



OblateWORLD

MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE



**Turkmenistan Oblates
Persevere for 25 Years**

Disponibile en Español en oblatesusa.org/oblates

Inside

- 4 — 7 **Oblates Select New Leadership Team**
- 8 — 10 **Turkmenistan Oblates Persevere for 25 Years**
- 11 **Oblate Crossings**
- 12 — 13 **Victory Noll Sisters Make Legacy Gift To OST**
- 14 — 15 **OST Profile: Discerning The Call Of The Holy Spirit**
- 16 — 17 **Revitalizing The Faith In Turkmenistan**
- 18 — 19 **Oblate Vocation Story – Fr. Andy Knop, OMI**
- 20 **Ukraine Snapshots**
- 21 **Ukraine Thank You**
- 22 — 23 **Tijuana Updates**
- 24 **Poland Snapshots**
- 25 **Oblate Updates**
- 26 — 27 **A Teacher Of The Faith**
- 28 — 29 **Fr. Salvatore Saves Everyone**
- 30 **Fr. Salvador "Chava" Gonzalez, OMI Named Shrine Director**

Front Cover:

For 25 years, the Missionary Oblates have been introducing the Catholic faith to people of all ages in Turkmenistan.

Back Cover:

Father Luis Ignacio (Chicho) Rois Alonso, OMI, has been elected the new Superior General of the Missionary Oblates.

Available in Spanish at oblatesusa.org/oblates

Disponible en Español en oblatesusa.org/oblates

OBLATE WORLD magazine is a publication of the United States Province of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Washington, D.C.

OBLATE WORLD magazine seeks to *inform* our readers about the mission to the poor in which Oblates engage around the globe; to *educate* our readers about the teachings of the Catholic faith and the Missionary Oblates; and to *inspire* our readers so that they may enhance their own spirituality.

OBLATE WORLD

Copyright © 2023

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
391 Michigan Avenue NE
Washington, DC 20017-1516
omiusa.org

Designed and printed in the USA

Publisher: Fr. Louis Studer, OMI

Editor: Mike Viola

Creative Direction: Mary Wuertz von Holt

Production Director: Noelia Pena

Writers: Annie Kessler, Mike Viola

Designer: Kate Brown

Photography: Sarah Abbott

Translator: Rosario García

If you no longer wish to receive *Oblate World* magazine, please call 1-888-330-6264. Thank You.

Please send change of address, comments or questions to:

Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate USA
323 Oblate Drive
San Antonio, TX 78216

Email: mviola@oblatesusa.org

MISSIONARY
OBLATES
OF
MARY IMMACULATE

From the *Provincial* Fr. Louis Studer, OMI



Dear Friend,

For nearly a month, I was fortunate to be in Italy for the General Chapter of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. This was the time when Oblates from around the world gathered to elect new leadership and chart a path for the future.

Several people came away from the General Chapter with promotions or increased responsibilities. I got a T-shirt. But it is a very nice T-shirt.

On the T-shirt is the theme of the chapter, "Pilgrims of Hope in Communion." Those few words beautifully sum up what it is to be a Missionary Oblate. And just as important, it also expresses your role in our Oblate family.

You truly are a "Pilgrim of Hope in Communion with the Oblates." You help us bring hope to the poor and needy not only here in the United States but in 70 countries around the world.

During the chapter, we held a lengthy discussion about the chapter theme. And something became very clear to me during that session, we need to do an even better job of letting our friends and benefactors know how grateful we are to have them as "co-pilgrims of hope" in our ministries.



One way we can do this is through *Oblate World* magazine. So, as you turn the pages of this issue, please know that you are truly our partner in these vital Oblate ministries.

Thank you for your generous heart. I look forward to our future efforts together as Pilgrims of Hope to a world in need.

In Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

Fr. Louis Studer, omi.

Fr. Louis Studer, OMI
Provincial, United States Province

From The Desert To Rome

What a difference a day makes.

On September 28, Fr. Luis Ignacio (Chicho) Rois Alonso, OMI, was ministering in Western Sahara, one of the smallest and most remote missions of the Missionary Oblates. The next day, he was headed to Rome, Italy, to become the leader of an entire religious congregation of over 3,500 priests and brothers ministering in 70 countries.

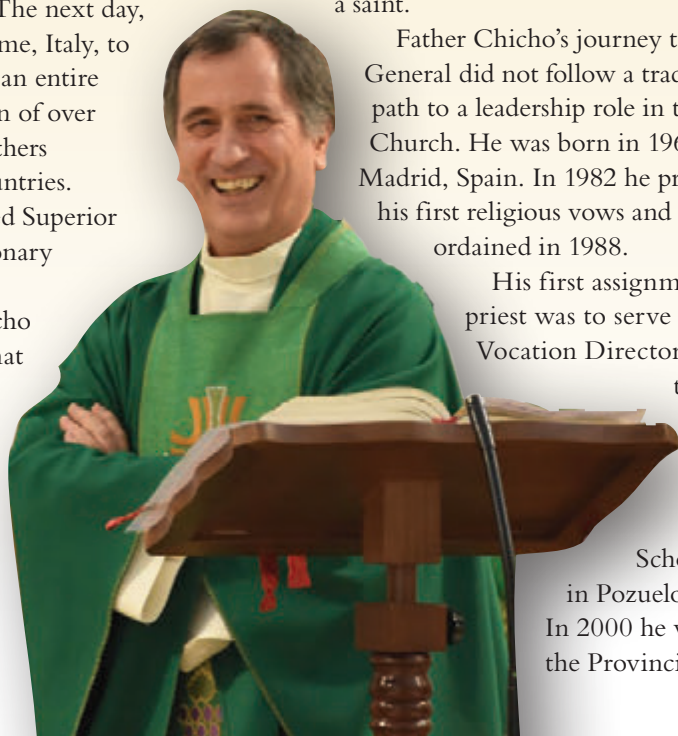
After being elected Superior General of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Fr. Chicho told Vatican News that focusing on the needs of the poor will be his primary concentration over the next six years.

