mindfulness” in Colwyn Bay, North Wales. This initiative was one of the practical steps taken to help participants nurture inner peace as a foundation for peace and justice in the wider world. The theme of the course was inspired by Scripture: “Be still and know that I am God.”

The programme brought together twenty-one participants and consisted of nine sessions, running from Tuesday 21st October to Tuesday 9th December. In total, 20.5 hours of sessions were delivered. The seminar was facilitated by Ms Liz Lord, a tutor from Oxford University, and Dr Steve Noone, a lecturer from Bangor University. Both facilitators brought deep knowledge, warmth, and approachability to the programme, creating a welcoming and enriching learning environment.



“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God” (Mt 5:9).

Mindfulness can be simply defined as paying full attention to the present moment, on purpose, and without judgment. In everyday terms, it means becoming aware of what we are doing, thinking, and feeling right now, instead of being trapped in regrets about the past or anxieties about the future.

It involves paying close attention to life as it unfolds in the present moment—our thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and the people and world around us—with friendliness and curiosity. Although this capacity is natural to all human beings, many of us move through life on “automatic pilot,” reacting to situations without awareness and allowing ourselves to be carried away by events without reflection.

Through mindfulness practice, we are gently brought back to our senses—quite literally. We learn to be fully present, to notice what is happening within and around us, and to respond more wisely rather than react impulsively.

The deliberate practice of mindfulness helps train the mind to pay attention without rushing into judgment. Over time, this clearer awareness enables us to see ourselves and the world more accurately and to act with greater wisdom and compassion.



Just as studying any subject leads to deeper understanding, mindfulness offers insight into who we are and how we live. Many people miss the small but meaningful moments of daily life. Mindfulness helps us “wake up” to our experiences, breaking destructive habits of thinking and behaviour. This transformation not only improves personal well-being but also positively affects relationships with others and our engagement with society.

Mindfulness also encourages an attitude of kindness toward oneself and others, coupled with non-judgmental awareness. This does not mean approving of everything we encounter, but rather having the courage to see reality as it truly is. Such honest awareness is the first step toward meaningful change—within ourselves, our communities, and the wider world.

The participants of the mindfulness seminar were deeply engaged throughout the programme. They supported one another, shared openly, and contributed to an atmosphere filled with positivity and mutual respect. United by a common purpose, they were willing to open themselves to personal growth and transformation.

Participants learned practical techniques for meditation and prayer. While many acknowledged their struggles in fully engaging with meditation, they remained patient and committed, understanding that mindfulness is a gradual process. They came to appreciate more deeply the truth that inner peace is the first step toward peace in the world.

“Inner peace is the first step toward peace in the world,” says His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The facilitators were highly appreciated for their clarity, warmth, and supportive approach. They expressed satisfaction in guiding the participants and witnessing their growth during the sessions.

As part of its ongoing initiatives, the JPIC team has already organised seminars on *Laudato Si’* across England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Building on this momentum, future seminars on mindfulness will be organised at local levels under the theme “Be still and know that I am God.” These initiatives aim to continue promoting peace and justice by nurturing inner transformation at the personal and community levels.

In a world marked by conflict, injustice, and unrest, the call to cultivate inner peace has never been more urgent. Mindfulness offers a practical and spiritual path toward that goal. By learning to be present, aware, and compassionate, individuals can become instruments of peace and justice in their families, communities, and the wider world. Let us strive to remember and live by this profound truth: Inner peace is the first step toward peace in the world.

– Fr Vimal Parunanthu, OMI



Diaconate Ordination of Br. Joakim Nguyen Thanh Duoc, OMI

The parish community of St Mary, Star of the Sea in Leith, Edinburgh, gathered on Saturday 6th December 2025, in a spirit of joy and gratitude to celebrate the Diaconate Ordination of Br. Joakim Nguyen Thanh Duoc OMI, marking a profound and grace-filled moment for the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the wider Church.

