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# Oblate Connections

Oblate Connections – No.28, 7th October, 2015

As this issue of Oblate Connections goes to print we remember and pray for the Synod on the Family taking place in Rome at this time. In his opening address to the Synod, Pope Francis invited the participants to be open to the working of the Holy Spirit with the following words:

*Let us remember, however, that the Synod will be a space for the action of the Holy Spirit only if we participants vest ourselves with apostolic courage, evangelical humility and trusting prayer: with that apostolic courage to bring life and not to make of our Christian life a museum of memories; evangelical humility that knows how to empty itself of conventions and prejudices in order to listen to brother bishops and be filled with God – humility that leads neither to finger-pointing nor to judging others, but to hands outstretched to help people up without ever feeling oneself superior to them.*

*Confident prayer that trusts in God is the action of the heart when it opens to God, when our humors are*

*silenced in order to listen to the gentle voice of God, which speaks in silence. Without letting ourselves be guided by the Spirit, all our decisions will be but decorations that, instead of exalting the Gospel, cover it and hide it.*

These words resonate and challenge us all as we strive to discern the call of Holy Spirit and work to build the Reign of God in the here and now. They also encourage us to make our communities a place of welcome so that, no matter what burdens or wounds we may carry, we can be assured of being made welcome in God's House.

Given his own family history, St Eugene de Mazenod has been described as the patron saint for wounded families. We therefore ask St. Eugene to continue to intercede for all families who are wounded and struggling and to continue to encourage us all to "leave nothing un-dared for the gospel."  
- Fr. Lorcán O'Reilly OMI

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# An Obituary for a Suicide

- Fr Ron Rolheiser, OMI

The more things change, the more they stay the same. That axiom still holds true for our understanding of suicide. Despite all the advances in our understanding, there are still a number of stigmas around suicide, one of which pertains to how we write the obituary of a loved one who dies in this way.

In writing an obituary we still cannot bring ourselves to write Suicide, in many cases, perhaps in most cases, is the result of a disease; the emotional and psychological equivalent of cancer, stroke, or heart attack. If that is true, and it is, why then, when a loved one dies of suicide, might we not write this kind of an obituary?

We are sad to report the of J\_\_ D\_\_ who died after a long and courageous struggle with emotional cancer. Jane, as you know, was born into this world with a tortured sensitivity, a gift and an affliction she grappled with from her earliest youth. She found comfort and peace at times, but was never able to fully extricate herself from some inner chaos which was always partially hidden to those around her and which medicine could not cure, counsellors could not quiet, and our affection and solicitousness could not adequately soothe. In the end, despite her courage and our best efforts to help her, the disease was incurable. Her temperament was both her blessing and her curse. She was a gentle person, not given to ego and unhealthy self-as death assertion, always overly-anxious not to hurt others or to claim too much space for herself. But her self-effacement was part of her disease as well. No amount of encouragement was able to ultimately take away this inchoate constriction that somehow deprived her of her full freedom. In the end, she died, against her will; but her life, lived with such sensitivity, was a precious gift to all who knew her, even as it sometimes brought anxiety and heartbreak to those around her. Given the sad circumstance of her death, she, with her extraordinary sensitivity, would be the last person who would want us to feel guilty and second-guess ourselves about what we might have done to help prevent her death. When a disease is terminal, all the love and concern in the world can still not bring a cure. But she died inside of our love even as we feel frustrated that our love could not do more to help her. She lives now, still, inside our love and affection, and, God-willing, inside a peace and security that so much eluded her in this life. In lieu of flowers please make donations to the Mental Health Association.

Or perhaps, in another situation, it might read like this:

We are sad to report the death of J\_\_ D\_\_ who died expectantly of an emotional heart attack. His death came as shock since those closest to him had no reason to suspect that he suffered from dangerously high emotional cholesterol or that he carried inside him some congenital heart disease that had not yet manifested itself clearly and had not been medically or psychologically diagnosed. In the face of this, understandably, we find ourselves questioning ourselves as to why we were not more alert or attentive to his person and his health and why we did not pick up on any symptoms manifesting themselves in his situation. Sometimes a potentially fatal disease can lurk beneath the surface and remain unobserved until it is too late. Such is the nature, often times, of deadly heart attacks and strokes. While his death leaves us feeling raw, struggling for understanding, at a loss to explain how this could happen, and needing to resist the temptation to project a certain anger at him for keeping his disease so private and hidden, we can also understand that much of his disease was hidden from him too and that the anatomy of this particular kind of death has within itself a particularly pernicious pathology which demands of its victim precisely this propensity to hide what he is undergoing from those closest to him. And this asks for our understanding: Everyone's life is its own mystery, and not always open to outside understanding. Moreover, emotional heart attacks and strokes, like their biological equivalents, are not willed and claim their victim against his or her will. J\_\_ was a gentle soul who wished no one any harm and tried to do no one any harm. He, no doubt, is as grieved as we are that his unwanted death has caused so much pain. But, no doubt too, he asks for our continued love and affection and, especially, for our understanding. In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to your local mental health association.