“Poor people can teach us about hope and life. So,

we must work with poor people, with lay people, with indigenous peoples, bringing new life to the congregation,” said Fr. Chicho. “For me, this means bringing holiness to the congregation, and the best way to do that is to be a missionary, to be a saint.”

Father Chicho’s journey to Superior General did not follow a traditional path to a leadership role in the Church. He was born in 1963 in Madrid, Spain. In 1982 he professed his first religious vows and was ordained in 1988.

His first assignment as a priest was to serve as a Vocation Director. He then was named the Superior of the Scholasticate in Pozuelo, Spain. In 2000 he was named the Provincial for the





Oblates in Spain and four years later was elected to serve in Rome as the General Councilor for Europe, a position he held for 12 years.

In 2016, Fr. Chicho decided that he needed a break from Rome and leadership positions with the Oblates. His decision was extreme. He became a missionary to Western Sahara, an area where 99% of the population is Muslim.

Father Chicho was one of three Oblates ministering in Western Sahara. There are just a handful of Catholics in the area, a small number of local Catholics as well as people from other countries who are in the area for work or who are travelers.

In addition to meeting the needs of the small Christian community, the Oblates also reach out to their Muslim brothers to promote dialogue between the two religions where mistrust has existed for many years.

Father Chicho said his prayer life has improved thanks to his Muslim neighbors.

“They have something of the gospel in their tradition, and I can learn from that,” he said. “They have a special gift of the Holy Spirit. So, we can apply the same to any other context where we are working as missionaries.”

A few days after arriving in Rome, Fr. Chicho attended an audience with Pope



Francis for the Oblates who had attended the General Chapter. The Holy Father joked that Fr. Chicho was “a poor man, taken from the desert and brought here to Rome.”

Pope Francis described the Oblates as: “pilgrims and wanderers, always ready to go, like Jesus with His disciples.”

Father Chicho fits that description to perfection. †



Fr. Raymond Mwangala, OMI

First Assistant General

In less than two years, Fr. Raymond Mwangala, OMI, has gone from being a theology student to the third highest position in the Missionary Oblate congregation. At the recent General Chapter, Fr. Raymond was elected the congregations' First Assistant General.

Prior to being assigned to the Oblate leadership team, Fr. Raymond was the Delegation Superior for the Oblates in Zambia, a mission overseen by the United States Province.

Father Raymond was born August 25, 1975, in Choma, Southern Province, Zambia. He grew up in a Catholic parish run by the Jesuits and as a teenager he worked as a research assistant for Jesuit publications, examining issues such as poverty and education.

The Jesuits sparked Fr. Raymond's interest in religious life. But he felt more comfortable with the Oblates because of their willingness to live and work with the poorest of the poor.

Father Raymond professed his First Vows in February, 1998, and was ordained on May 8, 2004.

Father Raymond's first assignment was as a Pre-Novitiate Formator in Zambia. In 2006 he was assigned as Formator at the Oblates' scholasticate in Cedara, South Africa, and at the same time served as a professor at St. Joseph's Theological Institute.

In 2016 he did advanced studies at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas, and at the same time served as a Formator at the Oblate seminarian community in San Antonio. In 2021 he returned to Zambia when he was appointed Superior of that delegation. There are nearly 70 Oblates in Zambia, making it one of the fastest-growing Oblate delegations in the world.

Father Raymond has spent much of his time as a missionary priest away from home. Now Rome will be his home for the next six years. Working in formation has been a primary focus of Fr. Raymond's journey and he expects that formation will continue to be a primary focus of his time on the congregations' leadership team.

"Educating our future Oblates is a big part of our missions," says Fr. Raymond. "We must continue to do so. Because ignorance is much more expensive than education." †



Fr. Jim Brobst, OMI

*General Councilor for the United States –
Canada Region*

For the next six years, Fr. Jim Brobst, OMI, will serve as the General Councilor for the Missionary Oblates' Canada - United States Region. The position is based in Rome, Italy, where Fr. Jim will serve as a liaison between the Oblates' leadership team and the Oblates serving in the two countries.

Father Jim was born in 1960 in Alton, Illinois, just a short distance from the Oblate novitiate. After earning a music degree in college, he began to seriously explore a religious calling and joined the Oblates.

He professed his First Vows as a Missionary Oblate in 1985 and was ordained a priest in 1990. He first served on the pastoral team at Precious Blood Parish, an inner-city parish in Chicago. He then was assigned to his hometown of Alton where he was Parochial Vicar at St. Peter and Paul Parish.

After seven years of parish work, Fr. Jim joined the formation team at George Sexton House of Studies in San Antonio, Texas. From 1999 to 2005 he was the Director of the Oblate House of Theology in Chicago.

Father Jim served for one year in Anchorage, Alaska, before being named Formation Director for the Oblates' U.S. Province. In 2008, he was named Director of Kings House Retreat and Renewal Center.

In 2011, Fr. Jim was appointed Midwest Area Councilor of the U.S. Province and since 2017 he has served as



Vicar Provincial for Mission in Ministry for the U.S. Province. †



*Turkmenistan Oblates
Persevere For 25 Years*

Twenty-five years ago, a handful of Catholics in Turkmenistan sent a request to Pope John Paul II. They asked the Holy Father to send them some priests because there was no Catholic presence in the entire country.

Pope John Paul was eager to send priests to the country where the Catholic faith had been denied for generations by the Communists. So he asked for volunteers. Vatican officials approached several congregations and got the same answer – no thanks. They asked 38 communities for volunteers, and got rejected by all of them.

