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Oblate Connections

Oblate Connections – No.30, 17th February, 2016

On January 25th this year we celebrated the two hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Oblates. Fr. Louis Lougen, the successor to St. Eugene recalls, while “The beginning was small, tenuous and fragile... Oblate hearts are stirred whenever we recall how the community began on this date in 1816 in makeshift quarters and with a certain poverty that did not discourage these first missionaries, but even evoked good humor and happiness... Along with these tenuous beginnings we also identify the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit in the audacious vision and courage, which so strongly impelled these priests to come together... Although he witnessed an enormous expansion of this little society before he died, he could never have imagined the thousands and thousands of men who would become members, the vastness of our mission and the outstanding work we have accomplished in the Church”

In this issue of Connections we have shared stories from all around the Oblate World on how this mission is being lived today. It is clear that the Oblate Mission is alive and well in so many places both near and far. As members of the Oblate family “we aren’t here simply to admire and celebrate the beginnings of our charism; we are responsible for living it with faithfulness and vitality today.”

As we enter into the season of Lent this year may we be inspired and encouraged by the example of St. Eugene. At the heart of his life was his experience of Christ as his Saviour and the mystery of cross was central to his mission. May these days of Lent be an opportunity for each one of us to encounter in a new way the deep love God has for us.

- Fr. Lorcán O’Reilly OMI

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Entering Lent

- Fr Ron Rolheiser, OMI

Sometimes the etymology of a word can be helpful. Linguistically, Lent is derived from an old English word meaning springtime. In Latin, lente means slowly. Etymologically, then, Lent points to the coming of spring and it invites us to slow down our lives so as to be able to take stock of ourselves.

That does capture some of the traditional meaning, though the popular mindset understands Lent mostly as a season within which we are asked to fast from certain normal, healthy pleasures so as to better ready ourselves for the feast of Easter.

One of the images for this is the biblical idea of the Desert. Jesus, we are told, in order to prepare for his public ministry, went into the desert for forty days and forty nights during which time he fasted and, as the Gospel of Mark tells us, was put to the test by Satan, was with the wild animals, and was looked after by the angels.

Lent has always been understood as a time for us to imitate this, to metaphorically spend forty days in the desert like Jesus, unprotected by normal nourishment so as to have to face “Satan” and the “wild animals”, and see whether the “angels” will indeed come and look after us when we reach that point where we can no longer look after ourselves.

For us, “Satan” and “wild animals” refer particularly to the chaos inside of us that normally we either deny or simply refuse to face – our paranoia, our anger, our jealousies, our distance from others, our fantasies, our grandiosity, our addictions, our unresolved hurts, our sexual complexity, our incapacity to really pray, our faith doubts, and our moral secrets. The normal food that we eat, distracted ordinary life, works to shield us from the deeper chaos that lurks beneath the surface of our lives.

Lent invites us to stop eating whatever protects us from having to face the desert that is inside of us. It invites us to feel our smallness, to feel our vulnerability, to feel our fears, and to open ourselves up to the chaos of the desert so that we can finally give the angels a chance to feed us. That’s the Christian ideal of Lent, to face one’s chaos.

To supplement this, I would like to offer three rich mythical images, each of which helps explain one aspect of Lent and fasting:

In every culture, there are ancient stories, myths, which teach that all of us, at times, have to sit in the ashes. We all know, for example, the story of Cinderella.

The name itself literally means, the little girl (puella) who sits in the ashes (cinders). The moral of the story is clear: Before you get to be beautiful, before you get to marry the prince or princess, before you get to go to the great feast, you must first spend some lonely time in the ashes, humbled, smudged, tending to duty and the unglamorous, waiting. Lent is that season, a time to sit in the ashes. It is not incidental that we begin Lent by marking our foreheads with ashes.

The second mythical image is that of sitting under Saturn, of being a child of Saturn. The ancients believed that Saturn was the star of sadness, of heaviness, of melancholy. Accordingly they weren’t always taken aback when someone fell under its spell, namely, when someone felt sad or depressed. Indeed they believed that everyone had to spend certain seasons of his or her life being a child of Saturn, that is, sitting in heaviness, sitting in sadness, waiting patiently while some important inner thing worked itself out inside the soul. Sometimes elders or saints would put themselves voluntarily under Saturn, namely, like Jesus going into the desert, they would sit in a self-induced heaviness, in the hope that this melancholy would be means to reach some new depth of soul. That too is the function of Lent.