It is hard to lose loved ones to suicide, but we should not also lose the truth and warmth of their mystery and their memory.



# Blessing the Animals

Sunday 4th October saw a very special Mass celebrated in Our Lady of Immaculate Church in Darndale-Belcamp Parish. The Mass, based around "The Canticle of Brother Sun," celebrated in honour of St. Francis of Assisi, was brought to life by a combination of the Oblate Youth Choir, and many local children. The Oblate Youth filled the Church with hymns and the young children retold the story of St. Francis' life and love of God's creation.

After Mass Sr. Lumay, our parish sister, and a group of parishioners continued the celebrations with a "Street Party" to thank the children for all their hard work at Mass. Children's laughter drowned out the sound of music, as the children enjoyed themselves playing games, winning prizes and tasting the baked goods on offer.

The excitement reached its peak when Fr. Ned Quinn along with family members joined the party goes to complete the day's celebration with the 2nd annual parish blessing of pets and animals. A variety of birds, dogs, and horses waited (sometimes patiently) with their owners for their turn.

Fr. Ned was introduced to each pet by the owners, who were excited to relay amusing anecdotes about caring for their pets, as he blessed each and every one. Health and safety procedures were strictly observed as some pets were overwhelmed by the crowds waiting in line.

Although the blessing was primarily for animals; children not wanting to leave the party to collect their pet had brought a symbol of their pet instead. Photographs, toys and collars were all blessed.

Fr. Leo Philomin and Fr. Tomasz Maniura, an Oblate visiting us from Poland, joined in the fun as Fr. Leo and his pet hen "Kiev" waited patiently to be blessed.

An array of favourite toys, much loved teddy bears, and even "little Tike's" motor-bike were all important enough to be brought along for the blessings.

At the end of a fun day many tired pets were brought home by happy and tired owners. We are all looking forward to next year's blessing. See you all next year!

- Lisa Lawless





# Walk The Talk

**On a beautiful sunny Saturday morning, Edwina Gateley had her audience of 96 people in Inchicore, Dublin listening and hanging on to her every word! She shared her powerful, moving, personal faith story which came with many challenges and joys in being a Catholic Lay woman. This had her audience equally moved to tears, in as much as “stitches of laughter” and even, at times, blushing with embarrassment.**

Edwina shared the struggles and joys she encountered with the institutional Church in setting up the “Voluntary Missionary Movement” (VMM) which involved recruiting skilled lay tradespeople to work overseas alongside religious orders. She ran it for many years and it had grown extensively worldwide. However, Edwina felt called to walk another path and this meant handing over the VMM which caused her a great deal of pain in the letting go process.

When she moved on, Edwina felt and heard the call to work with women who prostituted themselves on the streets of Chicago, USA. Prior to making these two life-changing decisions, Edwina saw the essential need for solitude. She spent time in the Sahara desert and also, later on, she lived in a caravan in the Chicago forests bought through the generosity of friends. These were challenging times, nevertheless, through the grace of God she was able to experience the gift of ‘nothingness’.

Edwina presented her personal faith story in a very dynamic style. She used her tangible communication skills to stir up our imaginations with her expressive actions, sounds, images, poetry and quotes from mystics across all religions. For example, she challenged her audience to be a “juicy people” rather than dried up and inward looking group.

Edwina encouraged us to be “walking tabernacles of Christ”. She offered us an image of a waiting God even if we chose to be stuck in inertia, as people who “buried their heads in the sand out of fear and insecurity”... She stated that “God is still able to come



through the “backdoor of our lives”... She alerted us to be prepared for “a bugging God”, one who is constantly lovingly present at all times.