On the 39th try, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate were asked to go to Turkmenistan. They immediately said yes. And for the past 25 years they have been the only Catholic presence in the entire country.

“When I arrived 25 years ago there were only a handful of Catholic faithful. Over time I saw a community rise before my eyes,” said Fr. Andrzej Madej, OMI, who has been in Turkmenistan the entire 25 years. “Being a witness of this birth was a great grace of God because it means having participated in a birth that was troubled but full of hope. We live the experience of the Apostolic Church, which starts from scratch and is based on the power of the Word of God.”

By the numbers, the Oblate mission in Turkmenistan is rather humble. There are three priests and about 200 faithful. When the Oblates celebrate Mass, there isn’t another Catholic liturgy being celebrated within 1,000 miles in all directions.

“We have a small Catholic community. They attend Mass in Russian and also in English. Our community worships in a

rented house. In spite of the lack of space our community maintains its enthusiasm, while the number of people coming continues to grow,” said Fr. Andrzej.

When Fr. Andrzej arrived in Turkmenistan from Poland in 1997, he was



joined by another Polish Oblate, Fr. Radoslaw Zmitrowicz, OMI, who had been ministering in Ukraine to victims of the nuclear disaster site of Chernobyl. Father Radoslaw would leave the mission after a couple of years to return to Ukraine, where he is now the Auxiliary Bishop of Kamyanets-Podilskyyi.

During those early years, the two Oblates would spend much of their time simply trying to find Catholics. They had some success in finding a few Catholics who were foreign workers, mostly as diplomats. They also had some success simply going through the phone book and finding names that ended with “ski” and “cki” which would indicate Polish and possibly Catholic ancestry.

“It may seem strange, but one of the means that allows us to speak about God to the people of Turkmenistan is a car,” said Fr. Andrzej. “People often ask us for a ride,

and this represents a wonderful opportunity to talk to them about God. People listen with interest. Everyone wants to talk about faith, conscience, or religion.”

The Oblates were lucky to get a handful of participants at their liturgies during the early years. Most of the time, nobody showed up. But the Oblates persisted.

The focal point of the Oblate ministry in Turkmenistan is their Chapel of the

visiting his neighborhood, introducing people to the Catholic faith. They talked with Anton’s parents and the youngster was fascinated about what was being discussed. Over time, Anton began to feel a calling to Catholicism and eventually to the priesthood.

Since its beginning in 1997, the Oblates’ Turkmenistan mission has been staffed by Polish priests who speak Russian, which is widely spoken by the population that grew up under Soviet rule. While the mission is entrusted to the Polish Province, the United States Province has also collaborated with the missions since the beginning, primarily by providing financial support.

“The ministry is reminiscent of the early Church, wherein these Oblates reach out in large ways and small – giving rides to doctors and hospitals and providing opportunities for these people to practice their faith and receive the sacraments, especially the Eucharist,” said Fr. Louis Studer, OMI, Provincial of the U.S. Province. “These Oblates are well prepared to continue their ministry and presence in Turkmenistan for many years to come.”

For Fr. Andrzej and the other Oblates in Turkmenistan, they are following the instructions that the Lord gave to Abram: *“Go from your country, your people, and your father’s household to the land I will show you.”* Genesis 12:1.

That land is Turkmenistan, which is 82% sand. They are a small speck in the desert, but as Fr. Andrzej points out, “In the desert a single drop of water is like a golden nugget.” †



Transfiguration of the Lord in the capital of Ashgabat. Mass is celebrated in the small chapel daily which can accommodate a few dozen worshippers.

Outside, in the courtyard, the Oblates have built a grotto dedicated to Mary Immaculate. The courtyard is not only used by the handful of Catholics but also by Muslims who go there to pray. There is also an area where children and teenagers can park their bikes and gather, allowing the Oblates to introduce them to the Catholic faith.

A highlight of the Turkmenistan mission came in 2016 when Fr. Anton Litvinov, OMI, was ordained an Oblate priest. He is believed to be the only person born in Turkmenistan to ever be ordained a Catholic priest.

Father Anton grew up in a completely atheistic society. One day the Oblates were

Oblate Crossings



Oblates are Growing the Faith

Consecration of a Church and School in Madagascar

In September, the Missionary Oblates celebrated the consecration of a new church and school in the mission of Misokitsy, Madagascar.

The church, known as Mother of the Church, and school were gifts from the Archdiocese of Szczecin-Kamien, Poland, in celebration of the diocese

50th anniversary of existence.

“We have created a spiritual bridge of churches between Poland and Madagascar that may be distant from each other by kilometers, but are in solidarity through mutual prayer and support,” said Fr. Pawel Placzek, Director of the Pontifical Missionary Worker for the Archdiocese of Szczecin-Kamien. “After all, missions are a matter of faith. We did this for Christ.”



The foundation stone for the church in Misokitsy was laid on December 1, 2019. The stone was excavated from the foundation of Szczecin Cathedral as a symbolic sign of unity between the two communities.

The celebration of the consecration began with a traditional greeting. Guests from Poland were transported in carriages drawn by bulls. During the Eucharist, presided over by the bishop of Morondava, the church was consecrated and the youth received the sacrament of Confirmation. †

A New Church in Pakistan

A new church is being built by the Missionary Oblates in Pakistan along the eastern border with India. When completed it will be a mission church connected to the Oblate parish of Our Lady of Sorrows in Kasur.

The parish in Kasur is the oldest parish in the Diocese of Lahore. The Oblates have been responsible for the parish since 2007. There are currently eight mission stations in the area connected with the parish with catechists working at each site performing missionary work.

