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Oblate Connections

Oblate Connections – No.26, 17th February, 2015

Speaking before Christmas, Pope Francis said, “A heart filled with God is a happy heart that radiates an infectious joy: it is immediately evident! So let us not lose that joyful, humorous and even self-deprecating spirit that makes people amiable even in difficult situations. How beneficial is a good dose of humour! We would do well to recite often the prayer of St Thomas Moore, I say it every day!”

“Grant me, O Lord, good digestion and also something to digest. Grant me a healthy body and the necessary humour to maintain it. Grant me a simple soul that knows to treasure all that is good and doesn’t frighten easily at the sight of evil but finds the means to put things back in their place. Give me a soul that knows not boredom, grumbling, sighs and laments, not excess of stress, because of that obstructing thing called ‘I.’ Grant me, O Lord, a sense of good humour. Allow me the grace to be able to take a joke and to discover in life a bit of joy and to be able to share it others.”

Since reading the text above I find myself returning regularly to this prayer. I find myself being grounded in a new way as we look to the future with its challenges and hopes. The articles in this issue of Connections witness to the seeds of hope that are around us. The great gift of our faith is hope which makes us have confidence in God, in his ultimate triumph, and in his goodness and love, which nothing can shake. I would like to conclude by quoting from a recent letter from Fr. Ray Warren, our Provincial Leader, who, reflecting on the challenges facing us as we begin 2015, offers us the following invitation:

“I borrow from St. Eugene’s Preface to our Constitutions to say, let us walk courageously along the same path trodden by so many before us apostolic labourers for the Gospel. Let us renew ourselves in the spirit of our vocation as we work for the Mission which the main reason for our union.”

- Fr. Lorcán O'Reilly, OMI

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Praying in a Crisis

- Fr Ron Rolheiser, OMI

How do we lift our darkest, most depressed, most lonely moments up to God? How can we pray when we are most deeply alone, helpless, and our whole world seems to be collapsing?

We can learn from Jesus and how he prayed the night before his death in the Garden of Gethsemane, in his darkest hour: It was late at night; he had just had his last meal with his closest friends, and he had one hour to prepare to face his death. His humanity breaks through and Jesus finds himself prostrate on the ground, begging for escape. Here's how the Gospels describe it:

Jesus withdrew from his disciples, about a stone's throw away, and threw himself to the ground and prayed. "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine." And he came back and found his disciples sleeping. So he withdrew again and in anguish prayed even more earnestly, and his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood. When he rose from prayer he went to the disciples and found them sleeping for sheer grief. And he said to them, "Why are you asleep? Get up and pray not to be put to the test." And he prayed a third time, and an angel came and strengthened him, and he rose to face with strength what lay before him.

This prayer by Jesus in Gethsemane can serve as a model for how we can pray when we're in crisis. Looking at the prayer, we can highlight seven elements, each of which has something to teach us in terms of how to pray in our darkest times:

1. The prayer issues forth from his loneliness: The Gospels highlight this, both in terms of telling us that the prayer takes place in a garden (the archetypal place for love) and in that Jesus is "a stone's throw away" from his loved ones who cannot be present to what he is undergoing. In our deepest crises, we are always painfully alone, a stone's throw away from others. Deep prayer should issue from that place.

2. The prayer is one of great familiarity: He begins the prayer by calling his father "Abba", the most familiar term possible, the phrase that a young child would use sitting on his or her father's lap. In our darkest hours, we must be most familiar with God.

3. The prayer is one of complete honesty: Classically prayer is defined as "lifting mind and heart to God". Jesus does this here, radically, in searing honesty.

He asks God to take the suffering away, to give him escape. His humanity cringes before duty and he asks for escape. That's honest prayer, true prayer.

4. The prayer is one of utter helplessness: He falls to the ground, prostrate, with no illusions about his own strength. His prayer contains the petition that if God is to do this through him, God needs to provide the strength for it.

5. The prayer is one of openness, despite personal resistance: Even as he cringes before what he is being asked to undergo and asks for escape, he still gives God the radical permission to enter his freedom. His prayer opens him to God's will, if that is what's ultimately being asked of him.

6. The prayer is one of repetition: He repeats the prayer several times, each time more earnestly, sweating blood, not just once, but several times over.

7. The prayer is one of transformation: Eventually an angel (divine strength) comes and fortifies him and he gives himself over to what he is being asked to undergo on the basis of a new strength that comes from beyond him. But that strength can only flow into him after he has, through helplessness, let go of his own strength. It is only after the desert has done its work on us that we are open to let God's strength flow into us.

In his book, *Stride Towards Freedom*, Martin Luther King recounts how one night, after receiving a death threat, he panicked, gave into fear, and, not unlike Jesus in Gethsemane, literally collapsed to the floor in fear, loneliness, helplessness – and prayer. He confessed that his prayer that night was mostly a plea to God to let him find an honorable means of escape, but God asked something else of him. Here are his final words to God in that prayer:

"But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I've come to the point where I can't face it alone." Then he adds: "At that moment I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced Him before." An angel found him. When we pray honestly, whatever our pain, an angel of God will always find us.

Unearthing God's Treasure Within Us



For the fifth year in a row, I was privileged to spend time with the Members of the Oblate Family in Crewe and other places. Each year a symbol is presented as an aid to understanding and expressing the Advent journey. This year the invitation was to transform ourselves into clay containers...

The inspiration came from St Paul (2 Corinthians 4:7):

"But we have this treasure in clay vessels, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us"

As always, we began by looking at Saint Eugene in terms of the symbol. It was his vision and spirit that brought us together and kept inspiring us. The way in which he allowed his relationship with God to fill the vessel of his missionary life, would be our reference point for the weekend. Through moments of creative prayer, personal and group reflection, guided meditations, we were invited to see ourselves as clay vessels, open to receiving and to sharing the treasure of the presence of God in our lives.