Edwina gave the powerful example of visiting the VMM in Uganda. She walked into a room full of crying babies infected with the HIV virus, and they were holding their arms up to be carried, but the volunteers stopped her from picking them up. Instead she was shown into a beautiful room which had gentle music playing in the background, and there in a corner was a woman tenderly holding a baby, rocking it gently to sleep. The volunteers explained that each baby is held like that for 2 hours each week. Likewise, for us, we need to see our great, big God as being the “holding room” of tenderness and compassion for our lives.

Edwina also demonstrated her love for the scriptures as she shared wonderful insights and a powerful exegesis into the scripture story of the “woman who was haemorrhaging “ for a lifetime. The key message was that God did not want us to suffer and just to “offer it up”, rather for us to receive love and healing for our lives. Edwina challenged us to view holiness as being

seen as embracing 'differentness' and being a voice for social justice on our planet!

Edwina shared how she has been tremendously enriched by the prostitutes. When she got to know them well, they gradually lowered their defences and allowed her into their lives. These women carried internal labels like "Magdalene" from the institutional Church and that of "scum" from society. These vulnerable women were physically and sexually abused from the ages of 3yrs and upwards by close family members and friends, and consequently, they landed up in a vicious circle of prostitution and drugs. So the last thing they saw in themselves was their dignity and the knowledge of being made in the image and likeness of God.

Edwina also shared two personal case stories of "Brenda" and "Suzie". These women transformed themselves from a vicious circle of prostitution to now being able to live healthily and hold capable jobs and steady families.

Edwina then opened the floor for a question and answer session in which the Inchicore audience participated enthusiastically. She responded to each of the questions with great sensitivity and a sense of measured listening.

Everyone returned home feeling enriched by Edwina's powerful style of presentation and authentic content. We were all challenged to 'walk the talk' in our lives.

- Kirk Jacob

## Wistaston Hall Events

### Advent 2015 Retreats

#### Day Retreats, Wed 9th & Thur 10th December

These days are suitable for parish groups, prayer groups and individuals who are looking for a quiet and reflective day within the Season of Advent. The programme will include the celebration of the Eucharist, the opportunity for the sacrament of Reconciliation, a talk and quiet time.

#### Residential Retreats, 11th-13th December & 14th-16th December

Advent is the special time when we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ. What better way to enter the spirit of this season than to take time aside for prayer, reflection and silence?

#### Dreams: God's Forgotten Language 29 – 31 January 2016

Dreams provide us with a rich resource and a portal to our souls. This workshop will explore the theory of dreams and it will also include some practical ways to interpret our own dream life.

### Individually Guided Retreats

This is an individually guided retreat. It 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 available:

5 Day Retreat:

Mon 26th (lunch) – Fri 30th (lunch) October 2015

8 Day retreat:

11 – 20 January 2016

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

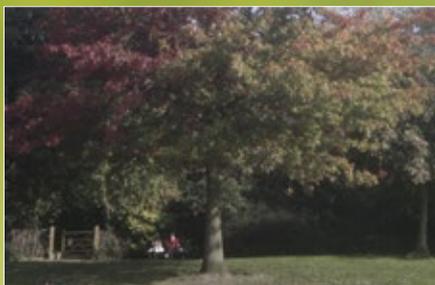
Oblate Retreat Centre, Wistaston Hall,  
89 Broughton Lane, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 8JS

Ph. 01270 568 653

or [director@oblateretreatcentre.org.uk](mailto:director@oblateretreatcentre.org.uk)

[www.orc-crewe.org](http://www.orc-crewe.org)

# Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation



The Lord created the heavens. God formed the earth. God did not make it a desolate waste, but a place to be lived in. (Is. 45.18)

To mark and celebrate the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, (JPIC) in Sacred Heart Parish, Quex Road in London organised two events. The first was an evening of reflection and discussion on how we as humans are affecting and contributing to the current reality and situation on earth, our common home.