To mark this special occasion and accompany Br Joakim as he took his first step toward priesthood in his Diaconate Ordination, our Provincial, Fr Lorcán O'Reilly OMI, together with members of our wider Oblate family, gathered around the altar in joy to witness this beautiful milestone.

The ceremony was led by Most Reverend Bishop Eamonn Walsh, whose warm and reverent presence underscored the significance of the diaconate as a ministry of service, charity, and proclamation of the Gospel. His words encouraged Br. Joakim to live out his new role with humility and missionary zeal.

Although Br Joakim's family couldn't be there in person, he was deeply moved knowing they were joining the celebration from Vietnam through the parish livestream. Their presence—felt across the miles—brought great joy to the day and reminded us all of the beautiful, worldwide family that the Church truly is.

The parish of St Mary Star of the Sea played a central role in the celebration, offering heartfelt support, hospitality, and prayer. Parish Priest, Fr Ray Warren OMI expressed the community's affection and joy, saying: "Having Br Joachim with us here in St Mary's is a wonderful blessing and joy for the parish community. Folks know Joachim and he made a great effort to engage and welcome all who came. The ordination ceremony was, by the account of those who came and joined in the celebration, a beautiful and moving occasion which included a lovely meal afterwards.



Joachim was very emotional but thanks to the parish webcam, his family in Vietnam could participate. Ad multos annos, Joachim!"

The wider Oblate Province also felt renewed hope through this ordination. Fr Irvin Morastil OMI, Director of Vocations, reflected:

"It's been a long while since the Oblates had an Ordination within the Anglo-Irish Province. Joachim's diaconate ordination has not only brought so much joy but more importantly it has brought HOPE for great things to come and INSPIRATION that all things are possible with God."

During the celebration, Deacon Joakim offered heartfelt words of gratitude to those who have accompanied him on his journey:

"I extend a special word of thanks to the whole congregation present here today, including my Vietnamese brothers and sisters. Through them, I have come to recognise more clearly the meaning of the mission to which I have been sent. Indeed your love and welcome have been a source that nourishes and strengthens my vocation."



The celebration concluded with warm applause and heartfelt joy followed with a shared table and a beautiful cake provided by St Mary Star of the Sea Parish.

As Deacon Joakim steps into his ministry—serving at the altar, proclaiming the Gospel, and reaching out to those in need—he does so uplifted by the prayers, love, and support of his parish community, his Oblate brothers, and his family across the world.

May God abundantly bless Deacon Joakim as he continues his vocational journey of faithful service and mission.

If you are interested in joining the Oblates of Mary Immaculate or learning about vocations to the priesthood or Religious Life please contact our vocations director Fr Irvin Morastil OMI, via email vocations@oblates.co.uk or check out our website www.oblates.ie



– By Jenny Forti

A light of Hope at the Grotto

The 2026 Oblate
Lourdes Novena

Every year from the 2nd to 11th February, the grounds of the Oblate Church of Mary Immaculate in Inchicore and the Sacred Heart Church in Kilburn hold nine days of prayer, reflection, and peace leading up to the Feast Day of Our Lady of Lourdes.

We gather to honour Mary under her title of Our Lady of Lourdes, recalling her gentle yet powerful appearances to Saint Bernadette Soubirous in 1858. In those apparitions, Mary called the world to prayer, penance, and trust in God's healing mercy — a message that remains deeply relevant today.

Throughout the novena, we place our lives, families, and struggles before Our Lady. We pray in a special way for the sick, the lonely, and all those carrying invisible burdens. In a world that often feels fractured and weary, this time of prayer offers a sacred opportunity for hearts to be lifted and hope to be rekindled.

For generations, the Lourdes Novena in Inchicore has been one of the most cherished traditions of prayer and community in the faith life of Dublin City. The spiritual heart of the celebrations is the famous Lourdes Grotto at the Oblate Church of Mary Immaculate. Modelled after the original grotto in Lourdes, France, this beloved shrine has become a place of deep reverence and countless quiet miracles. Many have come here with heavy hearts and left with renewed faith, strengthened by Mary's maternal presence.