Advent commemorates how the Word became flesh and took on our humanity, and so our first step was to reflect on the composition of our vessel of clay. What is my "vessel of clay" made of? and how was it made?" As we explored the important elements that moulded us - family, social background, place of birth, schooling, work, health, etc- we lived some intense moments, richly blessed with the grace of God. Our guiding vision was the first sermon given by St. Eugene to the poor and abandoned of Aix. In a powerful way he had invited them to reflect on how the world saw and judged them, and in an even more powerful way he gave them a new understanding of themselves: That is what the world thinks. That is what you are in its eyes! My brothers, dear brothers, respected brothers, listen to me. You are God's children, the brothers of Jesus Christ, heirs to his eternal kingdom, chosen portion of his inheritance; you are, in the words of St. Peter, a holy nation, you are kings, you are priests, you are in some way gods.

Let your eyes see for once beneath the rags that cover you, there is within you an immortal soul made in the image of God whom it is destined to possess one day, a soul ransomed at the price of the blood of



Jesus Christ, more precious in the eyes of God than all earth's riches.

With that life-changing view of our Christian dignity, we could explore the contents of the earthenware vessels of our lives: the treasure contained in each of us. Occasional glimpses into the mystery contained in us are not sufficient. The invitation of Advent is to deepen our awareness of the treasure and to be more receptive to it. Various means exist that can be used often: making time for regular prayer, praying with the Scriptures, going to the Eucharist, the rosary, examen of consciousness, and many other forms of prayer. The Christian earthenware vessel contains a treasure that is given to us to be shared. So, the concluding part of the retreat was on how we can become increasingly more closely united to God so as to be treasure-bearers to those most in need. Only once we are aware of our own dignity, despite our brokenness and failures, can God use us to make a difference in the lives of others.

Eugene made broken earthenware vessels aware of their dignity through his preaching, and spent the rest of his life putting it into practice – and impelling us to do the same. "But we have this treasure in clay vessels, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us"

- Fr. Frank Santucci, OMI



Oblate Pilgrimage with Pope Francis to Tacloban, Philippines

- January 17, 2015

“I’d like to tell you something close to my heart: when I saw from Rome that catastrophe, I felt that I had to be here! And on those very days, I decided to come here. I am here to be with you – a little bit late, I have to say, but I’m here” – Homily, Pope Francis, Tacloban, Leyte, Philippines

Indeed, no amount of words can ever describe the great consolation Pope Francis’ presence has brought to the tens of thousands who have lost their loved ones and properties in the Philippines. As the Pope spoke those words, tears swelled from their eyes especially to the many survivors including the many Clergy themselves. Tears partly hidden, thanks to the pouring rain!

It can be recalled, on November 2013, Super Typhoon Haiyan (locally named Yolanda) struck and devastated Tacloban, Leyte, Philippines and the neighboring islands. The airport, venue of the Papal Mass last January 17, 2015 was Ground Zero!

Due to financial and economic considerations, we always find it difficult, if not at all impossible, to send delegates for World Youth Days outside of the Philippines. Thus, when Pope Francis’ visit to the Philippines was confirmed, I made it a point that we would send our own delegates, especially our young people. We decided to travel to the venue in the Southern Philippines sharing the same reason that the Pope had for wanting to come here.

We were camped near the airport perimeters. Reminiscent of the Old Testament story, having no more rooms in the inn, we decided to pitch our tents (modern tents though!) in a nearby ‘resort’.

During the Pope’s scheduled visit to Tacloban, another Tropical Storm/ Typhoon Mekkhala (locally named Amang) was expected to make a landfall. In fact, during the Papal Mass, we had a storm alert level number 2 in operation! Ironically, or providentially, the storm allowed the Pope to personally see and experience a bit of the reality of life on this island.

Pope Francis, consistent and firm in his resolve and message of “Mercy and Compassion” really took a risk coming to Tacloban, Leyte in the midst of the storm, though his visit had to be cut short for safety reasons.

It was four o’clock in the morning of January 17, when we started to make our way towards the airport and it had already been raining non-stop all night. Many others had already stayed overnight at the airport.

All of us were given and advised to wear a plastic poncho/ raincoat but since it had been raining steadily, we could hardly avoid getting wet and as a result we were cold and shivering. But as soon as we saw the Papal plane approaching and descending and finally landing safely, we were all filled with great jubilation! As soon as we saw the Pope, all the inconvenience and difficulties we went through seemed to disappear in an instant.



Seeing the crowds donned in beautiful, colourful yellow raincoats, the Pope opted to say the Mass in an open field as arranged, amidst the gushing wind and pouring rain – and for the first time, the Pope presided at the Mass with his own raincoat on over his vestments. Not only did he smell like his sheep, he was dressed like them, making him look like them!

How important and significant was this visit of the Pope to us Filipinos, especially for the survivors?

Many Filipinos are poor but we are very rich in our faith! The Super Typhoon may have snatched away many significant people and things so dear to every survivor but it has never taken away their faith and the resolve to start life anew and move on no matter what it takes. They may have been shaken, broken or maybe at some point have doubted God for “letting them suffer that way.” But their faith remains the biggest factor in their survival. St. Paul in his 2nd Letter to the Corinthians Chapter 4: 7-9 has this to say: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”

When the many survivors saw and heard Pope Francis speaking words of consolation and comfort coming from his own heart, taking aside his prepared speech and homily, telling them and expressing to them the love of the Good Shepherd, many survivors saw, heard and felt the mercy and compassion of God.

All these I have personally witnessed in two instances.

First, was during the Papal Mass when the many survivors were constantly crying all throughout the Mass. The Holy Eucharist has always been a source of great consolation! To have the Holy Father presiding over it with his words full of compassion and assurance of the Mercy and Compassion of God, was more than enough source of joy and gratitude.