The Oblates arrived in Pakistan in 1971 at the invitation of the bishop of Faisalabad Diocese because of a severe shortage of priests in the country. In addition to parish ministries, the Oblates also recently created a high school in one of the poorest parts of the country. †



Victory Noll Sisters MAKE LEGACY GIFT TO OST



The Victory Noll Sisters have included Oblate School of Theology in their legacy plan and given a major gift that will enable the continuation of the Instituto de Formación Pastoral/Pastoral Formation Institute (IFP/PFI), for years into the future. The gift will go towards student scholarships and to support the program.

Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters (Victory Noll Sisters) was founded in 1922 to serve as catechists in remote communities underserved by the Roman Catholic Church and instruct the laity to the point where they could take over the teaching for the following generation. The Victory Noll Sisters missioned in the Southwest states, with many missions in Texas, especially down in the Rio Grande Valley.

IFP/PFI, a dual language (English and Spanish) lay certificate program, prepares students to minister in their

parishes and communities by providing academic formation in the foundational understandings of the Catholic faith, spiritual formation in the rich traditions of prayer and spirituality in the Church, and an

introduction to basic skills in lay ministry. The founding mission of Victory Noll Sisters resonates with the IFP/PFI purpose.

“The Victory Noll Sisters gave us this amazing donation as a legacy gift. They hope that OST will carry on the ministry that they have been doing since the 1920s. We are honored to do that. For decades, they have been working in the Hispanic community in Northern New Mexico, Arizona, and California. The sisters see OST as carrying on the legacy they created,” says OST President Dr. Scott Woodward.

Woodward says this endowment makes the IFP/PFI an integral part of OST. “The program is well funded, well supported – it will be here forever.”

The IFP/PFI has been a part of the OST course of study for about 18 years, but until two years ago, it was only offered onsite. “The pandemic pushed us forward to go online. This gift is a

tremendous opportunity for the school and people outside of the San Antonio Archdiocese,” says Ana Fietze, Director of Pastoral Lay Certificate Programs.



This year, the online and onsite platforms were marketed in areas outside of San Antonio and South Texas, resulting in an enrollment increase. The online platform has captured students' attention as far away as Chicago and Belleville, Illinois, and nearby areas such as Boerne, Fredericksburg, Canyon Lake, and La Coste. Fifteen students enrolled online and 35 onsite. "This (enrollment increase) is indicative of what we are anticipating in the future," says Frieze.

"Marketing has already started. We have created some videos to show people how the program works. Most marketing will be digital, but of course, personal contact through word of mouth is always good," says Woodward.

Current areas where the program is promoted will continue, with additional

marketing conducted in Catholic dioceses with a large community of Hispanics and in the Rio Grande Valley, Belleville, IL, and New Orleans, LA. In areas where there are Oblates, OST hopes to establish satellites.

Frieze notes that the IFP/PFI goals align with the Quinto Encuentro Pastoral Plan prepared by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB), which identified ways to better serve the ever-growing Hispanic population in the United States. The top priority identified was creating pastoral leaders within the community.

"We are so excited about this opportunity. The Victory Noll Sisters endowment speaks to the Oblates' charism to outreach to the abandoned, the poor. This will allow the outreach to flourish and grow," says Frieze. †

OST Receives Lilly Endowment Grant

Oblate School of Theology recently received a grant of \$1 million from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help establish a project, **Forming Adaptable Leaders who can (Re)Building Connections in a Suffering and Fragmented Word**, that will allow OST to build upon the strengths of the institution to revise academic and financial structures.

The project is being funded through Lilly Endowment's Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative. It is a three-phase initiative designed to help theological schools across the United States and Canada as they prioritize and respond to the most pressing challenges they faces as they prepare pastoral leaders for Christian congregations both now and into the future.

The goal of the project is to strengthen OST's capacity to equip pastoral leaders, both clergy and lay professionals, to minister to congregation in imaginative adaptive, fruitful ways.

Originally published in OST News, writer – Cynthia Ladson





OST Profile:

Discerning The Call Of The Holy Spirit

In 2009 Oblate School of Theology (OST) graduate Lori Peery was at a crossroads and had to discern what she wanted to do with the rest of her life.

At the time, Peery was a stay-at-home mom and had no recent work history outside of the tireless and demanding job as mom and homemaker. Peery, who has a Doctorate of Jurisprudence, worked for five years in criminal defense and family law and later probate before working in the home.

“I had two kids still living at home. I thought that they’ll all be gone soon and asked myself — where do I want to be?” Peery’s answer did not come without much prayer and contemplation.

She prayed and then met with a spiritual director who put her on a prayer regiment. “This was the first time that I spent time every day praying to hear what the Holy

Spirit had to tell me,” says Peery, adding, “this is not to say that the Spirit wasn’t working through me on other decisions.”

During this period of discernment, Peery went to a retreat where she met the facilitator and speaker, Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, then-President of OST. “I had never heard of Fr. Rolheiser or OST. During that retreat is when I decided I wanted to go to OST.”

Peery applied to and was admitted to OST in the fall of 2010, where she enrolled in the Master of Arts in Theology program. Peery, who graduated in 2015, enjoyed her time and studies at OST, but knew the MA Theology was the stepping stone she needed to get to where the Holy Spirit was leading — that being Canon Law.

Peery credits conversations she had with OST priests with helping her to



understand better the need for individuals with legal knowledge to have a theological base. “They helped me to see that there was a need for a pastoral interpretation of the law and not just a legalistic understanding,” says Peery.

“Law grounds you in some non-negotiables. But we need to be pastoral, considering the facts of a situation while also looking at a person's life experience and human condition. I was having a conversation with a seminarian the other day about how he is needed in Canon Law ministry,” says Peery.

Peery also credits OST with providing her with the essential introduction to the life of the Church. “I had been a Catholic all my life, but I had sat in the pews and never thought about the Church hierarchy or the practical functions of the Church. I never thought about the liturgy; however, while at OST, I was on a committee responsible for planning liturgy,” says Peery.