Finally there is the rich image, found in some ancient mythologies, of letting our tears reconnect us with the flow of the water of life, of letting our tears reconnect us to the origins of life. Tears, as we know, are salt-water. That is not without deep significance. The oceans too are salt water and, as we know too, all life takes its origins there. Hence, we get the mystic and poetic idea that tears reconnect us to the origins of life, that tears regenerate us, that tears cleanse us in a life-giving way, and that tears deepen the soul by letting it literally taste the origins of life. Given the truth of that, and we have all experienced its truth, tears too are a desert to be entered into as a Lenten practice, a vehicle to reach new depths of soul.

The need for Lent is experienced everywhere: Without sublimation we can never attain what is sublime. To truly enter a feast there must first be a fast. To come properly to Easter there must first be a time of desert, ashes, heaviness, and tears.



Friends of St. Eugene

Journey through the “Streets of London” to feed the homeless

On a cold Sunday evening in January, I joined Julie, Nick, Michael & Naz from the Peckham Friends of St. Eugene at London’s Charing Cross station. Upon arrival, a London black cab driver pulled up beside us and asked if we were the volunteers who were helping the homeless.

The cabbie helped us take 5 large suitcases out of his cab which contained virtually new gloves, hats, coats, sleeping bags and most importantly socks. There were also lovely, colourful individual little kitbags which contained a flask, socks, body-spray and gloves in each of them. I was amazed at the generosity of so many good hearted people! We were soon joined by the 2 founders of the project, Jessica and Jules, along with a group of 10 other volunteers who mostly came from various AA groups, along with the cabbie who brought the suitcases. They turned up with big flasks of hot water for tea, coffee, soup and sandwiches plus containers of hot home-made shepherd’s pies & delicious looking banana cake with custard!

We went along the Strand meeting several homeless people huddled relatively close to each other although occasionally, there was the odd one on their own trying to keep warm. Our volunteers shook the homeless person’s hand and asked for their name as they gave their own, making contact both physically & emotionally.

We handed out food, drink & clothing to all who needed it, however, one person who had a coat tried to get a second one from Naz, who had no qualms in saying ‘No’ since there were others who had more need of it! St. Eugene’s words were ringing loudly in my ear: “Leave nothing undared for the Gospel”!

At another point, we came to know Alex’s story. He was in his 50’s and looked quite well dressed, but he was very confused and kept saying he had plenty of money. One of our ‘Friends’, Michael, encouraged Alex to go to A&E since he recognised signs of medical amnesia. By the time we had finished, the group nick-named Michael a ‘saint’ since his befriending skills shone for all to see. I was very struck by the amount of mental health issues affecting so many adults on our streets.

By the end of the evening, it was very apparent that the distinction between the homeless and us was getting blurred as stories were shared and we all felt closer to each other within the larger Oblate family. I was in awe of the tremendous work being done by our Friends of St. Eugene as they endeavoured to live the Oblate motto: “He sent me to bring the Good News to the Poor” in their own context.

– Kirk Jacob



What We Are Celebrating

– 200 Years



Just over two hundred years ago St Eugene de Mazenod was – you might say – ‘in a tizzy’. He saw that there was a work to be done – but something held him back. The work was to heal the Church that had been devastated by the French Revolution and Napoleon.

His passion for Christ urged him to get on with it. But at the same time he was daunted by the difficulties. He even felt at times a longing to get away from it all and to go off to a monastery!

Then something began to happen. The Holy Spirit - which blows where it wills - blew on him. St Eugene recalls...

“...All of a sudden I find myself setting wheels in motion, renouncing my comfort and risking my fortune by launching an enterprise whose value I know but at the same time feeling an attraction in the absolutely opposite direction!”

As I said, he was ‘in a tizzy’! He goes on to speak of: “...a strong impulse from without. When I reflect on it, I am convinced that it so pleases God to put an end to my irresolution. And in such a way that I am engaged to the hilt. I assure you that here and now I am another man!”

That was his experience: an upheaval. He felt like a new man! He overcame the resistance he felt inside himself – he would form a group of missionaries in the diocese of Aix and preach missions to the people in their own dialect. He realized that it was the Spirit that was steering him firmly in a definite direction. This was how God wanted him to make a real difference in the recovery of his beloved Church. Not by working alone. Not by going off to a monastery. That way was for others to take.

It all came together on 25 January 1816. St Eugene described what took place in a letter 16 years later: *“Tomorrow I celebrate the anniversary of the day, sixteen years ago, I left my mother’s house to go and set up house at the Mission.”*

The ‘Mission’ is the former Carmelite convent that St Eugene bought and that is still our house in Aix, the cradle of the congregation.

‘I left my mother’s house and set up house at the Mission’.

Not just by himself but with a tiny group of like-minded priests whom he gathered together.

So it was on this day that the work the Spirit wanted first took shape.