We saw that there are many reasons for us to be concerned and worried. The polar ice caps are now melting and disappearing at a much faster rate than before. This is having far reaching consequences, not just for the local eco-system, but further afield. It is now a scientific fact the global warming is a reality. The accelerated change in the weather system around the planet is evidence of this. The destruction and demise of the rain forests is another contributor to the growing number of severe weather changes that are now more and more evident. As a result, it is not only nature and wildlife that is being affected. As we in the west continue to burn more fossil fuels, and pursue a lifestyle that is now no longer sustainable, those in developing countries are suffering more and more. One of the major messages of the evening was that all things are connected and that we are a part of creation not *apart* from creation. How we live here has consequences for other people and other parts of the world. What happens in and to the rain forests

affects how we live here in the west. In his latest encyclical, *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis challenges us with these words, "Our development must take in consideration full respect for other people. But it must also be concerned for the natural world around us.." (5)

On the Feast itself, the group, with others from the parish community, gathered outside the church and walked to the local park, Paddington Recreation Ground. This gave us the opportunity to simply be outdoors and walk silently and prayerfully as nature is embracing the season of autumn. We began our Creation Walk with these words from scripture, "Show me Lord your way so that I may walk in truth." (Ps. 86.11) The invitation and challenge of our brief pilgrimage was to walk with all our senses open and alert so that we could experience the presence of God in all that we saw, heard and experienced. Stopping to read another piece from the Pope's encyclical, we read, "As Christians, we are called to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale." (9) We finished our walk with this prayer, "Creator God, open our eyes to see your hand at work in the splendour of creation and in the beauty of human life. Touched by your hand, our world is made holy. Help us to cherish the gifts that surround us, to share your blessings with our brothers and sisters and to experience the joy of life in your presence."

The group plan to have another Creation Walk in the spring time and to organise a justice and peace event during Lent next year.

- Michael Moore



# Lourdes 2015

**Three Pilgrims share their experiences and what their visit to Lourdes 2015 meant to them...**

How could you put on one page the diversity of the spiritual journey that is the Oblate Lourdes Pilgrimage. For me, this was probably the best so far because of the many friends that I have made and that I keep in contact with over the rest of the year. Friends who have come to mean so much in my life and who have given me the courage to join them on the pilgrimage, no matter what the barriers. From the moment I got off the bus in the hospital until the last day, life was filled with fun, laughter, chat, sharing, praying and soul searching. Added to that is the spiritual renewal that uplifts my soul and highlights the need to give thanks for all the privileges I enjoy and that sometimes I take for granted.

The theme this year was the call of Pope Francis to have unity and love of our fellow man, and was to the fore in the ceremonies and homilies. He asked that we not spend time like mourners, but by being joyful and aware of those sick, rejected, or misunderstood and uniting in prayer with those present and for those who asked for our prayers. These aspirations were encouraged by the many inspiring homilies that touched deep within.

The awesome numbers of pilgrims that continually file past the Grotto until late into the night, the torch-light procession with the praying of the rosary, the uplifting hymns, and the raised candles, is akin to what we expect to hear when life is over. Heavenly, sacred and the unifying of people of all ages and backgrounds in prayerful concert. For anyone poor in spirit and searching, this is an awakening of an encounter with the Mother of God.

No amount of gratitude would repay the work done by the Oblate priests, leaders, helpers and young helpers in enabling people who are sick, disabled in body and spirit and in need of consolation and compassion that is given so freely and lovingly on this unique and wonderful pilgrimage every year. Sincere thanks to all who make it possible.

- Peg Hanafin, Ireland

This year in Lourdes was my first, and before going I was nervous about working with the guests and meeting all the members of the OYS, however there was really no need to be! The older members were so welcoming and encouraging and the guests were so appreciative of everything we did which made me feel much more at ease.

Even though it was daunting I found the morning shift very rewarding and really enjoyed it because the guests had so much trust in you due to how personal the care was and seeing how grateful they were was, very fulfilling. The older members of the OYS were fantastic and made sure you felt comfortable the whole time.

For me, the best part about my trip to Lourdes was spending time with the guests whether that was just talking over a cup of tea or bringing them shopping or to watch the rugby in town. This was the time we would really get to know the guests and form relationships with them. I loved hearing stories about their families and their past, and seeing how affected some of the guests were by their condition, yet they still had such a strong faith was inspiring, and on a personal level, I felt as though my faith was strengthened during my time in Lourdes because of this.

The time spent in Lourdes can be quite intense, especially the last day when the guests leave because you've formed friendships with some of them, however every member of the OYS was so supportive and I loved how close the group was and how we became a massive family for the week.

I enjoyed every moment of my first year in Lourdes, even the challenges and the nerves! I am very grateful to everyone who made my first year such an incredible experience and I look forward to going back!

- Niamh Roberts, Wales



## My Lourdes Pilgrimage 2015

I go to Lourdes to help others as part of a team but what I get out of Lourdes on a personal level is hard to put into words.

