



Missionary Oblates  
– Always Close to the People

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# Oblate Connections

Oblate Connections – No.52, 8th December, 2021

Welcome to our December edition of Oblate Connections. As we continue our Advent journey towards the celebration of Christmas there is no doubt we are living in a time of continued uncertainty. We are very aware of the ongoing impact of the virus on our lives especially as we are seeing the reintroduction of some of the restrictions that we had hoped we might have been able to put behind us. At the same time, we are grateful for the hope offered to us by the various vaccination programmes.

Yet despite these uncertainties Pope Francis reminds us that the season of Advent is “the period that every year introduces us to Christmas and its Mystery. This year too, its lights will be dimmed by the consequences of the pandemic, which still weighs heavily on our time. All the more reason why we are called to question ourselves and not to lose hope. The feast of the Birth of Christ is not out of tune with the trial we are going through, because it is the quintessential feast of compassion, the feast of tenderness. Its beauty is humble and full of human warmth. The beauty of Christmas shines through in the sharing of

small gestures of genuine love. It is not alienating, it is not superficial, it is not evasive; on the contrary, it expands the heart, opening it up to gratuitousness... to the giving of self.”

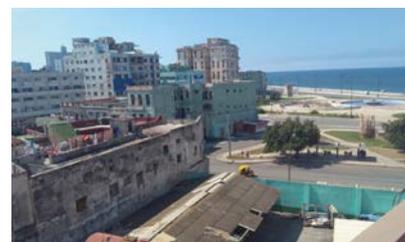
Let us open our hearts to those who continue to experience a sense of isolation or poor health because of Covid or for many other reasons. Let us also remember those who will be facing this Christmas without the presence of some of their loved ones. Such openness to the needs of others are examples of the importance of charity. Indeed, charity has been described as the beating heart of the Christian: just as one cannot live without a heartbeat, so one cannot be a Christian without charity. It is through our gestures of love, sharing and service that we bring forth the mystery of Christmas.

It is my hope that this Advent will be an opportunity for us all to recognize God’s closeness to us. May we be united together as we pray those important words “Come Lord Jesus.” Finally, let us remember that when we pray, we light a candle in the darkness.

– Fr. Lorcán O’Reilly, OMI

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# *Christmas as Shattering The Containers of Our*

*– Fr Ron Rolheiser, OMI*

Funny how God invariably shatters the containers of our expectations. We have a notion of how God should act and God ends up acting in a way that shatters all of those expectations and yet fulfills our expectations in a deeper way. That's certainly true of what happened in Bethlehem at the first Christmas.

For centuries, men and women of faith, aware of their helplessness to rectify everything that's wrong in life, had been praying for God to come to earth as a Messiah, a Savior, to clean up the earth and right all that's wrong with it. Exactly how this was to happen was perhaps more of an inchoate longing for justice, a hungry hope, than any kind of clear vision, at least until the great Jewish prophets came along. Eventually prophets like Isaiah began to articulate a vision of what would happen when the Messiah came. In these visions, the Messiah would usher in a "Messianic Age", a new time, when everything would be made right. There would be prosperity for the poor, healing for the sick, freedom from every type of enslavement, and justice for all (including punishment for the wicked). The poor and the meek would inherit the earth because the long-sought Messiah would simply overpower all evil, drive the wicked off the face of the earth, and make all things right.

And after all those centuries of waiting, of longing, what did we get? What did we get? A helpless, naked baby, unable to feed himself. That wasn't the way anyone expected this to happen. They had expected a Superhuman, a Superstar, someone whose muscle, intellect, physical stature, invulnerability, and invincibility would simply dwarf all the powers on the planet in a way that there could be no argument, no resistance, no standing against its presence.

That's still the way, mostly, we fantasize how God's power should work in our world. But, as we know from the first Christmas, that's not normally the way God works. What was revealed in Bethlehem is that normally we meet the presence and power of God in our world as a helpless infant lying in the straw, vulnerable, seemingly powerless, touching us subliminally.