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Second, was when we Oblates celebrated the Eucharist at the nearby Chapel that had been completely devastated. Proof that even the saints and the holy ones suffered with them, they have kept and put together in a small altar statues of saints without limbs and arms and heads! It was the 1st time since the Super typhoon when they had the Eucharist celebrated in their place. I have observed how the survivors had valued the Mass so much. They cried through every hymn, in every invocation, more so during the Consecration! They were deeply grateful and moved and as one survivor said – “God has visited our place again!” Then I realized how at times we have taken for granted the celebration of the Holy Eucharist because of its easy accessibility to us. Their faith has been a source of hope and strength. The Holy Eucharist has given them nourishment. They have hungered for it in their quest towards re-building and healing.

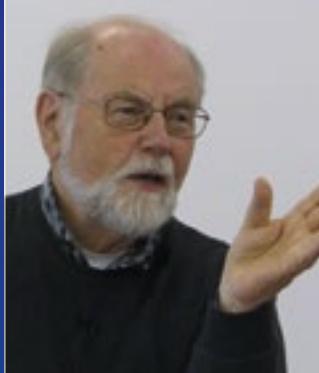
With Pope Francis in our midst, we have seen the Church gathered in mercy and compassion, becoming God’s mercy and compassion to those whose hearts were filled with grief and sorrow!

Let me take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude, on behalf of the many survivors, for all your prayers, kind thoughts and solidarity and for the many donations, big and small, you have shared and given to the Philippines during the height of the Super Typhoon Haiyan.

We have seen God descend from heaven, we have felt His Mercy and Compassion because, like Pope Francis, you have shown us and shared with us and enfleshed in concrete God’s Mercy and compassion.

May God bless you all and may He give you more – more than what you have shared, more than what you have given away!

- Fr. Irvin T. Morastil, OMI



A Change of Mind

- Fr. Eugene King, OMI

English-speaking people of my age, talking about Catholic experience was/is often a matter of apologetics or polemics. Over four centuries of talking since the Reformation, our words, ideas, convictions are often shaped, whether we are aware of it or not, to defend or explain Catholic faith to Protestants. But things are changing. At times I wake to the question: has everything changed, utterly changed? Well, there is change in the air, when listening and dialogue become the new tone in conversation about faith and religion.

When the conversation shifts from judging and correcting, a kind of revelation occurs - an awareness that the other party's experience complements our own with refreshing perspectives on elements of faith - God, Christ, Church, woman, man, work, world, sin, grace, and love. Change, however, is forever ironic; no sooner do we realize we are in a changed relationship with our Protestant neighbours, than we find around us new peoples bearing the traditions of Islam, Buddha, Hindu and other faiths. To complicate the mix, internal to Church life, the old Catholic solidarity is crumbling with disaffection from cherished ideas, familiar practices, convictions, and values. What was Yeats on to when he wrote: The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity!?

(The Second Coming)

I sense in this changing landscape a stirring of God's Spirit, and such stirring means change. A new dawn of grace is under way. A new era of questioning is upon us, as well as an era of doubts, of assurances, of certainty, of relishing old truths ... a rediscovery of what is wholesome and liberating in Catholic experience, an abandoning of what is dried up and dead. This dawn, this end to a winter season, this transformation gives hope now that I am old and grey! The Gospel hints that there is old and new in the stuff of the Kingdom of God. Change is often made wholesome when well examined, by well explored ideas. One such idea in recent conversation among Oblates is that of mission centres. It helps me in holding together what is old and new in Christian tradition. It helps me to deal with community change and at the same time promote wholesome change. Mission centres: what is hopeful in this idea?

First of all, what it is not. It is not a blue print to reorganize Oblate life and mission. Neither is it a rejection of the hard wrought fruits of previous generations of Christians and missionaries. It builds on their endeavours, recovering fruits of the Christian past, of Catholic ways of life that can only do good when tasted anew for what they are. This idea of mission centres is well established in the missionary reflection of Oblates in Canada and the United States, as well as in the Anglo-Irish Province. Let us name and savour some of what is old and new, that warrants a change of mind.

There are three dimensions of mission centres that I find refreshing: every Christian is gifted for service; Christian mission is carried out by community; every Christian is a missionary. All three dimensions are prominent in the thought of Saint Paul writing to the Corinthians, when the challenges of new beginnings were overwhelming the young community with enthusiasms born of the abundant gifts of the Spirit.

Every Christian is gifted for service. Saint Paul puts it this way: To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (I Cor 12:7) If we apply this insight to our own experience of Christian community - to family, parish, diocese, association, guild, school, hospital, sports organization - it changes our way of seeing things. In life, we often leave to others leadership and care for the common good. In the church, we have tended to see leadership and care for the common good as the business of priests and religious. And when they disappear, we are at a loss, we begin to question, a new awareness of forgotten treasure emerges - that everyone is gifted for the common good. Mission centres, a treasury of gifts, comes to the fore, not as a revolution against priest and religious or the past, but to multiple the number and quality of services which Christians have to offer to the world. You knew this already; now apply to your group. Gifts are complementary, giving of their best, when working in organic harmony.

Christian mission is best carried out in and by communities - in organic harmony. Saint Paul's idea is this. Imagine ourselves linked together as in an organic body - the human body. Read the whole

chapter of I Cor 12. I quote one verse: Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. (v.14). The good is best achieved when it is fostered by the many. The same insight about the role of the many is found in an African proverb: it takes a village to raise a child. Mission centres tap this old and new insight by weaving together new relationships among Christians, and Christian groups, creating structures that enable, that raise, that foster growth rather than paralysis. Everyone has a right to the joy of partnership.