We are witnessing God giving his Church through St Eugene a new charism –the ‘Oblate charism’: to work with others to evangelize the poor as the Saviour’s co-workers, co-redeemers, to follow in the footsteps of the apostles - these are all words Eugene used - for the building up of the Church of Christ.

We are also witnessing ‘oblation’. Oblation is saying ‘yes’ to the gift of the Oblate charism. This too is the Spirit’s work, a grace.

Eugene also described how the little group embraced a life of gospel poverty. This is very significant. Jesus promised Peter that whoever has left houses and family for the sake of his name ‘Will receive a hundred times as much - houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land – and persecution too – now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life’.



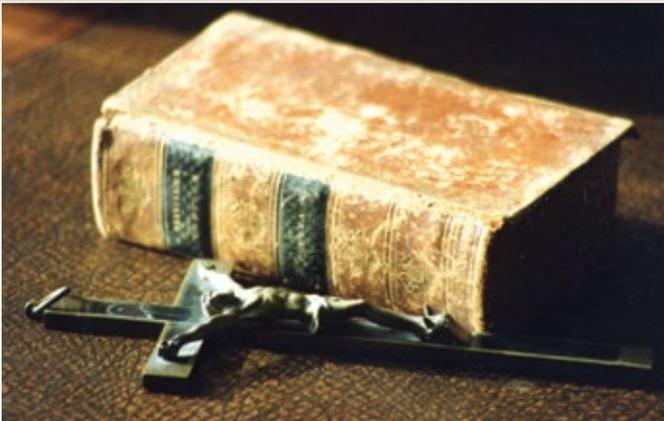
And so it was!

Very soon there would be Oblate Brothers as well as priests. And they would not be only Frenchmen any longer - they would be Italians and Englishmen and Irishmen and Scotsmen and Welshmen... And there would be not just one house but many! A long time later there would be Sisters who would accept the charism of St. Eugene. There would also be many laity, from all walks of life, accepting the charism: MAMI, associates, Friends of St Eugene. This is the phenomenon of our time!

What unites us all – what brings us into communion with one another - priests, brothers and laity - is our acceptance of the same missionary charism from one and the same Spirit. Yet the Spirit does not cast us all in the same mould and so there are different forms of oblation - vows and promises of various kinds.

What we celebrate today is the humble first appearance of a work of the Spirit in the giving and receiving of a charism. It would later be given the distinctive name of Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and be placed under Mary's patronage. It is the day St Eugene and his companions left their mother's house and set up house at the Mission.

– Michael Hughes OMI



Oblate Website

We are delighted to announce the launch of the updated Oblate website. On the new site you will be able to:

- Submit a prayer request
- Find the scripture readings of the day
- There will be a weekly reflection on the scriptures for the upcoming Sunday
- Learn about our upcoming events and make a booking online
- Keep up to date with news from around the Oblate world
- Discover the story of St. Eugene
- Find out how to become a member of the Oblate Congregation
- Get the latest article from Fr. Ron Rolheiser OMI
- Donate to support the work of the Oblate Mission and take out a subscription to the Oblate pools

The new site will enable members of the Oblate family to join with us and share in the mission of the Oblates so please visit us at:

www.oblates.co.uk | www.oblates.ie

Giving a Home to Refugees

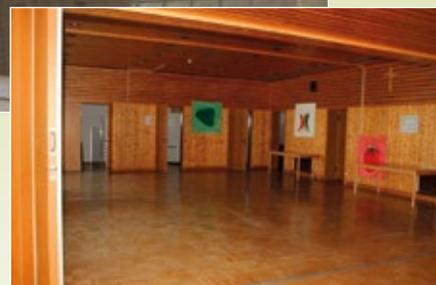
As of January 2016, about a hundred refugees from different countries, men, women, children and families, will be living at the house of the Oggelsbeuren Foundation. Fr. Alfred Tönnis OMI, is part of the Foundation's Board of Trustees and here he shares the story of this new mission.

Beginning on January 1, 2016, two Oblates, Frs. Heinrich Mayer and Alfred Tönnis will live in the main house. A private chapel and various apartments make up the community space and are available for those who would like to visit and temporarily share their life.

This project was preceded by a two-year process, developing its own concept in the sense of "giving a home" to refugees. A steering group was formed and there were visits to refugee camps in Malta, Greece and Lebanon. The people and leaders of the small village of Oggelsbeuren (450 people) were part of the process. The media were encouraging.