Why? Why doesn't the all-powerful Creator of the universe flex more muscle? Why is God normally revealed more in the body of an infant than in that of Superstar? Why? Because the power of God works to melt hearts rather than break them, and that's what vulnerability and helplessness can do. That's what infants can do. God's power, at least God's power to draw us into intimacy with each other, doesn't normally work through might, muscles, and cool (invulnerability). It works through a lot of things, but it works with a special power through vulnerability and helplessness. Intimacy is predicated on vulnerability. You cannot overpower another person so as to make him or her love you, unless you overpower his or her heart the way an infant does. We can seduce each other through attractiveness, draw admiration through our talents, and intimidate each other through superior strength, but none of these will ultimately provide the basis for a shared community of life for long... but the powerlessness and innocence of a baby can provide that.

# Expectations



God's power, like a baby sleeping in its crib, lies in our world as a quiet invitation, not as a threat or coercion. When Christ took on flesh in our world in Bethlehem two thousand years ago and then died seemingly helpless on a cross in Jerusalem some thirty years later, this is what was revealed: the God who is incarnated in Jesus Christ enters into human suffering rather than stands clear of it, is in solidarity with us rather than standing apart from us, manifests that the route to glory is downward rather than upward, stands with the poor and powerless rather than with the rich and powerful, invites rather than coerces, and is more manifest in a baby than in a superstar.

But that isn't always easy to grasp, nor accept. We are often frustrated and impatient with God who, as scripture tells, can seem slow to act. Jesus promised that the poor and the meek would inherit the earth and this seems forever belied by what's actually happening in the world. The rich are getting richer and the poor don't seem to be inheriting much. What good does a helpless infant do apropos to this? Where do we see messianic power acting?

Well, again the containers of our expectations need to be shattered. What does it mean "to inherit the earth"? To be a superstar? To be rich and famous? To have power over others? To walk into a room and be instantly recognized and admired as being significant and important? Is that the way we "inherit the earth"? Or, do we "inherit the earth" when a coldness is melted in our hearts and we are brought back to our primal goodness by the smile of a baby?

## Advent Evening Retreat

### Advent & The Synod of the Whole Church

– With DeMazenod Retreat & Spirituality Centre London

As the faithful People of God, during this season of Advent, you are invited to actively participate through scripture, prayer, reflection and sharing.

The Synod of the whole Church is in a listening attitude. What do you want to say?

*A Time to Journey*  
Tuesday 14 December,  
7-8pm

*A time to Witness*  
Tuesday 21 December,  
7-8pm

Join us on Zoom!

To register, please email: [Communications@oblates.ie](mailto:Communications@oblates.ie)



# A Reflection on The Oblate Lourdes Pilgrimage 2021

Looking out the window as I begin this, there is the evidence all about that the end of the year isn't all that far away. It is a little colder, certainly dark evenings, and living as I do in a rural location, nature's signs are all about to remind us, even if we did not know the date, that we are well and truly into Autumn.

For the second year in succession, the year is closing without the traditional Oblate Lourdes pilgrimage. This has been such a central part of the year for so many of us that there is a real feeling of loss, of sadness, that our pilgrimage has not been possible. Of course, we must put this into context; the Covid pandemic has been a most terrible time and our inability to arrange a pilgrimage cannot be compared to how people have suffered over the past 20 months. For Oblates, the pandemic and its effects became very real from the beginning with the deaths of four Oblates from Inchicore, viz. Frs Anthony Carroll, Tom Scully, John Nolan, and John Murphy – all in the space of six days. May they rest in peace.

The Lourdes pilgrimage is part of the life blood of the Oblates of the Anglo-Irish Province and so, while it was not possible to go to Lourdes physically, modern technology that could not even have been imagined when our pilgrimage began in 1883, made it possible to put together a full pilgrimage programme online, across the internet. And so it was that in September, we went on a pilgrimage journey with our second digital pilgrimage. It was a rich and varied experience of prayer, of personal sharing, of liturgies that despite the medium, evoked many of the same responses as happens each year in Lourdes. Every year, so many people speak of looking forward to our Mass with the



anointing of the sick, celebrated at St Bernadette's Altar beside the Rosary Basilica. This year, for the second time, we had the privilege of celebrating this liturgy with the staff and residents of Curragh Lawn Nursing Home and for all who joined in via the internet, the depth of meaning and faith, conveyed and celebrated in that Mass, was no less evident.