After graduating from OST, Peery went

to St. Paul's University in Ottawa, Canada, where she lived and studied Canon Law for two years — only spending summers and Christmas breaks back home.

Today, Peery has successfully melded her law and theology degrees as the Vice-Chancellor for the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Another OST graduate, Auxiliary Bishop Gary Janak, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, is her direct supervisor. Peery's duties vary from day to day, but she notes that she spends much time on calls and researching Canon Law.

“I love what I do,” she says. And apparently, her supervisor loves the work Peery does as well. She recently was given additional responsibilities that mean she will serve as the Episcopal Delegate for Ecumenism, Interreligious-Faith, and Community Affairs. †

*Originally published in OST News, writer –
Cynthia Ladson*

Celebrating 25 Years of Revitalizing the Faith in Turkmenistan.





*“Revive us again,
so Your people can
rejoice in You?”*

Psalm 85:6



OBLATE VOCATION STORY — FR. ANDY KNOP, OMI

I was born in Katowice, Poland, in 1963. My parents were very devout in practicing their faith. Since I was one year old I was a member of a Missionary Oblate parish.

At the age of six, I became an altar server and began serving Mass in the parish. I attended public school in Poland. Because of Communism there was no Catholic or private schools. Before I went to school, I always went to serve Mass, sometimes as early as 6:00 a.m. I really enjoyed doing it, and also taking part in all of the different devotions the parish had to offer.

With the Missionary Oblates running the parish, we had missionaries coming to give testimonials and to present slideshows about the work from places like Cameroon, Madagascar, or other parts of the world. This always interested me, to see how they work and fulfill their ministry.

My parish was a big Oblate parish, with about 15 to 20 Oblates there all the time. So, the interaction for me with

many different Oblate priests, brothers, seminarians, and retired Oblates really influenced me. I felt like being home when I was with the Oblates.

Going on pilgrimages was also important for me growing up in Poland. It was one of the few ways for us to express our faith outside of the churches, and our homes during Communist times. We had a shrine to Our Lady in the area and there was always a large pilgrimage of men and young men each year there. My father started taking me along as a boy on this ten-mile pilgrimage. It would be an all-day event and I enjoyed it very much.

I also visited several times our great national shrine in Poland to Our Lady of Czestochowa, the Black Madonna. This was always a nice place to pray and reach a deeper understating of my faith.

When I was in the fifth grade it became clear to me that becoming a priest is what I wanted to do. In the sacristy where I would





get ready to serve Mass there was a poster saying that you can become an Oblate of Mary Immaculate. Reading that poster was when the idea started to come to me to explore the idea of becoming an Oblate.

In the seventh grade a priest came to our parish and he organized a vocation group of young men interested in becoming Oblates. And there was about 15 of us participating in it. And a good number of us, including me, went to the minor seminary. I was 15 years old.

At the minor seminary I got interested in music and started playing in a band. I was also the goalie on our soccer team. The big adjustment was working on a farm because I was a city boy, but it was actually fun learning all those farm chores.

After the minor seminary I decided to continue and went to the novitiate and then six years of seminary formation before my ordination. At my first Mass in my home parish, my father came up to me and said

that ever since I was a baby, he was praying for me to become a priest and a missionary. He never told me this because he didn't want to pressure me into this vocation. But I always felt there was the support from my father and family on this journey to the priesthood. So, my vocation wasn't just about me. There was also a spiritual influence on this vocation.

My calling in becoming an Oblate was basically to become a missionary, to leave my country. I didn't know where to go but my original thought was to go to Canada to work with Native Americans in the Northwest Territory.

But that didn't happen right away. I was sent first to work in a parish in Poland. Then I was approached with a proposal to come to the United States in 1991, two years after my ordination. I arrived in Chicago to start my journey as a missionary. My dream, to proclaim Christ in a new country on a different continent, had come true. †



Ukraine Snapshots

A Simple Gesture From Young Children

At the Missionary Oblate parish of St. Nicholas in Kiev, Ukraine, a touching ceremony recently took place on the occasion of the Ukrainian National Flag Day.

The children of the parish carried their handmade Ukraine flags and placed them on the altar. The offering of national colors to God was a request for His protection during this time of war.

In explaining the children's gesture, Parish Priest Fr. Pawel Wyszowski, OMI, said: "We want to invite Christ to our future, especially in these difficult times. And we pray for a future that will be fulfilled in accordance with the will and judgments of Almighty God." †



Hope Wins Over Hate

During the summer, in Tyviv, a village in central Ukraine, the Missionary Oblates organized a festival for young people called "The Breath of Life."

In an interview with *Vatican News*, Fr. Vadym Dorosh, OMI, explained that this event has been held every year since 2009. The usual program includes prayer, several workshops, and a Christian music concert. Activities were scaled back this year because of the war with more emphasis on prayer and reflection.

"I am glad that despite the war, I was able to participate in the festival," said Maria Teresa, 25. "In these difficult times, it was very important to feel 'the breath of life' in the meeting with other young people and in the closeness with God through Mass, prayer, and nightly adoration. The very fact that such events are done in such difficult times helps us to keep hope and faith alive that God wins."

In addition to prayers and sports activities, the organizers offered thematic conferences to the youth, one of which, under the guidance of a psychologist, dealt with the topic of preventing and overcoming stress. †



Ukraine Thank You

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We wish to express our eternal gratitude for the financial support of our ministry in Ukraine. People continue to suffer and die in this war. Many people were forced to leave their homes and workplaces, often escaping only with documents.

Many of these people have found refuge in our churches and monasteries. Some have already returned to their homes to rebuild them and ask us to buy building materials such as windows, roof covering, bricks, and other needs.

Many people have also lost their jobs and have no means of subsistence, so they come to our monasteries for food, personal hygiene items, and clothes. In our religious house in Obukhiv, we cook food, which we later serve on the spot and deliver meals to Kyiv where it is distributed in various parts of the city.