Lourdes for me in two words is peace and contentment. Lourdes has restored my personal faith and enhanced my recovery from my own illness. As hard as the week can be physically, this is cancelled out mentally by what I get out of helping others enjoy their own pilgrimage.

Experiencing what Lourdes does for people from all walks of life and their own disabilities is truly magical. Seeing old friends and making new friends regardless of illness or disability all with the same common bond, having faith and guidance through God.

Being part of the Torchlight Marian Procession without a care in the world is such a humbling experience and puts my own life into perspective. My life changed so much for the better since going to Lourdes annually and this keeps my life simple from one year to the next.

Roll on Lourdes 2016 "God willing".  
-Dominic O'Gorman, England





# Congress on the Oblate Charism in Context

I am sure that many people connected to the Oblate congregation are already aware that next year the Missionary Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate celebrates 200 years of service to the poor and marginalised people of the world.



It all began on January 25, 1816 when Father Eugene de Mazenod and four companions met together with the firm intent to renew the church in France by preaching missions in Provençal and the rest, as they say, is history. After 200 years of history, it is clearly a good time to reflect on the charism and purpose of the Congregation, and thus began the work of Fr. Fabio Ciardi, (Director of the General Service for Oblate Studies) to organise a Congress on the Oblate Charism in Context. Not just a Congress but a “cyber-Congress”.

The Congress was aptly named as a “Congress on the Oblate Charism in Context”. Thus the idea was formulated to hold the Congress, via the internet, based in eight places worldwide encompassing all the Regions of the Congregation. The international connections took place in San Antonio (USA); Mexico City (Mexico); Rome (Italy); Odra (Poland); Kinshasa (D.R. Congo); Durban (South Africa); Colombo (Sri Lanka); Manila (Philippines).

The Anglo Irish Province was invited to send a representative to the Rome event, held at the OMI General House from June 30th- 3rd July 3. Local meetings were held at different times to suit the inter-continental connection point in the day (it was 2 o'clock -Rome time). Thanks to modern communications over 1,000 Oblates and associates were able to participate in all or a part of the proceedings as well as the invited presenters.

Fr Ray Warren was at the Congress in the role of Discussant. He commented on and summarised what he had heard from all the presentations on one day. Fr Lorcan O'Reilly was originally asked to present a paper in Rome on behalf of the Province but as he was unable to attend the Congress he invited me to take his place.

## Missionary Visit To The Oblate Mission, Zimbabwe, June - July 2016\*

Join our month long annual missionary experience to Zimbabwe. Work in the Sandra Jones Children's Village and experience the Oblate Mission and life in the Zimbabwean bush. Places are very limited. Applicants must be 18 or older. \*Dates TBC

**For an application form, or more information please contact:**

Ronan Lavery, Oblate Partners in Mission Office,  
Denis Hurley House, 14 Quex Road, London, NW6 4PL.  
Ph: +44 (0) 20 76247296 E-Mail: [lavery.ronan@googlemail.com](mailto:lavery.ronan@googlemail.com)  
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There were two other ladies speaking at the local meeting of the Congress in Rome, one an Oblate Sister, Immaculada and another, Ileana, a member of COMI. It was a huge privilege to represent the Anglo Irish province at such an esteemed gathering. My paper was entitled, "Living the dream of St Eugene today". In the paper I spoke about the history of Partners in Mission in the Anglo-Irish Province with particular emphasis of on the development of Friends of St Eugene and of possible future prospects for the dream of St Eugene.

## Delegates from around the world



The technology worked remarkably well. It was amazing to see and hear the speakers from the international centres so clearly. After every presentation, there was an open dialogue among all the geographic areas. The main language of the Congress was English but there were some talks in French or Spanish. Fr Fabio would say, "Let's go to San Antonio " and lo and behold there was Frank Santucci and Sandy Prather on screen and as audible as if they were sitting in the same room. And in the next breath, Fr Fabio summoned up the group from Durban or Kinshasa. It was as Frank Santucci said in his thanks to Fabio, " Thank you for having had the courage to impel us into the 21st century cyber world and allowing the charism to touch so many during these days. I hear the words of St Eugene when he embarked on the adventure of foreign missions echoing again as he looks at our use of the media: 'Here is a vast field that is opening up to our zeal'. And indeed it was.