The idea of fleeing is a very current issue, not only in terms of the many refugees who are on the road. In our society, we are living various kinds of escape: escape into alcohol, drugs, sex. Escape into the "reality" of the Internet (there one can custom build embellished or even invented profiles -- then live with them for quite some time). There is the escape of the body (plastic surgery, excessive sports, mental disorders as a result of no longer being able to tolerate one's own body). There is the escape into relationships; escape to the monastery; escape into religious fanaticism; escape into violence. There is also "tax evasion", another form of escape. Escape from responsibility. Escaping, fleeing: it is the issue of our time.

Also very current is the theme of the home, of being at home. Where am I at home? What do I mean by "home?" Is it about persons? Is it about buildings and places? Is it about ways of thinking or philosophical structures? Is it religion? Is it a culture? Is it a relationship with God? The lack of a home is also a theme for our time.



The ideas of escape/flight and feeling at home are also great biblical themes. There is the escape of persons from God's command (Jonas); the flight of the Holy Family; the escape of entire peoples. We also encounter "economic refugees" and "refugees" in terms of violence and natural disasters.

The Oblate provincial and his council have accompanied the development of the project. Fr. Stefan Oberfell, the provincial and his council decided, that Fr. Alfred Tönnis and Heinrich Mayer should live and work in the Foundation.

We want these fleeing people to feel a bit at home, through our work, through prayer, worship and inter-religious celebrations, through our witness of the Christian Good News and of our Rule and of the spirit of our religious community. Two pre-novices of our Central European province have already lived with us for a while and have learned of our work.

There are Oblates who work with refugees in various countries: one could surely mention Italy and Spain. They have supported and even developed projects of their own. In many places, this work with people in flight is increasing. For me, it would be important to work in a network. We could cooperate better on the international level. Perhaps it would be good not only to develop the “work with refugees in the whole Oblate world” with conferences and presentation of projects, with tools and its own website, but also, through our very work and a process to develop new missionary energies. Here, we have experienced that with this work, we also reach people who have been distanced from the Church or people who are religiously neutral. Here too a missionary field is opening up. We are experiencing that something new is emerging and a very good interreligious dialogue is beginning.



For me, the refugees are messengers of God. They pull us out of the fences around us, out of our structures, our oasis of well-being and our borders. They broaden our view. They transcend borders and challenge us. They oblige us not to define the works of mercy and a revitalization of our missionary spirit, but to live it.

Especially in view of our 200th Anniversary Year, we could deal with this challenge of God more intensely in our work, in the spiritual and family life of a religious family found in the whole world.

– Fr. Alfred Tönnis, OMI

Lourdes Pilgrimage

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.

ASSISTED PILGRIMS

We offer pilgrims who need assistance a special service to travel to Lourdes from Dublin and London. This includes full-time nursing care in the Accueil Notre Dame while taking part in the pilgrimage.

We invite you to join us as a pilgrim or helper and share in a journey of faith together. For more information please contact:

BRITAIN

London 17th-22nd September

Pilgrims £545 | *Assisted Pilgrims £465

Contact: Noreen Keenan, Sacred Heart Church, New Priory, Quex Road, London, NW6 4PL

Tel: 020 7624 1701 **Email:** noreen@omiquex.org.uk

Manchester 16th-23rd September. £685

Contact: Kirk Jacob, 14 Quex Road, London.

Tel: 020 7624 7296

Email: kirk.oblate.partners@googlemail.com

Overland Trip Departing from London

Visiting Nevers, Paris, and joining the rest of the Oblate pilgrimage in Lourdes on the 17th September.

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

IRELAND

Dublin 17th-22nd September

Pilgrims from €635 | *Assisted Pilgrims €580

Contact: Fr. Vincent Mulligan OMI or Barbara Hogan, Mission Office, House of Retreat, Tyrconnell Road, Inchicore, Dublin 8.

Tel: 01-4542888 **Email:** mamioblate@eircom.net

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

Email: padraig.oblate.partners@gmail.com



For more information about the pilgrimage visit www.OblateLourdesPilgrimage.com



Restoring Lost Limbs – and Lost Hope – in Sri Lanka

An estimated 30,000 people lost limbs during a civil war in Sri Lanka that lasted from 1983 - 2009. Many of the victims were women and children who stepped on buried land mines. Today nearly 2,000 of these victims have received artificial limbs, thanks to the Missionary Oblates and a network of partners.

The Oblates are responsible for the logistics and day-to-day operations of the Lebara Wellness Centre for Amputees located in Mankulam. On average, 30 people each month receive new artificial limbs at the centre.

Father Jeevendra Paul, O.M.I. a native of Sri Lanka, said the Lebara Centre is an excellent example of how the Oblates in Sri Lanka have transitioned their ministries to better serve the needs of the people. “In former times most of the Oblates were parish priests,” said Fr. Paul. “Today we are assisting the displaced, the refugees, orphans, widows and poor children.”