We become our best selves in the service of others. We know the greatest joy in giving, or in what Saint Paul calls love - what he speaks of in I Cor 13 - a reading so often chosen for weddings. Gifts are not

for hoarding, but for giving away. The dynamic of life is to share and give away. In that way we are fruitful, we multiply, and enrich the earth - to echo the story of Genesis 1. All Christians are missionaries; the idea allows everyone to realize that they are sent, that they are bearers of gifts; a great disservice occurs when we restrict the word missionary to a minority.

Yes, it is true: The Times They Are a-Changin (Dylan); yes, we live in very dangerous times; yes, the world is faced with overwhelming problems; but yes, we face the future with immense hope, born of a treasury of Christian experience - of an abundance of gifts, of new power in community, and of being sent by the One who is almighty. Hope changes my mind.

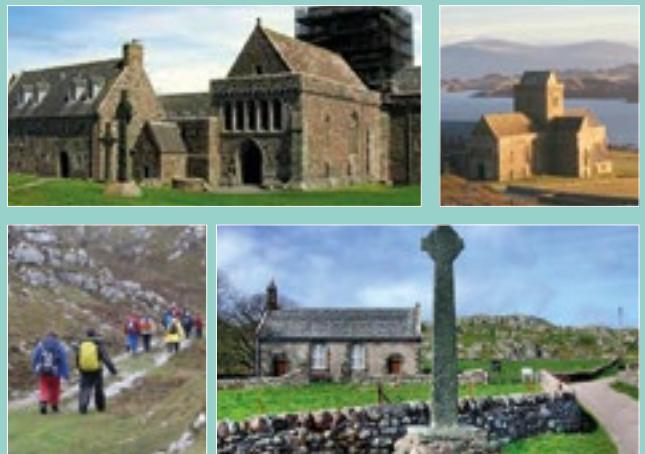
Upcoming Events

Iona Pilgrimage

20th – 24th April

A short experience of Celtic Spirituality. Spend 4 nights on the remote island of Iona, rediscovering the ancient Celtic forms of prayer. This is sure to be an incredibly rewarding pilgrim experience.
(Age: 17-30)

For more information contact: Andrew Cassidy,
Star of the Sea Parish, 106 Constitution St,
Edinburgh, EH6 4AW. Tel: 0131 5542482
Email: andrew.oblade.partners@gmail.com



**Is God calling you to be an...
Oblate?**

“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

Fr. John Mc Fadden, OMI, St Mary Star of the Sea, 106 Constitution Street, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6AW.

E-mail: j.mcfadden@oblates.co.uk www.oblatevocations.com



The Inchicore Lourdes Grotto

Father William Ring was probably the first Irish Oblate to visit Lourdes. He went there on a private pilgrimage in 1879. In subsequent years he took pilgrims there and came to deeply appreciate the spirit of prayer and devotion that he experienced these visits.

Lourdes is a small town in the south of France, nestling at the foot of the Pyrenees. It was on the outskirts of this town, at the Rock of Massabielle, that Our Lady appeared seventeen times in 1858, from February 2nd to March 25th to a little peasant girl named Bernadette Soubirous.

Our Lady asked Bernadette to petition the local priest to have a chapel built on the spot and have people come in procession. Since that time millions of people from all over the world have come in pilgrimage to Lourdes, bringing their sick, worshipping Christ and praying to Our Blessed Lady.

When Fr. Ring returned from one of these pilgrimages, he invited Oblate Brother Patrick Malone to erect a small grotto in honour of these events at Lourdes in the grounds of the Oblate Church at Inchicore, Dublin. From that time on people came to this little grotto in increasing numbers to pray and meditate.

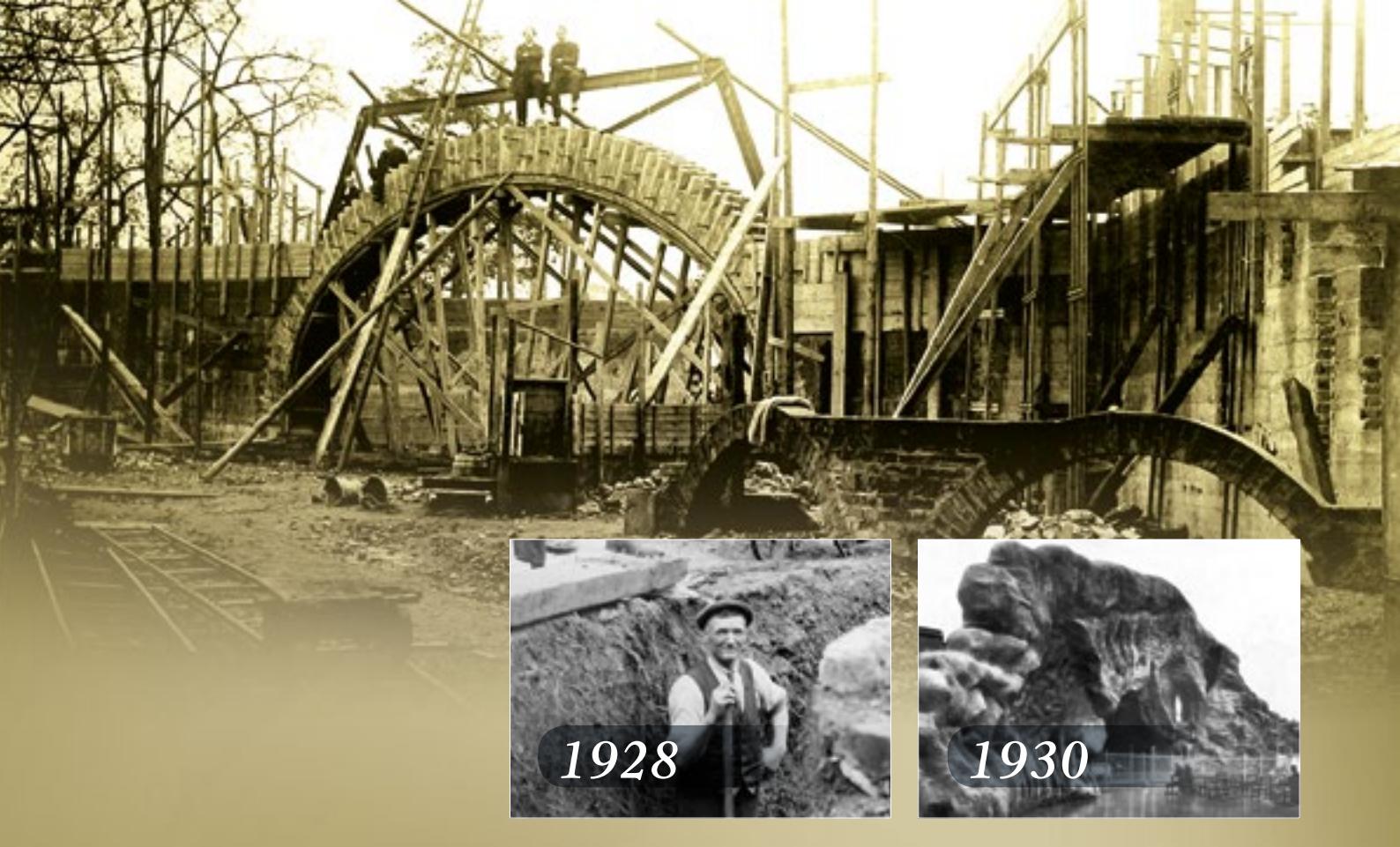
In 1927 the Oblates of Mary Immaculate at Inchicore organised their first pilgrimage to Lourdes. Fr. William Sweeney, then superior of the Oblate community there, went on that pilgrimage with several hundred people. On his return he was inspired to erect a much larger Lourdes Grotto and engaged Oblate Brother Patrick McIntyre, who was quite a genius at building, to implement this project. Brother McIntyre went to Lourdes, and measured in detail the contours of the grotto there with its cave and niches.