As suggested by the title, the Congress was primarily intended for vowed Oblates and therefore it is not easy or even possible to summarise the 24 presentations or the 118 pages of the written submissions in this article. But, it is appropriate to mention the main emphasis of all the presentations was community living and the importance and necessity of on-going formation. Both of these themes are relevant to Friends of St Eugene and Oblate Partners in Mission as well as vowed Oblates.

My personal highlight was being asked to respond to Sandy Prather's paper, "Give us a portion of your Spirit: Oblate Associates and the Oblate charism". Sandy is well known to us here in the Province, so it was with delight and very little notice, which is probably a good thing, I had my 15 minutes of fame speaking via the video link to Sandy and the Oblate world. Wow!!!! It was an incredible experience for me. But, actually the whole experience was tremendous.

All the delegates, students and Roman staff welcomed me; I enjoyed generous hospitality and was totally integrated into the Congress experience. It certainly strengthened my sense of being a Partner in Mission belonging to the Oblate Congregation. As Fr Fabio concluded, "For years, I have dreamed of this Congress. Now I can tell you: the reality has been more beautiful than the dream!" I agree. Fr Fabio, thank you for all your hard work and congratulations on success of the venture.

– MaryTyrell

# Oblate Jubilee Celebrations

August 29th 2015



**The following is the homily delivered at this year's Oblate Jubilee Celebrations by Fr. Eugene King who was celebrating the Golden Jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood.**

## **Introduction:**

I was out of Ireland and studying in Canada when I first learned of James Joyce. A fellow student asked me what I thought of Joyce's writings. He took a strange look at me when I said that not only had I not read his writings but I had not even heard of him. Probably due to the fact that in Cavan, in those days, we were much more into reading the Greek and Latin classics than what was fashionable in Dublin!

However, my interest was awakened and I read *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and then I discovered *Dubliners*. The concise volume is made up of 15 short stories. I learned that for Joyce, and in literary circles, such short stories are categorised as epiphanies. I would not recommend *Dubliners* as a first adventure into spiritual reading, even if one of the stories is entitled *Grace*. However, if you are seeking a sobering look at what we are like on a day to day basis, at the real flesh and blood of human experience, the flesh and blood that Jesus Christ took on and befriended, then read *Dubliners*. There is more to *Dubliners* than meets the eye. People still read *Dubliners* for what the stories reveal of the people of this city and our common human condition.

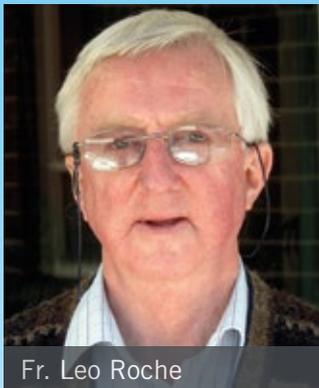
The invitation to give this homily reminded me of the remarkable fund of stories of Oblates whom I have met over the past 50 years and more. When Oblates get together a festival of story-telling breaks out, a selection of which would warrant a volume entitled *Oblates*. I will offer you a glimpse of three such Oblates - a glimpse of what is more than meets the eye in Oblate life and mission.

## **On the Banks of the Mekong:**

The first is Michel Lynde, a French Oblate, whom I met on the banks of the Mekong river in eastern Thailand. Living all alone, his home was in a poor, densely populated neighbourhood. It looked across the river to Laos, and to the people Michel had been sent to as a young missionary and from whom he had been banished. Seven of his Oblate brothers were killed in service, martyred (soon to be beatified). He was anything but alone, as his home, nestled in among Buddhist families and small businesses, was an open house for all comers including the handful of Christians in the area. In early morning Michel's home served as a sacred space for silence, prayer, and meditation, and during the day and afternoon as a work space for artists and artisans. In their midst, one normally found Michel, himself an artist and wood carver. The beam above the front door featured one of his carvings. Surging out of the wood was the radiant face of a young woman in full song and above her head the word: *Magnificat* - the prayer Mary sang in the home of her cousin, Elizabeth, when both women were pregnant, caught up in an epiphany of new life.

The scene has remained an epiphany for me of what being an Oblate is all about in today's world, in a global village, where world religions meet, where we get to know new neighbours, and stand shoulder to shoulder in caring for our common home. For Oblates, a key to that new world is a taste of the life and experience of Jesus Christ, his story - his fund of stories, sayings, encounters, actions, his friends, his enemies, his death, his resurrection; or in other words his selfless care for others, his love of people just like us - Dubliners, Oblates, Jews, Muslims, Galileans. Carrying on his mission is the job of Christians and Oblates. There is more than meets the eye...