Overseeing the centre’s medical operations is Dr. Bandara Panagamuwa. He was born in Sri Lanka but raised and educated in the United Kingdom. Doctor Panagamuwa was a surgeon in Birmingham, England specializing in artificial limbs and prosthetics when the war in Sri Lanka ended in 2009. He decided to go back to his native country to work in a hospital. He discovered that many war victims were missing limbs, so he teamed with the Oblates to begin a program to provide them with artificial limbs.



In the U.K. artificial limbs cannot be recycled. Even brand new, expensive limbs that don’t fit a patient have to be discarded before ever being used. “I thought that was silly, so I collected them, kept them in a garage and had them shipped to Sri Lanka,” said Dr. Pamagamuwa in a recent interview with Radio Netherlands Worldwide.

As word spread in the U.K. about the amputee program in Sri Lanka, hospitals and physicians began collecting artificial limbs and shipping them to the Lebara Wellness Centre. The staff of the centre want to expand its range of services. The Oblates have plans for a store where handicraft created by local amputees and food items will be sold.

There are also plans for a vocational training centre that will provide job skills to the amputees. “These are the new poor of today’s Church in Sri Lanka,” said Fr. Paul. “We are joined with hundreds of Oblate collaborators and donors from all over the world who generously contribute financially to make the Oblate presence effective in these times of great need.”

God's Mercy

- Fr. Des O'Donnell OMI

In his letter, 'The Face of Mercy' Pope Francis launched what he calls the Year of Mercy. He writes that 'both believers and those far away' need to be reminded or told for the first time about 'the tenderness of God' (5).

God's mercy is not news in the Church. Because of this, it is reasonable to ask why Francis gives us 'The Face of Mercy' at this time. He must have some good reason for recalling to us a truth that every Catholic knows, namely that God is merciful.

Perhaps he thinks that it is necessary to remind the modern world that the Church is a messenger of God's mercy because many people, even Catholics do not experience the Church as merciful? In the past, people could easily have seen Church leadership as seeking power, control, status, privilege, possessions and money. Popes, bishops and priests wrote and spoke severely about people's obligations and their failures. Many Church leaders lived luxuriously and dressed distinctively, expecting a certain status to be recognised. Their houses and their cars were often bigger than the majority of their parishioners.

Mercy and compassion describe a willingness to feel and to share the weakness and struggles of the other person, and some priests did just that, but in the past the many did not. Francis puts it this way, 'It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters. (10) and 'Perhaps we have long since forgotten how to show and to live the way of mercy' Is that why he thinks it necessary to emphasise the deeper meaning of mercy once again?... He tells us that 'the very credibility of the Church' is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love'

Beyond the importance of acknowledging our need for God's mercy (1 Jn. 1.9) Francis does not mention any chaplets or novenas attached to receiving it. Nor does seem to think that some are more in need of God's mercy than others. For him, divine mercy is not a devotion depending on any prayer-formulas or conditions; we do not have to go anywhere to meet it. It is 'the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us'

The pope reminds us that 'the person of Jesus is nothing but love, and that everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion' (8) He devotes sections 8 & 9 to examples of Jesus' merciful words and actions.

As he is driven around in his Fiat car or as he washed the feet of Catholic and Muslim men and women who are poor, sick or in prison or as he kissed disfigured faces and as he bowed to cushion his face in the shoulder of an Eastern Patriarch, Pope Francis showed by example that mercy means to be as close to people as we can. He writes, 'Nothing in the Church's preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy' (10) In his efforts to reveal a merciful Church he is being quietly opposed even by a few bishops and by a Cardinal who wears a long silken red train once worn by royalty.

The Holy Father points to so much pain and misery in the world today, and to the 'wounds of our brothers and sisters', calling us to practise the spiritual and corporal works of mercy (15) He reminds us how St. John Paul II said that 'the present day mentality tends to remove from life and from the human heart the very idea of mercy' (11).

Francis reminds us that mercy received from God must lead to mercy shown to our neighbour by never judging or condemning and always forgiving one another. (14)

It is clear from the Holy Father's exhortation, that mercy is not just an action. It is a permanent attitude as it is with 'God whose mercy endures forever' (7) He assures us that 'if God limited himself to justice only, he would cease to be God' (21) If we believers limit ourselves to justice only, in dealing with one another, we cease to be believers.