Of course, we would love to have made that journey to all the familiar places - to walk through the Grotto, and see afresh the spring that never changes, to walk the Stations of the Cross along the River Gave, be able to respond to the invitation of Our Lady, issued through St Bernadette to us to "come and wash ourselves in the water" at the Baths, and of course, to renew friendships that are important to us, nourished through service over very many years in Lourdes. All these things we missed. And despite all of this, person after person made the same comment: "I felt like I was there."

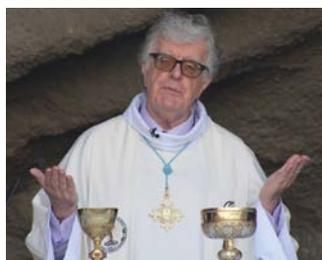


It was a pilgrimage that brought together people from all parts of our Oblate pilgrimage world, from Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales, and the island of Jersey and of course, our 'new' Oblate family, those who have learned about us and shared our prayer online since the onset of Covid. The team at Kairos Communications from Maynooth were invaluable and brought all their professional expertise and commitment as we recorded the liturgies in Inchicore and Kildare. And where would we be without Rebecca Roughneen, our digital communications leader, as it was on her shoulders that responsibility rested to manage all the inputs and contributions and create the pilgrimage. Very few really know the professionalism and effort required to do this.

During the pilgrimage and beforehand, we invited people to send in their petitions and with those petitions in hand, some 592 days after I had last set foot

there, it was possible to return and stand once more at the most sacred place of the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes. It was a privilege and a gift to be there - I know that. I made my way to the Grotto, carrying both in hands and my heart, the very many petitions sent in, and presented them there to Our Lady, praying and knowing that she would, in turn, present them to her Son.

The 2021 pilgrimage is now behind us and not unsurprisingly, our thoughts now turn to 2022. As these words are being written, there is great uncertainty throughout all the pilgrimage groups around Ireland about plans for 2022. Covid numbers are rising again, the vulnerable continue to be vulnerable and it would be a foolish person who would say that they know how things will be when September, our usual time of pilgrimage, comes about.



So where do we stand? The leadership team, led by Fr Lorcán, held a meeting one week ago to discuss this. Our conclusion was that we will return on pilgrimage in 2022, scheduled for September 17 through 22 and we will begin to work with David Walsh soon to plan the logistics of this decision. We also decided that for now it would be premature to return with our full assisted pilgrims' group; the situation vis-à-vis those whose health is already compromised makes them very vulnerable and the risks of travelling to, and being in, another country, when Covid is still present, are too great.

Recently, two key national meetings took place, the first one being the lay leadership of all the Irish pilgrimages including dioceses, religious congregations (Oblates and Franciscans), and association groups (e.g., Order of Malta). The second meeting was that of UIP, the association of the Pilgrimage Directors from across Ireland. The primary topic of conversation for both was Lourdes 2022.

In February, the annual February Days will take place in Lourdes, a time when pilgrimages come together to finalise plans. Our leadership team will be there and only after those meetings will we make final decisions about 2022. There are almost three months to those meetings and a lot can happen. For this reason, final decisions around the composition of the pilgrimage will be deferred until the end of February. In the meantime, and with the certainty that there will be a pilgrimage in 2022, we hope that you will put the dates in your diary so that we can once again gather in Lourdes, in 2022 as much in thanks as in supplication!

Key individuals from Lourdes, including the Vice-Rector and his team, François Labadie, Director of the Accueil Notre Dame, as well as Patrick Vinuales, head of the Vinuales Hotel Group (Solitude, Panorama, etc.) and David Walsh, all contributed to one or both meetings. It was clear from these presentations, as well, it must be said, from the experience of our Director Nursing, Miriam McDonnell who was in Lourdes in October, and my own experience shortly before, that Lourdes in all its forms – sanctuary, town, hotels, and restaurants – are making huge efforts to ensure the health-safety of all visitors.