## Celebrating their jubilee...



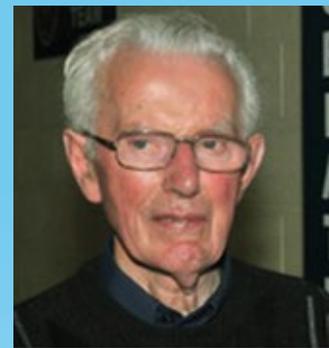
Fr. Leo Roche



Fr. John Lee



Fr. Ned Quinn



Fr. Martin O'Keeffe



Fr. Tom Scully



Fr. John Patterson



Fr. Tom O'Shea



Fr. Dennis Connor



Fr. George Ryan



Fr. Paddy Guidon



Fr. Richard Haslam

### On the Plains of South Africa:

The second epiphany that I wish to evoke is from the life of Fr. Tommy Swords. I have an image of him imprinted on my imagination from a visit to South Africa back in 1983. Sadly, Tommy is not with us today. He died after the invitations for this event went out. My sympathy and prayers are with all of you who mourn his passing. I was looking forward to seeing him here.

Two images of Tommy superimpose on one another in my memory. The first is Tommy as right full back, coming up to kick out the ball on the Belmont football team. I played left full back. He had a characteristic pose of an eagle about to take flight, with his arms out from his body. That was Dublin in the early 1960s. Thirty years later I visited him on his mission in South Africa. Apartheid was still in force and he was pastor among a community of black South Africans, who were uprooted and replanted. I sighted him off in the distance in the middle of the street, and from his stance it could only be one person - Tommy Swords. Still playing right full back, sustaining his people.

In Tommy's story, there is so much more than meets the eye. What explains this Offaly footballer teaming with the people of South Africa on their hope-filled march to freedom? Thousands of miles away from the rich bog lands of Offaly. In his heart he carried treasure, deep-rooted seeds of nation and religion - a Christian Irish culture that has known so much struggle for the cause of the poor, of captives, of the blind, of the downtrodden to use the language of the first reading. Tommy believed that everyone has the right to a year of favour. What madness, what "excess of love bewildered" him throughout 50 years of priesthood? In one word the freedom of Jesus Christ...

Tommy was my companion in the novitiate in Cahermoyle. His epiphany reflects the stories of several others of that class who are celebrating with us this day - Tom O'Shea, Leo Roche, Dennis Connor, George Ryan. All embody great stories, some best told in the Black Lion, but all worth recording in Oblates.



### Above the Arctic Tree Line:

A third story is of a member of my community in Ottawa. I am talking of another Frenchman, named Robert Lechat. He is a quietly energetic hero. Still travelling to his beloved north of Canada, and heading for 96 years of age in January, he stands tall among adventurers, explorers and missionaries. But I nominate him for the witness of interior freedom that he manifests - a true religious epiphany, more than meets the eye.

I will not dwell on his days as a student, away back in 1944 when Gestapo agents came to our scholasticate in France and at random shot six of his companions on allegations of collaboration with the French resistance. I want to highlight one feature of his life and mission. He was sent to the North of Canada to a community who by that time was Christian and Anglican. His mission was to convert them to Catholicism. It was a strange age; with dozens of Oblate missionaries across the great white north. Over 15 years no conversions had occurred.

On second thoughts, maybe one conversion occurred, maybe many, all in the same person - Robert himself. With time, he recognised his profound communion with the Anglican community, present in his being cared for by Anglican clergy and their community, and present also in his own services to them. In a world of accelerating activity, of the need for instant gratification and success, I relish listening to the stories, the epiphanies of men and women like Robert. Given time to ponder, there is so much more than meets the eye...

When I meet Robert, our exchange of greeting is much the same. I proclaim: Vive, la France, libre! And he replies: Vive, l'Irlande, libre! At times to the annoyance of some of our French Canadian colleagues, who hear an echo of Charles deGaulle's Vive le Québec, libre. Through satire, irony, or parody, we are highlighting that one of the truest epiphanies of Christian life is the quality of freedom that following Jesus engenders. Freedom is an Oblate passion and a hope.