We spend quite a lot of money on helping the refugees. Still, these people are currently unable to rent an apartment or feed themselves, as many workplaces are closed or destroyed. We can continue to help such people thanks to your generosity.



Unfortunately, the war against Ukraine is still ongoing, and we do not know when it will end. More and more people will continue to lose their flats, livelihoods, or even health. This was the case a few days ago when a rocket fell near our monastery in Obukhiv which not only destroyed neighboring buildings but also caused one person to lose a leg.

Thank you once again for your solidary, financial support, and especially for your prayers. We continue to ask for your prayers and financial assistance. May the good God reward you all a hundred times and protect all of you in peace.

With respect and prayers,

Witalij Podolan OMI

Fr. Witalij Podolan, OMI
Superior – Oblate Delegation of Ukraine



Tijuana Updates

These updates are provided by a team of lay missionaries helping the Missionary Oblates in Tijuana, Mexico.

You Are the Lawyers of the Neediest Persons

Francisca is a 74-year-old woman with Parkinson's disease. Half of her body is paralyzed and she also suffers from dementia. Both conditions are progressive. Her daughter, Maria, is her caregiver. She was doing a good job but had to go to Sinaloa, Mexico, to attend to the death of her father. During the month she was gone, Francisca's son took care of her. However, this did not work out too well as she hurt her back and developed several bedsores.

This is when our medical team got involved. Three of the bedsores were very bad and are being treated. Also, the team was able to provide Francisca with a special mattress designed to stave off bedsores. Our friends from Maximum Impact donated five such mattresses recently. Generally, these are too expensive for the people living in our parish, and often they do not know about them. The team has also taught the family how to treat the bedsores and provided medication.

Francisca always looks depressed and sad, but it is heartening to see Maria talking to her with so much love, patience, and compassion. Maria likes to kid her mom to get a laugh. Maria says that is as much to help herself, given the difficulty of seeing her mother in such a condition. Maria told us she struggles a lot about expenses since buying diapers and medicine puts a significant strain on finances. She thanks God that she usually manages without imposing on her brothers. We realize how hard it is for her to ask for help. Our biggest challenge sometimes to overcome is the pride instilled in the Mexican culture.

We remind ourselves of a quote the Oblates teach; "You are the lawyers of the neediest persons." So, we talk for them and ask for what they need. Maria offered to provide advice to any other family that we visit who must deal with the same situation. She has learned a lot.



God Will Provide

Kassandra is a 39-year-old woman who has had arthritis for 20 years. Her hands and feet are numb. Because she has never been able to work, she does not qualify for government health insurance. Her husband must work, so is not available to help her during the day. Making only \$100 a week, he also is not able to afford health care for his wife and their children.

We have been helping with food baskets. Kassandra says she is too embarrassed to ask for government help, and further does not like to go out in public because of her appearance. She mentions how great the Church has been and is especially appreciative of the fact that they are very polite and compassionate about her condition and appearance. Apparently, there are people, including some of her own relatives that have made fun of her appearance.

We have invited her to Church and have explained to her the various programs the Oblates have facilitated that she could benefit from, including the roof project and the scholarship and taekwondo programs that would help her children. Kassandra promises to get more involved with the Church, saying she does want the best for her family, and she believes God will provide.

The Oblate Family Was the First to Help

Maria Sanchez and her family attend our Oblate parish in Tijuana, Mexico. Recently her house caught on fire and everything was lost.

The Oblates immediately sprang into action to help Maria and her children. They provided them with food, clothing, and temporary housing. Then a wonderful blessing occurred. The Oblates, because of their generous benefactors, were able to build Maria and her family a new house.

During the construction, Maria slept on the ground at the construction site to prevent gangs from stealing tools and construction material. Today, Maria has a three-bedroom, one-bath house with a small kitchen and living room.

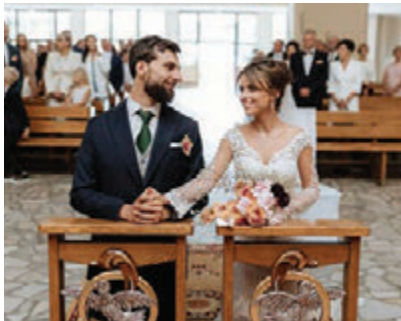
When sharing her story, Maria always makes one point crystal clear: **“The Oblate family was the first one to help.” †**





Gifts for the Poor

Wojciech and Silwia had an unusual request for the guests at their wedding. Instead of gifts for the newlyweds, the couple asked for cutting boards, vegetable peelers, and other items useful in preparing a weekly soup for the poor.



The gifts for the poor were given to “Soup in Kato” an initiative of the Good Shepherd Community which is a ministry of the Archdiocese of Katowice. Meals are prepared by the community for the homeless in the city of Silesia.

The community was created by the Missionary Oblates in 1993 to provide activities aimed at the poor, homeless, and addicted. Currently, Fr. Andrzej Kordek, OMI, is the chaplain of the community. †

Pope Blesses Crowns for Koden

A delegation of the Missionary Oblates visited the Holy Father on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the coronation of the image of Our Lady of Koden.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Koden is the main Marian

shrine in the Diocese of Siedlce in the east of Poland. The Oblates have been responsible for the shrine since 1927. Annually, over 200,000 pilgrims visit the sanctuary.

During the papal audience at the Vatican, Pope Francis blessed the crowns prepared on the occasion of the 300th anniversary. Pope Francis also asked the Oblate delegation from Poland about their work at the Shrine which is located on the border with Belarus and very close to Ukraine.