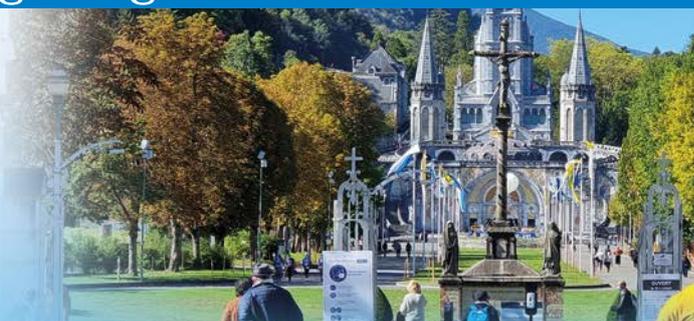
– Gerard Bennett

## Lourdes Pilgrimage 2022

**17th - 22nd September**

With packages available from  
Dublin, Manchester, Edinburgh & London.

For more information visit website (see below)  
or email [lourdes@oblates.ie](mailto:lourdes@oblates.ie)



[www.OblateLourdesPilgrimage.com](http://www.OblateLourdesPilgrimage.com)



# Living as Oblate People

You may already be aware that there is to be a worldwide gathering of all lay people associated with the Oblate Mission in 2022. Since the canonization of St Eugene de Mazenod, founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, many people are seeking to know more about St Eugene and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and share in the Oblate charism. This gathering will seek to connect once more with all people involved in the Oblate charism and rejoice that it is being supported by the prayers and actions of Oblate people all over the world.

This second Congress will take advantage of all the technological advances since 1996 when the first Lay Congress took place. As well as being held face to face in Kokotek, Poland, the event will be streamed online. The Congress titled, "Living as Oblate people" will gather people from all over the world to Celebrate, Connect and Commission all who share the Oblate mission.

Our Province will be well represented in the European Regional Team by Pauline Thomas (Anglesey, Wales), Gerard Bennett (Westmeath, Ireland), Kirk Jacob and Fr Brian Maher (London, England).

Through the Congress, it is hoped to strengthen and deepen the identity of Oblate people and to share locally, regionally, and at the congregational level, the depth and variety of ways of connecting as a big family joined through the charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod - the Oblate family.

Preparations for the three-day event are ongoing and it will be streamed from Rome to the whole world for three hours each day. Fr Louis Lougen, Superior General of the Congregation, a keen promoter of lay involvement with the mission, will open and close the event.

Some might wonder what St Eugene would make of involving lay people in the Oblate mission. The present Superior General of the Congregation wrote, "Before Saint Eugene de Mazenod brought together the first Missionaries of Provence on January 25, 1816, he was collaborating with lay people in his ministry to prisoners, in his work with young people, and in charitable works. From the very beginning of his ministry as we know, Saint Eugene lived a special quality of closeness to the poor and to those lay people who were collaborating in his apostolic works. There was a deep sense of respect for the diverse gifts that lay people brought to the various ministries and he regarded them as real co-operators in mission." (D.O.A.rev. pg.3).

It is hoped that as many Oblate people throughout Britain and Ireland as possible will want to be involved with the Congress, which takes place May 27th - 29th 2022. There will be more information in the New Year about the event and how to take part in it.

So put the dates in your 2022 diary now, you really don't want to miss it!!!!

– Mary Tyrrell

# A New Missionary Picture-Postcard from Cuba



Father Nick Harding has sent us photos from his assignment in Cuba, a country largely unfamiliar to many people. In 1959 Fidel Castro overthrew the government and aligned himself with the Soviet Union, (Russia). Though relations have thawed a bit since Castro's passing, insight into the daily lives of the Cuban people, and the faith community are rare.

In this photo journal, Fr Nick gives us a slice of life in Habana (Havana) where he and Fr. Roger Hallee, OMI serve the local people in an Oblate mission parish. He gives us a glimpse of the neighbourhood he lives in along with some insight into life in a country where the government oversees much of everyday life. We see simple shops, horses and oxen still being used for wagons and on farms, along with 1950's – era cars which Cubans have somehow kept running for 60 years after the U.S. imposed an embargo on trade with Cuba when Castro came to power. Along with those old cars, the people also seem to have kept their faith intact, in a country that is "officially" non-religious.

Though Fr. Nick is able to send these photos and thoughts out via email, he and Fr. Roger cannot see them when they are posted on the Oblate website as internet from outside Cuba is blocked by government censors.



1953 Ford at gas station closed because workers have Covid.



View out apartment window of a small part of one of our three parishes, which together have almost 300,000 people.



A homemade trike taxi.