### Conclusion:

You must be wondering: is he ever going to finish? There are 15 short stories in the Dubliners; I am just giving you a hint of three Oblate stories. I have pointed to something wonderful in all three. I tell the stories not to glorify the individuals, but to set us thinking, imagining that we all share in a mysterious, wonderful world. We need to take the time and begin to recognise the more than meets the eye, in our own personal lives, in the lives of children, partners, friends, and indeed even those whom we can't stand. I have not touched on the negative side of the human condition which has such an attraction for modern media; the story of the negative must also be told and recognised - at another time.

My purpose today is to draw our attention to some features of the mystery of life that ensure hope for the future, for the Oblates, for all of us. Like Michel - to share life and its gifts with the growing number of other religious traditions with whom we come in contact; like Tommy - to go forward and share the lives of the oppressed, those yearning for freedom in the conviction that being truly oneself, being Irish, or British, or African, and being Christian is a blessing to be shared with others; like Robert - to come to know that one's own personal conversion is a primary fruit of Oblate vocation and mission.

Today is a favourite word of Jesus, in Luke's Gospel. Today, in our lives, there is much more happening than meets the eye.  
- Eugene King, O.M.I



Fr. Ray Warren with Maura and Christy, the brother and sister of the late Fr. Tommy Swords

# Oblate Associates Answer God's Invitation to Carry the Charism to Those in Need



**“... 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...”**  
- St. Eugene De Mazenod

In the spirit of the Founder, Missionary Oblates have always been inviting others to minister with them. The last General Chapter mandated: “That all Oblates discover the rich potential of the presence of associates who strengthen us in the Oblate vocation and mission.” The General Council continues to encourage efforts to harmonise these efforts.

In reality this invitation comes from God. The grace of our baptismal call continues to impart to us a grace to go beyond ourselves in order to care for God's people. When a person steps outside their comfort zone in this way, the goodness is palpable.

In order to make sure that one's good actions are guided by God and not one's ego, an Associate program gathers together men and women of faith and develops them through daily prayer and meditation, studying the charism of St. Eugene and Oblate Spirituality. Associate communities get together monthly, not just to listen to speakers or take up a collection of money or work on a project, but to focus on listening to the Word of God and to reflect on how God has helped them through the experiences of the past month. They offer themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

An Oblate Associate is defined by who they are—a leaven of goodness in the world. They connect their spiritual life with their everyday life. The outcome is that God leads them deeper into the meaning of the Gospel. They are impelled to bring the Good News to those most in need. What that looks like varies with the diversity of Associates.

The United States joins Italy, Ireland, England, Latin America, Australia, Japan, Mexico, Germany, and Africa, to name just a few places around the world, where men and women are inspired by God to do as St. Eugene and his fellow Oblates have done for

nearly 200 years. Even in areas where Missionary Oblates are no longer physically present, the Good News of God's unconditional love is being heard through the loving actions of Oblate Associates who reach out to their neighbours in villages, barrios, towns, cities, counties, ghettos, hospitals, prisons and nursing homes.

Associates build relationships based on the dignity of each person. God leads them to reach out in a variety of ways: gathering supplies for the homeless, helping at soup kitchens or shelters; lay ministers in their parish by lecturing, Eucharistic Minister, or catechetical teacher, visiting the sick, the imprisoned, the lonely; caring for children, grandchildren or an infirm spouse; assisting pregnant teens; denouncing and fighting against injustice; practicing the corporeal works of mercy; praying for those in need. Yes, the list is endless, because God continues to call and generous souls continue to respond through the charism of St. Eugene.

For many who have answered this call from God, their life echoes the words of Fr. DeMazenod: “They will have a compassionate charity for the misery of the poor and they will count themselves happy to be able to relieve, in their needs, these suffering members of Jesus Christ.”...(Fr. DeMazenod's 1816 Rule of Life for Aix Christian Youth Assoc.)

- Geri Furmanek

In the Anglo-Irish Province, Oblate Associates are better known as the Friends of St. Eugene. For more information about the Friends of St. Eugene please contact: Kirk Jacob, Denis Hurley House, 14 Quex Road, London, NW6 4PL, England or by email at [kirk.oblate.partners@googlemail.com](mailto:kirk.oblate.partners@googlemail.com)



“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**

Andrew Cassidy  
wyd@oblateyouthservice.com  
Telephone: 0131 554 2482  
07975 718 278

**Ireland**

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

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