He also asks us to have mercy towards the earth rather than dominate it in 'a one-sided and superficial way' (11)

In summary, Pope Francis writes, 'the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as that of a father or a mother moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It is hardly an exaggeration to call it visceral love. It gushes forth from the depth naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy' (6)

We can say that his letter is a commentary on the words of Jesus, 'Be merciful just as your heavenly Father is merciful' Lk. 6.36



Outreach to the Homeless Shelter

Following on from the example of Pope Francis who constantly encourages followers of Jesus to look for ways to reach out to those on the margins of Church and society, the parish community in Quex Road, Kilburn, London, have taken upon themselves the task of helping at a homeless shelter in the next parish up in Cricklewood.

We began by providing food one night a week, but this soon spread through an appeal in the Quex Bulletin. The generosity of people in Kilburn is outstanding. Now, we as a parish, support Ashford Place, three nights a week, each night having their own team. There is a great atmosphere in the kitchen and in the dining room as we work together in cleaning plates, chopping veg, slicing chickens, frying sausages or hamburgers as we try to make a meal for the group of anything between 17-27 men and women.

Every Sunday evening the young people from Quex Youth Club and the Confirmation Group join in and help to prepare the food. It is fabulous to see the young people making such a fantastic contribution to the project. Some nights after the meal has finished and we have cleaned up with the residents we have arts and craft classes, play bingo, take part in guitar classes or just sit around and have a sing song. Some of the nights the young people prepare some home-made cakes to share at the end of the meal.

With the support of the staff at Ashford Place the residents are helped to find rented accommodation and, if possible, employment as soon as possible. This means that there is a high turnover of residents at the Centre. It is great to see former residents coming back to join us for a meal.

The residents come from many countries and therefore speak many languages. At times the group is predominately Muslim and this means that the majority of the food has to be Halal respecting their rituals and customs. What is really striking each evening is how grateful the men and women are to the volunteers who come along. They really appreciate that people they don't know would go out of their way to feed them and befriend them.



The parishioners at Church donate the money each week to cover the costs of buying the food. There is a real sense of the faith community in Quex Road supporting this venture.

This is a practical way of us reaching out to those on the margins of our community whilst making a difference in this Year of Mercy and helping to keep the flame of faith alive.

– Terry Murray, OMI

Subscribe to the Oblate Pools and Support the Oblate Missions

Weekly prizes of €300 and €150

The cost of an annual is €30/£25 and each subscription purchases a weekly entry into the Pools. To purchase an annual subscription please email Barbara Hogan at: mamioblate@eircom.net or write to The Mission Office, House of Retreat, Tyrconnell Road, Inchicore, Dublin 8, Ireland.

You can also subscribe online: www.oblates.ie

All proceeds from the Oblate Pools is used to support the work of the Oblate Mission throughout the world.



“Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy”(Mt 5:7)

The Oblate Youth Service
Invite you to

World Youth Day 2016

20th of July - 3rd of August



If you are 16 - 26 and interested in attending the World Youth Day Celebrations in Krakow and Wroclaw please contact:

Britain

Ronan Lavery
wyd@oblateyouthservice.com
Telephone: +44(0)20 76247296

Ireland

Padraig Corcoran
wyd@oblateyouthservice.com
Telephone: 01 4531660
087 7723 255

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The 150th Anniversary of the founding of Sacred Heart Parish,

Quex Road, London

Our Mass in November 2015 was the culmination of a year's celebration of the founding of Quex Road parish in 1865 by Robert Cooke OMI. The celebrations began with an inaugural Mass celebrated by Fr Louis Lougen, the Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, in February and continued throughout the year, with something happening every month – a Mass organised by the Friends of St Eugene in May, St Eugene's feast day, summer fun days and finally a Mass in November concelebrated by Cardinal Vincent Nichols.

All the dignitaries from around the borough were invited, the Lord Mayor of Camden, various councillors and Oblates who used to serve in the parish over the years. The church was standing room only, reminding some of years gone by when parishioners had to be early to get seats for Sunday Mass. Cardinal Nichols' homily reminded us of our roots, when the house in Tower Hill came to rest and recover from the hardships of the East End. Now Quex Road is a bustling parish community with parishioners from nearly 70 different countries worshipping together along with Oblates from Sri Lanka and DR Congo, England and Ireland living and ministering in community.



After the Mass, Cardinal Nichols spent time outside the church talking and having many hundreds of photos taken for posterity before moving into the community centre next door to have a cup of tea with the parishioners. The hall was packed, with volunteers helping to serve refreshments and the vast quantities of food that had been prepared. Once again, Cardinal Nichols happily posed for photos until he had to leave for another engagement.

– Dawn Benbow



Denis Hurley Centre Blessing

Pope Francis has given thanks for the life of Archbishop Denis Hurley OMI and has given his apostolic blessing to the Denis Hurley Centre in Durban, which was formally opened and blessed on November 9th, the 100th anniversary of the late archbishop's birth. The pope addressed his message to Cardinal Napier who succeeded Denis Hurley as Archbishop of Durban.