Here I am in front of one of our parishes, Our Lady of Sorrows.



Me with some elderly Oblate associates on the coast of our parish area, note Habana skyline in background.

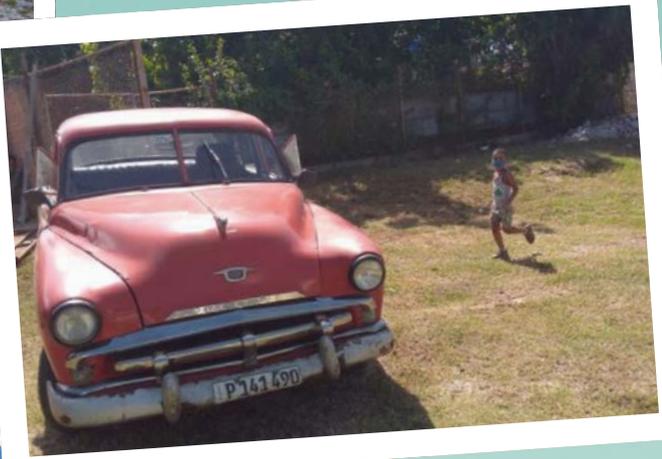
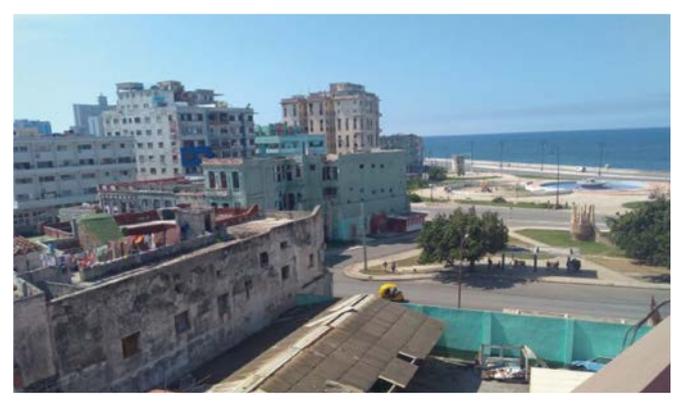


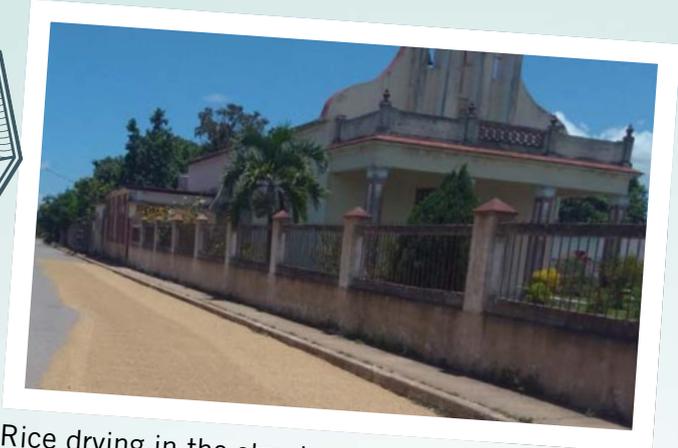
Photo of front of our rectory, 1951 Plymouth with Datsun motor belongs to our neighbour.



On our street an old man under a tree refills disposable lighters for a living.



View of dilapidated buildings downtown, note laundry drying.



Rice drying in the street next to our parish church in los Palacios.

Today I went to buy our ration of food. This is for the two of us Oblates in Cojimar for a month. The package of coffee says on it contains 50 per cent chicory. Note the Black beans would be for one meal for two in the USA but it is our supply for entire month. I have lost about 13lbs. in weight.

# News from Wistaston Hall

With the changing of the seasons come many new changes to Wistaston Hall. As we move into Autumn and winter we move into a new season of life for the centre.

When the buildings next door were first purchased it was clear how much work was needed to fix them up. The house was a shell, the outbuilding was falling down, and the garden had been neglected for a number of years. It was sad to see such an old building, that was originally built as the coachman's house for the Walthall estate, fall into disrepair. With a lot of time and hard work the whole place has been redesigned to serve contemporary need, while still keeping some of the original features, like the fireplaces and the well, to honour the history of the place.