The foundations of this new grotto at Inchicore was blessed by Fr. Joseph Scannell, Oblate provincial superior, in August 1928. From that time on more than forty men worked, most on a voluntary basis, in the building of the grotto. Sadly, Brother McIntyre left no plans, but the construction is unique, built with reinforced concrete, and mesh wire. It has a remarkable resemblance to the original grotto at Lourdes. The grotto or cave, the niches and the contours are accurate replicas of the original rock at Massabielle.

The total cost of this grotto was £6,000, a considerable sum in 1930. Over 2000 people subscribed to the project and a scroll with their names was placed in a special recess at the feet of the statue of Our Lady, which was made from white Carrara marble.

This Inchicore Lourdes Grotto was blessed by the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Edward Byrne, on May 11th 1930, and the preacher for the occasion was Dr. William McNeely, Bishop of Raphoe. Crowds packed the grounds and surrounding streets for the occasion.

Beginning in 1941 and through to 1942 Brother McIntyre raised and resurfaced the floor of the Grotto and completed the arch of the Crowned Virgin at the entrance to what has become known as Grotto Square. In 1943 he also built the beautiful balustrade that bounds the west side of the square.



Rededication of the Grotto in 2012

In 2012 a massive refurbishment of the grotto was undertaken because of leaks that were causing rusting to the steel structural frame. It was cleaned by a specialist power-hosing company; the cracks were filled with cement and the whole grotto sprayed with a mixture of sand, lime and cement to ensure the same colour texture as the original. The area in front of the grotto was resurfaced. The total cost of this refurbishment was €66,000.

Every day people come to pray at the grotto to Our Blessed Lady. Also each year there is a Novena to Our Lady of Lourdes from February 2nd to February 11th, and people come from all over Dublin to take part in this and in the torchlight procession on the night it closes.

The appearances of Our Lady to Bernadette at Lourdes were not meant primarily to encourage devotion to her but to encourage renewal of devotion to her Son Jesus, the Word of God incarnate, Our Saviour and Mediator. This is evident at Lourdes where emphasis at the devotions is on the Christ in the Eucharist, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and in the blessing of the sick.

The ‘Constitution on the Church’ of the Second Vatican Council says that ‘by her maternal charity Mary cares for the brethren of her Son, who still wander through this world in the midst of dangers and difficulties until they are led to the happiness of their eternal home.’
– Fr Richard Haslam, OMI

Lourdes

- The Role of the Day Pilgrim Service

For many years now Br. Paddy Flanagan OMI has been part of the Day Pilgrim Service in Lourdes. Each Summer he helps people from all parts of the world to discover the gift that is Lourdes and in the process reminds them of the love of the Lord. Here he shares with us how the Day Pilgrim Service carries out their mission.

Every day hundreds of Pilgrims descend on Lourdes from all parts of the world. They come in large organised groups or in small groups. Many others arrive on their own or with family or friends. Often people stop in Lourdes on their way to other countries and stay for one or two days. These people are known as Day Pilgrims.

A lot of people coming to Lourdes have no prepared programme and often have no real knowledge about Lourdes other than it is a place of pilgrimage. The Day Pilgrim Service is there to welcome these Pilgrims and help them in any way they can. There are Day Pilgrim Service teams to cover all the main languages. They are directed by their specific language co-ordinator.

The English Speaking Day Pilgrim Service team consists of volunteers who come to Lourdes to work for varying lengths of time, some for two weeks others for four weeks or longer. Some are Seminarians, others are



experienced people who have worked in Lourdes for many years and have extensive knowledge about its history and religious significance.