"I extend prayerful best wishes to you and to Bishop Barry Wood, the clergy, consecrated men and women, and lay faithful of the Archdiocese of Durban as you celebrate the centenary of the birth of the late Archbishop Denis Eugene Hurley OMI."

I join you in giving thanks to Almighty God for the many blessings which God bestowed upon the Archdiocese and all of South Africa through Archbishop Hurley's years of episcopal ministry,

in particular through his efforts to combat discrimination and to defend human dignity.

As you mark this centenary, it is fitting that you dedicate a new centre in Archbishop Hurley's name for the good, not only of the Catholic community, but broader society as well. I was pleased to learn that the Denis Hurley Centre will offer educational, healthcare and social outreach opportunities, especially to the poor and homeless. By serving those most in need, the Centre will honour the legacy of the late Archbishop and his devoted service in the name of the Gospel.

I offer the assurance of my prayers for all those involved in the work of the Centre and for all who will benefit from its outreach, and willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of peace and strength in the Lord Jesus.

Pilgrimage to Rome

Celebrating 200 years of the Missionary Oblates

29 November to 04 December 2016

Departures available from Dublin, Edinburgh, London and Manchester

The cost is £849/€979 and is inclusive of:

- Flight to Rome return (including one piece of hold baggage)
- Airport transfers in Italy
- 5 nights accommodation at the Hotel Lancelot
- Rome City Tax (currently €4 pppn)
- Continental buffet breakfast
- 2 lunches & 4 dinners
- Wine and water with main meals
- Programme of excursions and visits including St. Peters and other major basilicas, Catacombs of San Callixtus and the Oblate General House.

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For more information and a booking form please contact:

Britain: Kirk Jacob, Denis Hurley House, 14 Quex Road, London, NW6 4PL.

Email: kirk.oblate.partners@googlemail.com

Ireland: Barbara Hogan, Oblate Mission Office, House of Retreat, Tyrconnell Road, Dublin.

Email: mamioblate@eircom.net

Oblates Reintroducing the Faith in Cuba



Pope Francis visited Cuba in September, just two months after the announcement of restored diplomatic relations between that country and the United States. The Vatican played a role in fostering the agreement, with the support and encouragement of the Missionary Oblates.

The Oblates have been a presence of hope for the Cuban people for almost 20 years. In 1997 they were among the first Catholic missionaries allowed back into the country in almost 40 years. Since then much of their ministry has involved restoring parishes in rural parts of the country.

Today there are six Oblates in Cuba. They serve in parishes in and around the towns of Catalina de Guines and Los Palacios. The government restricts the Oblates from performing social ministry, so they focus on reintroducing the faith to the Cuban people.

Father Roger Hallee, O.M.I. joined the team of missionaries in August. He was pleasantly surprised to see the level of enthusiasm for the Catholic faith in the Oblate parishes. “For example, in Madruga there is a youth choir and a youth group,” said Fr. Hallee. “There are 20 catechists working with over 180 children in the program.”

Father Andrew Small, O.M.I. from St. Theresa’s, a former Oblate parish in Liverpool, now directs the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States, which raises funds for the Catholic Church in Cuba. Previously he worked in Washington, D.C. to advocate for policies supported by the Catholic Church, including improving U.S. relations with Cuba. During the early 2000s he made frequent visits to Cuba as secretary of the U.S. Bishops’ office for Latin America.

“The Church has been a key partner in Cuba’s becoming more open,” said Fr. Andrew in a recent interview with Vatican Radio. “We are seeing a spectacular turnaround in U.S.–Cuba relations.”

The Oblates, in partnership with other religious and humanitarian organizations, have helped to foster that turnaround. They have supported the establishment of a U.S. embassy in Cuba and urged Congress to end the Cuban embargo.

“We pray for full normalization (of U.S.–Cuba relations), which promises to benefit U.S. citizens and our Cuban brothers and sisters,” according to a statement signed by Fr. Bill Antone, O.M.I. U.S. Provincial, in April. “We support full diplomatic relations, greater opportunities for religious and cultural travel, loosened restrictions on remittance and commodities, Cuba’s removal from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, more trade and new opportunities to support Cuba’s private sector.”

Father Andrew noted that there are new opportunities for an improved Catholic presence in Cuba because Pope Francis understands the political context of the region and knows many of the players personally. While there have been improvements in recent months, Fr. Andrew said there is still a long way to go to make things better for the most abandoned and marginalized in Cuba.