The Grange is now finished, and open for those who wish to come on a personal retreat. The self-catering kitchen, St Oscar Romero prayer room, which has a new stained-glass window designed by Alan Davis, and library make it a perfect place for those who wish to come and spend some time alone in personal reflection. The Grange also adds four extra double rooms to the centre, meaning the capacity for taking larger groups has increased.

As well as the Grange, we have now almost completed work on the Francis Morrisey OMI conference building and the art room. The art room has been specifically designed so it is the perfect space for getting creative in a relaxing environment. Using the art facilities will give people the opportunity to contemplate, to explore, and express the unity and mystery of all creation.

The Francis Morrisey building has been designed for day groups. It contains a 50-seat conference room and a small kitchen for tea and coffee and self-catering purposes. For many years Fr Frank was a regular contributor to the Oblate Retreat Centre's programme, so when the time came it felt fitting to honour him by giving his name to the conference building. We have also installed a bespoke stained-glass window in the conference room, which takes pride of place on the main wall.

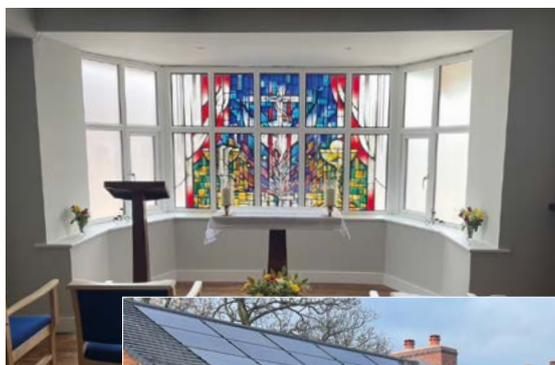


Work on the Reflection Garden is almost completed, with the installation of statues designed by Timothy Shultz, who describes his sculptures as "visual prayers". Some of Shultz most famous pieces are installed in historical churches in Rome and the Vatican. There is a sculpture inspired by The Last Supper, the viewer sees Christ on his knees ready to wash their feet. The other sculpture is entitled "When I was Hungry and Thirsty" and is inspired by the Gospel of Matthew 25:40, this sculpture is a visual representation of charity. It tells us that we need to see Christ in the poor and the hungry, and that we should see our acts of kindness to them as kindness to Him.

The garden has had a complete transformation, going from a neglected patch of grass and over grown trees to a lovely area for quiet contemplation. To see the new buildings and grounds now, compared to what they were, makes all the hard work that has gone into them worthwhile.

It's not only the buildings that have been brought up to date, we also have a brand-new website, which is now live on [www.orc-crewe.org](http://www.orc-crewe.org). People will be able to find all our events and book online much easier than before. There is a history of Wistaston Hall and updates of the work on the Grange from start to finish. We also have a new brochure, which we will be sending out, detailing all of the events for the coming year.

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Autumn saw another new addition to Wistaston Hall, with Sr Anne Donnelly joining the team in November, as Assistant Director. Anne is a member of the Daughters of the Holy Spirit. Before coming to Wistaston she spent 7 years in France on the general council, and before that was part of the team in Loyola Hall. Sr Anne will be on hand to give Individually Guided Retreats, input for directed retreats, and the general day to day business that goes with the running of a retreat centre. Anne is a great addition to the centre team, and we very much look forward to working with her.

The last couple of years have been very trying for us here at Wistaston Hall. There were moments when it felt like we would never get to where we are, with the fire in August of 2020 followed by the flooding at the beginning of this year, but we are thankful that we can now start the next chapter of the Oblate Retreat Centre.

As we gear up for our December retreats and all the joy that Advent brings, we look forward to welcoming back friends, old and new, to Wistaston Hall.

– Rachel Challoner

## Events at Wistaston Hall

**Mindfulness for Stress** – Led by Martin Zetter  
28th – 30th Jan suggested donation £160.00  
Led by Martin Zetter  
Learn mindfulness tools and develop a meditation practice that will help you manage stress in all aspects of your life.

**A way of living life to the full**  
Sober living – an AA themed Retreat  
4th – 6th March suggested donation £160.00  
We will explore, reflect, share, and celebrate conscious sobriety. The retreat will draw from the rich sources of the scriptures, from AA and Christian spirituality.