The first port of call for Pilgrims wishing to get more information about the Sanctuaries is the Information Bureau. The Bureau usually directs the Pilgrims to the appropriate Day Pilgrim Service language team. The main aim of the team is to provide all the necessary information and assistance to make their stay in Lourdes both a spiritual and enjoyable experience. The Day Pilgrimage Service team usually consists of 2 or 3 people who greet the Pilgrims and provide them with a programme for the day. The Programme consists of Mass, Stations of the Cross, visit to the places of interest associated with Bernadette and a tour of the Sanctuaries. At least one member of the Day Pilgrim team will be at the meeting point to accompany the Pilgrims to the various venues and assist and participate with them in the particular ceremony. On the various tours they impart to the Pilgrims the relevant information about Lourdes and the story of the apparitions and answer any questions that are asked. The team also organise and coordinate the English speaking parts of the Eucharistic Procession and the Torchlight Procession.

- Br Paddy Flanagan OMI

Upcoming Events

Lourdes Pilgrimage

17th – 22nd September

Since their first pilgrimage in 1883 the Oblates have been answering the call of Our Lady to come in procession. Today we have groups that depart from Dublin, London, Manchester and Jersey and we bring over 100 assisted pilgrims who require a special level of care and medical support. We invite you to join us as a pilgrim or helper and share in a journey of faith together. For more information please contact:

Ireland

Fr. Vincent Mulligan OMI, Mission Office, House of Retreat, Tyrconnell Road, Inchicore, Dublin 8.
Tel: 01-4542888 Email: mamioblite@eircom.net

Britain

Overland Trip: Fr. Paschal Dillon OMI,
237 Goldhurst Terrace, London, NW6 3EP
Tel: 020 7328 8610



London Departure: Noreen Keenan, Sacred Heart Church, New Priory, Quex Road, London, NW6 4PL Tel: 020 7624 1701 Email: noreen@omiquex.org.uk

Oblate Youth Service Pilgrimage:

If you are aged 18 – 26 and would like to volunteer on the pilgrimage please contact:

Padraig Corcoran, OYS, St Michaels Parish,
52 Bulfin Road, Inchicore, Dublin 8 or email
padraig.oblate.partners@gmail.com

Please, bring all, ribbons with you...
With love, from the
Missionaries of St Eugene

The Friends of St Eugene

- Ffrindiau Sant Eugene

Prayer-Friendship-Support-Service to the Community

"A lot of Christians have it in them to do all kinds of good works that they will never perhaps carry out unless...someone...invites them to get to work..." - Eugene de Mazenod

Table-Fellowship-Sunday Roast

On Sunday December 7th 2014, under the watchful eye of Diana the chef for the day, the members of Friends of St Eugene in Holyhead cooked and hosted a meal for twenty-five in St Mary's Parish Hall. The group had recognized that many parishioners live alone and every Sunday throughout the year they return home from Sunday Mass to an empty house and eat their Sunday dinner alone. So as part of 'Action for Advent' invitations were sent out for a 3-course Sunday dinner and preparations began. Meetings were held, lists were written, the shopping was done, the desserts were made – fruit crumbles and trifles. On Saturday December 6th the Parish Hall was prepared.

After 11 am Mass on Sunday 7th the guests arrived, those who needed transport were brought to the hall and over a 'cuppa' caught up on 'the hanes' (chat). Dinner was served at 1 pm; each table was hosted by

a member of the Friends and a good time was had by all. We sang 'Happy Birthday' to Gwynn and applauded Eric on his presentation of a medal from the Russian Government for his service on the Russian convoys in the Second World War. There were smiles all round when the winners of the secret raffle were announced.

In expressing their thanks the guests appreciated: 'the fellowship'; 'the chance to meet up with friends for a chat'; 'thank-you for a super-Sunday lunch'; 'we were wined and dined in style'; 'a lovely friendly atmosphere'.

This event will be the first of many when the Friends of St Eugene in the Anglesey Centre of Mission offer prayer, friendship, support and service to the community.

- Veronica Conlan





What is a Triennium?

Over the next two years this poster will become very familiar to those of you in Oblate Centres of Mission, as it will be displayed in every Oblate parish and Mission to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Congregation.

What is a Triennium?

It is a Latin word which indicates a specified period of three years. The present Superior General, Fr. Louis Lougen, OMI, called for the beginning of this Triennium on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 2013, "To fan the flame of Oblate life and mission in anticipation of the 36th General Chapter and the 200th Anniversary of the Congregation". The hope is that at the close of the Triennium on January 25, 2017, each of us (Oblates and laity) will be renewed in the charism and the mission of St Eugene.

It was on 25 January 1816 that Eugene de Mazenod met with some companions to initiate the small religious society that would become the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. As we approach this significant anniversary it seems right to celebrate and thank God for the gift we have all received in Eugene, whose holiness the Church recognized almost twenty years ago. Fr Paolo Archiati OMI, Vicar General, wrote that the general administration would like to live the Triennium as a true renewal of our lives and in thanksgiving for our vocation. It is meant to rekindle in the heart of every Oblate the fire of life and mission. Certainly, it is primarily a time for all professed Oblates to thank God for the gift of their Oblate vocation and to renew the Spirit's call to on-going conversion both as individuals and communities. But, it is also a time for people who recognize themselves as Friends of St Eugene or as members of the Oblate family to thank God for the inspiration that St Eugene has been to them in their lives and missionary activity.

The hope is that together we will acknowledge the 200 years of dedication, work, joys and failures of so many that have gone before us and to honestly discern where God calls us into the future.

We are now into the second year of the Triennium preparations (8 December 2014 – 7 December 2015) and it is dedicated to the theme of formation.

The third year will go from the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 2015 until 25 January 2017. It will be a time of celebration, with the theme of the mission. Here in the Anglo-Irish province the local professed Oblates are meeting regularly to discuss the themes of the preparations. These faith-sharing encounters can be downloaded and read on <http://omiworld.org>.