– Originally published in *Oblate World*

Wistaston Hall Events

Seasonal Retreats

For these seasonal retreats we have a theme, this year our theme is "Why am I so favoured?" We also invite you to spend Holy week with us to experience the Easter Triduum, in a prayerful setting.

23rd February Lenten Day Retreat
3rd March Lenten Day Retreat
18th – 20th March Lenten Retreat
19th – 27th March "Living Holy Week in Community"
13th – 19th August 6 Day Preached Retreat

Individually Guided Retreats

An individually guided retreat gives you the time and opportunity to spend some time alone and with God. This is an opportunity for you to reflect on the "things that matter" in your life and to deepen your relationship with God. An IGR helps you to be more aware of how God works in your life and it allows you to become more aware of the many ways God is present to you.

Each retreatant has their own retreat guide/spiritual director with whom they meet each day, and who will help you focus, reflect and discern.

An IGR is held in silence. There is a celebration of the Eucharist and half-an-hour of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for communal prayer available each day.



We offer several options for the length of an IGR. For those who have not done an IGR before there is the possibility of coming for a shorter period of time. In general our IGRs are either 6 or 8 days. As well as the prayerful atmosphere of the house there are also five acres of garden for the exclusive use of our retreatants. We are just beside Wistaston Park which gives plenty of space for longer walks. Be assured of a warm Oblate Welcome to Wistaston Hall for your retreat. "It is good to come away and rest awhile."

Dates available:

4th – 8th April; 1st – 10th July; 20th – 27th August; 11th – 16th September; 11 – 20 January 2016

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

Oblate Retreat Centre, Wistaston Hall,
89 Broughton Lane, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 8JS
Tel: +44 (0) 1270 568 653 or
E-mail: director@oblateretreatcentre.org.uk
www.orc-crewe.org

Summer Camp 2016



1st - 5th August 2016

Our Summer Camp will place in Blue Peris Mountain Centre in North Wales. During the day the group are given the opportunity to take part in a selection of different outdoor activities such as raft building, abseiling, canoeing and problem solving. In the evening the group took part in faith based workshops and got to learn more about their faith through art, drama and discussions.

The cost of the camp is £180 / €210

Application forms are available from your local Oblate priest. Places are limited, so get your application in soon!

For more information about the camp, contact:

Padraig Corcoran on: (+353) 01 4531 660

E-mail: padraig.oblate.partners@gmail.com

Ronan Lavery on: (+44) 020 7624 7296

E-mail: lavery.ronan@googlemail.com

**Bookings now
being taken
for Summer
2016**

A Workshop with Fr. Frank Morrissey OMI



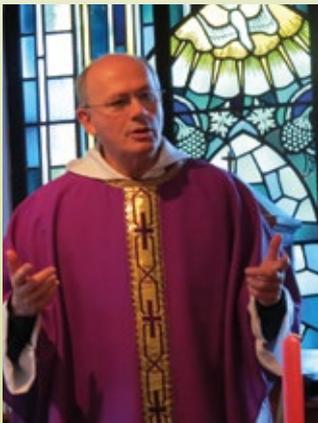
Pope Francis' Message after the Synod on the Family

Wistaston Hall, Crewe. May 17th -18th

Speaking at the end of the Synod, Pope Francis said:

"The Synod was not about settling all the issues having to do with the family, but rather attempting to see them in the light of the Gospel. ...The Church's first duty is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas, but to proclaim God's mercy, to call to conversion, and to lead all men and women to salvation in the Lord."

In this workshop Fr. Frank will explore the message of Pope Francis following the 2015 Synod on the Family.



Oblate Summer School

Spirituality for the 21st Century

with Fr. Frank Santucci OMI, Wistaston Hall, Crewe.

Spirituality and Mission

Module 2: July 22nd - 24th

To have a "mission" means being a missionary, a preacher, a priest or religious - or does it? Mission, in fact, is allowing my experience of God and my spirituality to give a direction to my life, and to make a difference in the lives of others.

Starting with Eugene de Mazenod's understanding of spirituality and mission, we will see its development and significance in the past 200 years - and how this can help us to understand our own spirituality and mission.

Fr. Frank Santucci OMI, will also give a talk on Spirituality Today in Dublin on the 16th July.

Do I Have a Spirituality?

Module 1: July 18th - 21st

"Spirituality" is a word that we tend to apply to saints and mystics - but never to ourselves. During these days we will explore the concept of spirituality and the key phases in its development. Then, looking at Eugene de Mazenod's life and spirituality as an example, each participant will work at expressing their own spirituality.

These events have been organised as part of the activities to mark the 200th anniversary of the foundation of the Oblates.

For further information or to book a place for 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.oblate.partners@googlegmail.com