“Last year was very difficult for Koden, but on the other hand, the spiritual development continues,” said Fr. Pavel Zajac, OMI, Provincial of the Polish Province. “The situation on the eastern border led to our pilgrim house being used not only for pilgrims, but also soldiers, and policemen who stayed in this area most all the time, guarding our security and keeping an eye on the borders. From July 1, everything is open at the Shrine of Our Lady of Koden and thousands of pilgrims are gathering again.” †



Legendary Oblate Peace Activist Dies

Father Carl Kabat, OMI, a tireless opponent of nuclear weapons, died on August 4 in San Antonio, Texas, at the age of 88. Much of his influence came from his unbending commitment to public protests, and a defiant spirit with a touch of sly wit.

Father Kabat sometimes trespassed on military bases dressed as a clown, an homage to St. Paul's admonition in Corinthians to be valiant yet humble: "We are fools for Christ."

Father Kabat was repeatedly jailed, spending a total of nearly 20 years in prison since the 1970s, but remained steadfast in his belief in civil disobedience to bring attention to the threats from nuclear arsenals.

Through difficult times, the Oblate charism – "to preach the Gospel to the poor" – offered direction to this relentless anti-nuclear weapons protester. †



Father Joshua Nash, OMI, Ordained in Australia

In 2016, Bro. Joshua Nash, OMI, made his First Vows as a Missionary Oblate after completing his novitiate year at the Oblate Novitiate in Godfrey, Illinois. In July, Fr. Joshua Nash, OMI, was ordained a priest in his native Australia.

"At the novitiate I was the only novice from Australia," said Fr. Nash. "I was truly blessed to have my fellow Oblate brothers to live with and discern my calling during that very special year."

Father Joshua was born and raised in Adelaide, Australia. He and his family attended the Oblates' St. David Parish throughout his childhood. After high school he studied law and international studies while also working as a youth ministry coordinator for the diocese. He spent time with the United Nations in South Africa working with refugees.

As an Oblate seminarian, one of Fr. Joshua's most memorable experiences was spending three months in Lourdes, France, helping young people to engage more with their faith.

Father Joshua was ordained at St. David's Parish and his first assignment is as the assistant pastor at his childhood church. He said the appointment will enable him to learn and grow in the sacraments and to develop his pastoral and parochial ministry as a priest.

"I hope later that I may be able to move into more missionary work, perhaps development of new ministries that don't exist yet in the Church, enabling the Church to reach out to those who are most excluded and abandoned by both the Church and our society," said Fr. Nash in a recent interview with *The Southern Cross*. †





A Teacher Of The Faith



When he was a boy growing up in Chad, Bro. Jacques Marie Liba, OMI, used to tag along with his parents as they

taught catechism classes at a Missionary Oblate parish.

Watching his parents teach the Catholic faith left an impression on young Jacques, and today he is studying for the priesthood so that he can continue that family tradition of sharing the faith as a Missionary Oblate priest.

“I see the role of a priest as being a teacher,” said Bro. Jacques. “I want to teach the Bible to people in their own language.”

Brother Jacques is currently studying for the priesthood at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He arrived last year and is the first Oblate from Chad to study in the United States.

Brother Jacques grew up in a small village in Chad where the Oblates ran a parish. His parents, Martin and Pauline, were active members of the parish and they instilled a strong faith in their eight children. Brother Jacques was an altar server from an early age.





“It was common for the Oblates to come by the house when I was growing up,” said Bro. Jacques. “They really were part of our family.”

When Bro. Jacques began feeling a calling to religious life, he first explored the possibility of becoming a diocesan priest. But the impression that the Oblates made on him as a child eventually led him in the direction of becoming a missionary priest.

Because there is limited opportunity to pursue the priesthood in Chad, Bro. Jacques became a worldwide missionary after joining the Oblates’ pre-novitiate program. He spent three years studying philosophy in Cameroon

and also spent time in Nigeria where he began his teaching career by teaching Sunday school.

In 2021, Bro. Jacques received the surprise of his life when he was chosen to continue his studies in the United States. He joined the Oblates’ seminarian community in San Antonio comprised of scholastics from the United States, Mexico, and several countries in Africa.

After ordination, Bro. Jacques said he is open to working in a parish, school, hospital, or any other location where he can be a teacher of the Good News and a messenger of God’s love.

And as he teaches, Bro. Jacques will be fulfilling a directive of Scripture: *“Bring them up in the training and instructions of the Lord.”* Ephesians 6:4 †

Fr. Salvatore Saves Everyone

When Fr. Sal De George, OMI, was a scholastic at the International Roman Scholasticate the other Missionary Oblate seminarians used to call him “Salvatore salva tutti” (Salvatore saves everyone!).

While he would be the first to admit that he cannot save everyone, Fr. Sal has spent 57 years as a priest trying to fulfill the instructions of the Oblate founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, to help people “act like human beings, first of all, and then like Christians, and, finally, we must help them to become saints.”

Father Sal was born into an Italian American family in Houston in 1939. He also had relatives in New Orleans who were pillars of Oblate-staffed parishes there. The family also owned and operated the famous Napoleon House Bar in the French Quarter.

In 1952, after graduating from eighth grade, Fr. Sal enrolled at the Oblates’ St. Anthony’s High School Seminary in

San Antonio. In 1958

he entered the Oblates’

St. Peter’s Novitiate in Mission, Texas.