On the night of February 11th, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and the World Day of the Sick, we participate in the Torchlight Rosary Procession. The procession is a powerful symbol of Christian hope. Each candle represents a prayer - for healing, for peace, for loved ones, for the world. As the light moves through the darkness, it reminds us that Christ, the Light of the World, walks with us even in our deepest trials.



It is no coincidence that World Day of the Sick is also marked on the 11th of February. We pray in a special way for all who suffer from illness, disability, and old age, as well as for those who care for them. Established by St. John Paul II in 1992, the World Day of the Sick is a privileged moment of prayer, spiritual closeness, and reflection for the entire Church and for civil society. All are called to recognise the face of Christ in our sick and vulnerable brothers and sisters. At Lourdes, Mary revealed herself as a mother close to human suffering, and her compassion continues to be experienced by millions across the globe.

This year, Pope Leo has chosen the theme “The compassion of the Samaritan: loving by bearing another’s pain.” The theme focuses on the Gospel figure of the Good Samaritan, who shows love by caring for the suffering man who fell into the hands of thieves. It highlights that love of neighbour requires concrete gestures of closeness - entering into the suffering of others, especially those who also experience poverty, isolation and loneliness.

– Rebecca Roughneen

Log on for further information:
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BUILDING FAITH & FRIENDSHIPS



Across our parish communities in London Kilburn, Youth Clubs have taken shape since the summer holidays and are already becoming a source of connection, encouragement and growth for young people. Though still new, these regular gatherings offer far more than activities, creating welcoming spaces where faith is explored, friendships begin to grow, and young people feel valued and included.

At Sacred Heart Church, Quex Road, the Youth Club has quickly become a fortnightly highlight for many. Karis describes it as “a welcoming place where I feel included and valued,” and Grace joins her in describing it as “a safe space where I can be myself without being judged.”

Sessions are filled with fun and varied activities, from games and dancing to sharing meals together, all helping to lift spirits. Alongside the laughter, joint prayer plays an important role, strengthening bonds and building a strong sense of community.

A similar atmosphere is felt at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, where Jeremiah speaks warmly of the Youth Club’s welcoming and friendly environment. He values both the activities and the conversations about life, which he finds “productive and entertaining.”

The involvement of priests and dedicated volunteers has made a lasting impression on our young people. Their enthusiasm and commitment help create sessions that are both meaningful and enjoyable. Trips such as the visit to Winter Wonderland have already become cherished memories, along with simpler moments like sharing Domino’s pizza together.

Now we share members of our Youth Clubs reflections to show how our Youth Clubs are already playing a vital role in our Parish life, offering spaces of faith, friendship and joy where young people can truly belong.

Karis: Sacred Heart Church

“Being part of our youth group at Sacred heart Church, Quex Road, has been a positive experience for me. It is a welcoming place where I feel included and valued, and it gives me something to look forward to every other Wednesday.

The activities are fun and varied, and they always lift my mood. One of the most meaningful parts of the group is our time spent in joint prayer, which brings us together and strengthens our sense of community. Through the group, I have also made new friends, which has been nice. It is also great to have some of our priests take part and to be in touch with the young people, as well as helpful volunteers who lead the sessions and work hard to make it fun for us.

Some of my favourite memories with the group include trips such as our visit to Winter Wonderland, as well as sharing food together — especially Domino’s pizza. I also enjoy the games and dancing we do, which are always full of laughter and friendly competition. These moments make the youth group a fun, supportive, and memorable place to be.”

Grace: Sacred Heart Church

Youth club to me means a safe space where I can be myself without being judged. It has brought me closer to my church community and given me friends for life. It’s also strengthened my faith and helped me find my role within the youth church community.

Jeremiah: Immaculate Heart Church

I really appreciate being in the youth group. The members are friendly and welcoming. I like the activities that we do and the moments we talk about life in general, these moments are productive and entertaining. I’m grateful to the group and the guardians. A major highlight was our trip to Winter Wonderland, that was an amazing experience. Much appreciated and I’m happy every fortnight as we gather as a group.

– By Fr. Phillip Zimora OMI



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