What can we do in our Oblate parishes or with other Oblate associates to share in this preparation for 2016?

The Triennium preparation has two main features, which can help us all to respond to the Spirit's call to conversion. The first aspect is sharing our faith in our community. This is not a discussion or debate about ideas, but an invitation to hold conversations on the level of faith. To find opportunities to enrich each other by witnessing to our experience of God; by faith-story telling to deepen our communion with one another and making time for occasions to talk about what really matters.

The second facet of the Oblate Triennium preparation is to seek conversion through concrete gestures, as individuals, as parishioners or as members of the Oblate family. These practical actions may be small or large but they will be definite signs of conversion: recycling refuse; praying together; finding ministries that are closer to the poor; simplifying our lifestyles etc. In last month's edition of Connections, you might have read the summary of Fr. Chicho's input to the Congress about putting the poor at the centre of all we do. And, many of you will be involved in the implementation of the pledges made by the delegates at the recent Congress 'Living Mission Together'.

Many of these pledges were concerned with discerning opportunities for significant concrete actions towards ministering to the poor in our areas. It seems to me that the Triennium suggestions are already being put into action in many Oblate parishes and groups in the Anglo Irish province but we can always do more.

It would be a real successful preparation if at the close of the Triennium on January 25 2017, each of us (Oblates and laity) can say we have been renewed in the charism and the mission of St Eugene.

- Mary Tyrrell

Hurley Statue Blessed



The statue of Archbishop Denis Hurley, OMI sculpted in 2009 by the late Reg Stroh of Winterton, KwaZulu-Natal, has been in storage in the Cathedral tower in Durban waiting to take up a suitable place in the new Denis Hurley Centre.

On 11 December 2014, it was unveiled by Reg Stroh's widow, Gill, together with Mikaela York, niece of Archbishop Hurley and Cecilia Mkhize former President of the Sacred Heart Sodality which raised most of the funds for the statue. It was then blessed by Cardinal Napier in its prominent position on the ground floor of the new Centre, visible from the other three floors through the atrium ensuring that the Archbishop will be very much at the centre of things, in this brand new venue named in his honour.

Share in a Missionary Visit

To The Oblate Mission, Zimbabwe

10th June - 10th July

Participants in this experience will have the opportunity to spend a month working with some of the most marginalised people in our world today. They will spend time with the children of the Sandra Jones Centre, many of who have been orphaned by AIDS and have experienced suffering and rejection in their young lives. The presence of the volunteer team makes a huge contribution to the quality of these children's lives.

Participants will also spend time witnessing to the incredible work being done in St Luke's Mission Hospital, and the Oblate outreach ministry to the villages and outstations in the Zimbabwean bush. Our experience finishes with a couple of days holiday in Victoria Falls, one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

To request an application form, or for more information about the trip, please contact:

Ronan Lavery, Oblate Partners in Mission Office,
Denis Hurley House, 14 Quex Road, London, NW6 4PL.
Phone: +44 (0) 20 76247296
E-Mail: lavery.ronan@googlemail.com

Please note all applicants must be at least 18 years old.



ONLY 2
Places Remaining

Youth News from Dublin

Oblate Youth Club

Just before Christmas the club organised a class reunion for those students who had graduated from Scoil Gan Smal the previous summer. The students were invited back to meet with one another and spend a few hours together. We started off the day with a workshop on how the change was going for them after moving from primary to secondary school. We also shared the story of the Good Samaritan, which got a great discussion going. The group also watched a video on the dangers of living your life online via mobile phones and computers as opposed to living their lives in the real world with their family and friends. We concluded with a prayer. The day went so well that it is intended that we repeat this for the other primary schools in the pastoral area. Thanks to the OYS members that came on the day to make it so memorable for the kids.

Faith Friends

This is a programme which has been up and running in Bluebell and Mary Immaculate but has not taken place in St. Michael's in many years, but with the help of the OYS it is in place for 2015.

'As Faith Friends Leaders, we meet the sixth class students in an informal and fun environment in the weeks leading up to Confirmation. Each night we have a different topic to discuss such as "Belonging", "Believing", "Christianity" and how these are important in being a member of the Catholic Church. We were able to answer their questions about the Holy Spirit and what the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit mean. A huge part of the programme for us is to let them learn and listen to each other's opinions on what they think Confirmation is. It is a great way to for the students to ask any questions that they have about Confirmation and having a bit of fun while doing so.'

– Amy Kiernan, Oblate Youth Service

November We Remember

The parish of St. Michaels was delighted to have had every student from Goldenbridge Secondary School attend daily Mass in the parish at different times during the month of November. They not only attended but also participated in many different ways including the prayers of the faithful and the gifts. They also were invited to write down the name of their loved ones who have passed away and place the names up on tree that was left in the sanctuary for the month of November.



Flame 2015

Flame II is the largest National Catholic Youth event of 2015, taking place in the Wembley Arena on Saturday 7th March 2015. 10,000 young people will gather for a day of input from inspirational speakers, and world-class music and drama. Spend the weekend in London with young people from Oblate parishes throughout Britain and Ireland. (Age:15-21)

It was put to the students in the Mercy Secondary School if they would be interested in going. There was a huge response to it. So much so it was decided that each student that wanted to go would have to write a letter of application giving the reasons why they should be chosen. The letters flew in and the teachers involved had to pull the students names out of a hat in order to decide who could come. Eleven students in all are coming on the trip including the R.E. team from the school. Four of the students are from Bluebell, six are from St. Michael's and one from Assumption Ballyfermot.

'It is an honour to be chosen to attend Flame 2015. We are all very excited to experience what this trip will teach us about our faith. Personally, I am really excited at the thought of spending my first time in London with some of my closest friends and some wonderful teachers. It's bound to be an eye-opening experience for all involved. Honestly, I just can't wait!' – Kathryn Tolster, Bluebell Parish, 6th Year Student.