After his first profession of vows, his superior assumed that as the grandson

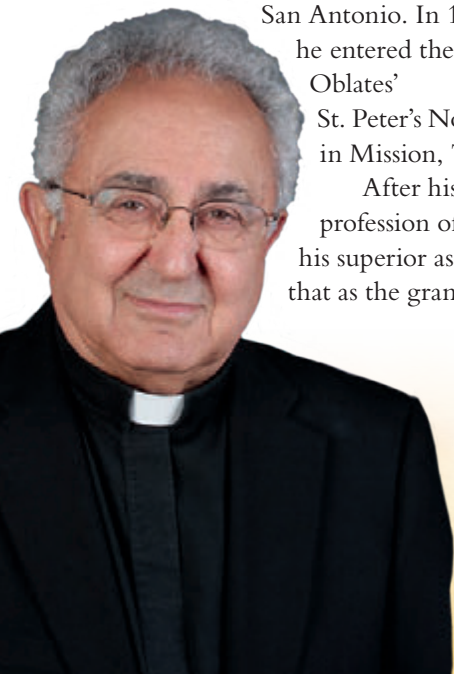
of Italian immigrants, he would do well studying at the Oblate International Scholasticate in Rome. So he spent seven years there being educated in philosophy and theology by the Dominicans at the Angelicum.

One of Fr. Sal’s most memorable times in Europe was during the summer of 1963 while studying Spanish at the University of Madrid. One July weekend, he took some time off with friends to attend the Fiesta de San Fermin in Pamplona which includes the Running of the Bulls. Since money was hard to come by, he and his friends chose to run with the bulls to gain free entry into the bullfight.

Father Sal was ordained in Rome in 1965 as Vatican II was ending. While he had expressed his desire to go to the African mission of Chad, his first assignment took him back to St. Anthony’s Seminary where he taught for seven years. He then headed up the college-level Oblate formation programs in Texas.

The next stop was parish ministry, first at St. Thomas the Apostle in Huntsville, Texas, which had a university as well as a prison mission attached to it. He then was sent to Holy Family and then the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Brownsville, Texas. Eventually he returned to St. Anthony Seminary where he served as rector of six years.

In between two stints as pastor of St. Patrick’s Parish in Houston, Fr. Sal served as Vicar Provincial of the Oblates former Southern Provinces and then, in the newly formed United States Province, he held the title of “Area Councilor” for six years.



In 2012, the Oblate provinces of Italy and Spain were being combined and an assembly was convened near Rome to work out the details. Father Sal, because of his ability to speak both Italian and Spanish, was asked to serve as moderator.

“I repeatedly told the organizers I was not their man. I hadn’t really spoken Italian in 46 years,” said Fr. Sal, who agreed to accept the assignment because nobody else volunteered.

Today, Fr. Sal lives at Immaculate Conception Church in Houston, a parish where the Oblates have served since 1911. He is always on the go helping people, whether they be at Immaculate Conception, other Spanish speaking parishes, or local charities.

Of the places that he serves, one of his favorites is the Catholic Worker House where Casa Juan Diego is located. It is a last hope ministry for immigrants and refugees who have no other place to turn to for help. Before the pandemic, he celebrated Mass weekly and cooked for people who land there without papers or insurance. Some of the residents are paraplegic. They are the forgotten, but not to Fr. Sal.

Salvatore salva tutti – Salvatore saves everyone. †

Information for this article originally appeared in OMI USA, the newsletter of the United States Province of the Missionary Oblates.





Fr. Salvador “Chava” Gonzalez, OMI Named Shrine Director

When most people think of a missionary, they imagine a person who journeys out to the far corners of the world to preach the Gospel and serve the poor.

Father Salvador “Chava” Gonzalez, OMI, projects another image of a missionary – someone who helps others journey inward to a deeper relationship with God and the people in their lives.

As the new Director of the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, Fr. Chava is able to be a missionary in many ways.

“To work at a Marian shrine is truly a blessing for me,” said Fr. Chava. “I feel like I am following in the footsteps of our founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod, because the very first place he sent his priests was to Marian shrines.”

Father Chava was born in Mexico in 1971 and raised in Oakland, California. As a Missionary Oblate seminarian he worked with young people and preached at youth missions in both the United States and Mexico. He also worked with incarcerated teenagers, helping them to see that they can have a better life. He continues to volunteer with prison ministry today.

After his priestly ordination in 2004 Fr. Chava ministered in parishes in Lowell, Massachusetts, and Houston, Texas. He then was assigned to the Oblates’ Immaculata Retreat House in Willimantic, Connecticut, where he was director for six years.

Father Chava then came to the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows as the Director of Hispanic and Youth Ministries. He was a member of the staff at King’s House Retreat Center where he would eventually serve as director for more than six years. For the past several years Fr. Chava has also served as the Oblate Communication Director, overseeing a variety of communication programs for the Oblates in the United States.

Throughout his Oblate journey, Fr. Chava said what has impressed him most about the Oblates is their commitment to always be close to people in need. As Shrine Director, he has numerous opportunities to do that every day. †



“Being a missionary is something that we are all called to do,” said Fr. Chava. “I am blessed to be a missionary at the Shrine and to help others in their missionary journeys.”



LEAVE A LEGACY

WE TRULY APPRECIATE your generous support of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and our service to the poor. Are you interested in continuing this support for years or generations to come? You can when you leave a legacy to help the Oblates spread the Good News of Jesus Christ by feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, and giving shelter to the homeless here at home and around the world.

BECOME A CO-MISSIONARY WITH THE OBLATES

To help you better understand your legacy options, the Oblates have put together a simple brochure explaining various gift giving opportunities.

To receive your free, *Leave a Legacy with Lasting Impact* brochure, simply contact us at 1-800-233-6264 or email charitablegifts@oblatesusa.org.



MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION
OF MARY IMMACULATE USA
MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE



**“A poor man, taken from the desert
and brought here to Rome.”**

**Pope Francis talking about Fr. Luis Ignacio (Chicho) Rois Alonso, OMI,
the newly elected Superior General of the Missionary Oblates.**

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage

PAID

Missionary Association
of Mary Immaculate USA

OblateWORLD Magazine

323 Oblate Drive
San Antonio, TX 78216
omiusa.org



For more information about the
ministries of the Missionary Oblates,
scan this code on your digital device.