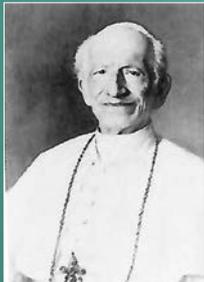
**Living the Light**  
25th – 27th March suggested donation £160.00  
– Scripture Weekend with Sr Marie Henry OP A weekend scripture course, beginning with Genesis and moving through the Prophets to the fulfillment in Christ.

**Embracing Trust with a Woman's Heart**  
6th – 8th May suggested donation - £160.00  
Led by Sister Kathleen Bryant  
So many things are coming at us, so much expected of us, where is God's invitation in all of this frenzy?

**Icon Workshop**  
29th June – 3rd July suggested donation £320.00  
Led by Sabeesh Jacob, OMI  
There is an increasing interest in the immense spiritual potential of art in our society as symbols and images unite people and enhance spiritual connectedness and communication.

**For more information please visit**  
[www.orc-crewe.org](http://www.orc-crewe.org) or phone Rachel on  
**+44 1270 568653**

# The Breton Oblate Mission in Wales



Pope Leo XIII



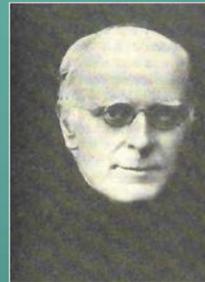
Bishop Mostyn



Fr. J. Soullier



Fr. F. Anger



Fr. C. Tatin

## The Bishop, the Oblates and the Pope

On the 8th January, 1896, Very Rev. Father Louis Soullier, Superior General of the Oblates, accompanied by Fathers Tatin, Assistant General, and Anger, Pro-Director of the Holy Family, had a private audience with his Holiness, Pope Leo XIII. A report of the conversation which took place appeared in *Mission de Oblats*, in 1896. The conversation went like this:

**Superior General:** Your Holiness, who has a lively desire for the return of the English people to Catholic unity, will be pleased to know that our missions are nearly all in countries subject to England.

**Pope:** You have full liberty in these missions? It must be acknowledged that England, which once persecuted religious so cruelly, now allows missionaries complete freedom.

**Superior General:** Yes, Holy Father, we enjoy complete freedom, both in England and in the colonies. In the British Isles, we have 12 foundations, and the new Vicar Apostolic of Wales is asking us for missionaries who speak Breton.

**Pope:** They must be given him.

**Superior General:** We would very much like this, but the needs everywhere are so great and the labourers are few...

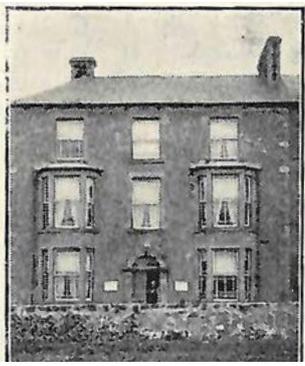
The outcome of this meeting resulted in the Pope giving his blessing to the Vicar Apostolate of Wales to bring Breton speaking missionaries to begin preaching the Catholic faith to Wales. Bishop Mostyn set in motion the Breton mission to Wales.

## The Mission

The Breton Oblate mission was to reach out to Welsh non-Catholics through the medium of the Welsh language. At the request of Mgr. Mostyn, Bishop of Menevia, the Oblate Congregation sent two Fathers to Holyhead to found a mission for the

Welsh speaking population. Thanks to the common roots between their own Breton language and Welsh, the Breton Oblates would not find it difficult to become proficient enough in Welsh to preach in that language. In an article in *Les Missions*, "Nouvelles Diverses", December, 1900, mention is made that the two Breton Fathers, Fr. Trebaol and F. Croissier, in Llanrwst, had begun the study of the Welsh language. By the following December, 1901, an account by the Breton Fathers state 'A year has elapsed since we received our obedience for Wales. We came directly to Holyhead and immediately began the study of the language which is so indispensable for announcing to the Welsh people the faith of their Fathers. We have spent twelve months at Holyhead with Fr. D'Alton, for whose zeal and good advice we shall feel grateful' By 30 November, the Breton Fathers had arrived at their first mission at Llanrwst – 'a charming and pleasant little town of four thousand people, situated on the banks of the Conway river'. The following day, the first Mass, a High Mass, was celebrated, 'at which the choir of Colwyn Bay church assisted, about thirty Catholics attended, the majority of them Irish, but no Welsh person...'. By evening, the Welsh people began to arrive, "at first a few, then more, and, wonderful to relate, our chapel was too small to hold all of them. There were more than eighty, nearly all Welsh'. By 1904, two more Breton Fathers had arrived, Fathers Merour and Julian Tanter in Pwllheli.