Some of the students and teachers who are going to Flame.

If you want to get involved in the youth ministry in the Dublin area get in touch:

Padraig Corcoran, St Michaels Parish, Inchicore
email: padraig.oblate.partners@gmail.com



One Big Adventure Of One Little Girl

When I graduated from an University in the Czech Republic I decided to go into the Oblate world to gain experience. I was adopted with immense confidence and kindness in parish of the Sacred Heart in Kilburn where I was welcomed by the local Oblates and the people from Partners in Mission.

Ever since the first day in London I received an incredible acceptance, feeling of security and protection. Every day was different, a new challenge was always waiting for me. I had for example the opportunity to meet a several groups of the Friends of St. Eugene and participated in the retreat program for children in an elementary school. I regularly attended the drop-in centre in Kings Cross dedicated to supporting women with the problems relating to street based prostitution and Ashford Place which deals with helping the

homeless. In addition to British culture I had a chance to soak up very intensively the spirituality of the Oblates through the time spent with a kindly Oblate community.

Despite of all difficulties in the new environment and especially with my bad English, I never felt alone and lost. I am inexpressibly grateful for all the people that I met, for all who cared for me, for all their attention and thoughtfulness, for their dedication and endless patience.

I have tasted how the Sacred Heart parish is beautiful, especially the people in it. I thank God for you every day. I really miss you. The Czech Republic is in return waiting for you! The Lord bless you all!

- Zuzana Laskova

Wistaston Hall Events

Lent Weekend Retreat

27 -29th March 2015

In a quiet environment, these days we are invited to discover and deepen our relationship with Jesus. The retreat will include the celebration of the Eucharist, the opportunity for the sacrament of Reconciliation, input and time for individual reflection.



Lenten Day Retreats

Tuesday 3rd March, Wednesday 18th March, Thursday 19th March 2015

These days are suitable for parish groups, prayer groups and individuals who are looking for a quiet and reflective day within the Holy Season. The programme will include the celebration of the Eucharist, the opportunity for the sacrament of Reconciliation, a talk and quiet time. Each day begins with Registration and Coffee at 10.00am and finishes at 4.00pm.

Easter Triduum

1- 5th April 2015

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

Individually Guided Retreats

An individually guided retreat takes place in silence. Each day will include a meeting with one's director, guided prayer based on the scriptures and the celebration of Eucharist.

Dates:

29th June – 3rd July 2015
13-20th July 2015
22- 29th August 2015

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
Ph. 01270 568 653
or director@oblateretreatcentre.org.uk
www.orc-crewe.org



Canon Law Workshop

with Fr. Frank Morrisey OMI,

14th – 15th May, Wistaston Hall, Crewe

Fr. Frank is an Ottawa-based Oblate, a professor and former Dean of Canon Law at the Oblate run University of St. Paul. A gifted speaker and he is an author of over 300 articles. He has recently been appointed by Pope Francis to the Special Commission for the Study of the Reform of the Matrimonial Processes in Canon Law.

This year's workshop will focus on the working paper for the upcoming Synod on the Family that will take

place in Rome in October. The document is partly a summary of the last Synod in October 2014 and partly a series of questions meant to help prepare for the next synod. One of the questions in the working paper takes the theme of mercy head-on, asking: "How can people be helped to understand that no one is beyond the mercy of God and how can this truth be expressed in the Church's pastoral activity towards families, especially those which are wounded and fragile?"

Oblate Summer School 2015



Three Events with Edwina Gateley

Edwina's life has been described by Publisher's Weekly as "fascinating – an exceptional blend of contemplation and action". Her journey has led her to teaching in Africa, founding Volunteer Missionary Movement, sojourning in the Sahara Desert, spending nine months of prayer in a trailer in the woods, befriending and ministering to street people and women in prostitution – "God's little ones," and preaching the Good News: God Is With Us.

Edwina is a poet, theologian, artist and writer. Numerous groups and individuals, including the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, and Bill Clinton, former President of the United States, have publicly commended Edwina's work and ministry. Edwina has also been featured on CBS's "60 Minutes" and "48 Hours."

1) Walk the Talk, July 18th, Dublin

In the morning Edwina will share her own journey to faith from Africa to the bars and brothels of the inner city. The second part of our day we will explore our call to a renewed and dynamic spirituality inspiring us to believe in our own potential to bring about new life in our broken world.

Tickets available from local parishes or can be booked online at <https://oblate-summer-school.eventbrite.ie>

2) Call to Personal & Global Transformation, July 20th – 23rd Wistaston Hall, Crewe

In the midst of our violent and hurting world we will explore how God as lover and healer ever invites us to new possibilities and to believe in our potential to

make a difference. Through scripture and contemporary stories we will be stretched and challenged to believe in our call to become mystics, saints and prophets. We will laugh, cry and celebrate as recognise more deeply in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

3) Standing on their Shoulders

July 24th – 26th, Wistaston Hall, Crewe

We will look at some contemporary prophets, mystics and rebels for justice. We will be inspired and affirmed as we listen to stories and poetic readings of the lives of these extraordinary people who have made a difference in our world. Their struggles and passion will inspire and encourage on our own journeys of faith.

For further information or to book a place for any of the above events please contact:
Mr. Kirk Jacob, Oblate Partners in Mission Office, Denis Hurley House, 14, Quex Road,
London NW6 4PL, UK. Tel: 020 7624 7296 email: kirk.oblite.partners@gmail.com

If you would like to share your thoughts or ideas with us please contact: Fr. Lorcán O'Reilly OMI, Partners in Mission Office, Denis Hurley House, 14 Quex Road, London NW6 4PL or email oblite_partners@btinternet.com

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