The purchase of Salesbury House, Llanrwst, for the Breton priests, who were now ministering to the Welsh people in their own tongue, 'recalls the alliance which existed, in bygone days, between Welsh people and the Catholic Church and the Salesbury family of Llewenny, which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, numbered several men of distinction, many of whom were associated



Mission House, Llanrwst



Breton Friends, Llanrwst

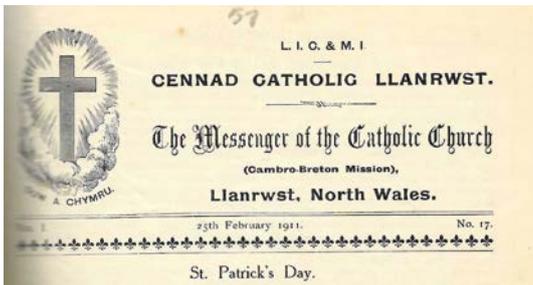


Father Méroux, Pwllheli



Catholic Y.M.S., Llanrwst

with the Catholic cause in Wales'. But though the language barrier was broken, it would prove to be a very difficult mission. An attempt to set up a mission in Blaenau Ffestiniog met with bitter anti-Catholic opposition and was closed down by the bishop. The missionaries did not sufficiently appreciate the vibrant form of church life developed in the chapels and the depth of the local attachment to it. The years 1904-1905 were witnessing a great religious 'revival' in Wales that centred on the Protestant chapels and re-invigorated them. In short, neither party to the proposed interfaith dialogue had yet developed the ecumenical sympathies that we have grown accustomed to since Vatican II.

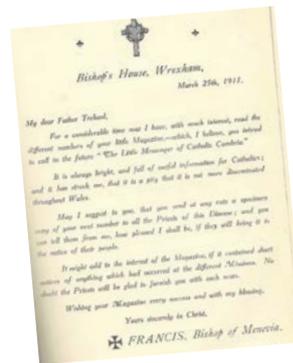


### The Medium is The Messenger

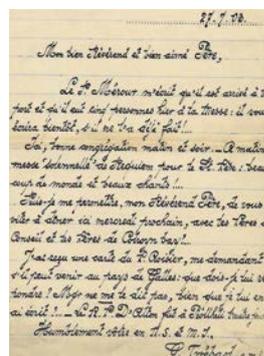
The missionaries persevered however. They were inspired by the number of Welsh newspapers in circulation and saw how they were influencing people. They turned to the media themselves to get over their message. A Welsh missionary magazine was started - the first ever - The Messenger, Y Cennad!

Father Goulvain M. Trébaol, O.M.I. was an outstanding missionary priest who came to Wales from Brittany in France in 1900. His native language was Breton which is more akin to Welsh than any of the other Celtic languages. Within a few months he was able to preach Missions in Welsh at Caernarfon and Holyhead to the delight of the native Welsh people. Fr. Trébaol was a prolific writer on Welsh Catholic History, on Catholic Doctrine and Morals and translated prayers and hymns into the Welsh language. His publication, Cennad Llydwig Llanrwst/Cennad Catholic Cymru, 'The Little Messenger' – all 39 of them found their

way not only into every parish of the diocese of Menevia but also into many dioceses in England and abroad. They were greatly appreciated and valued and became an inspiration to many Oblate Missionaries who later inculturated themselves into Welsh culture. The issues of the last year, 1914, were chiefly written in the Welsh language. The Bishop of Menevia was impressed. But it was hard to impress non-Welsh speaking Catholics. People were more interested in economics than ecumenics. They were more eager to join trade unions than a new church.



However, a seed had been sown and the letter from Fr. Trebaol, in 1909, provides an overall view of the Breton mission and the growing Catholic population.



Llanrwst (1909).

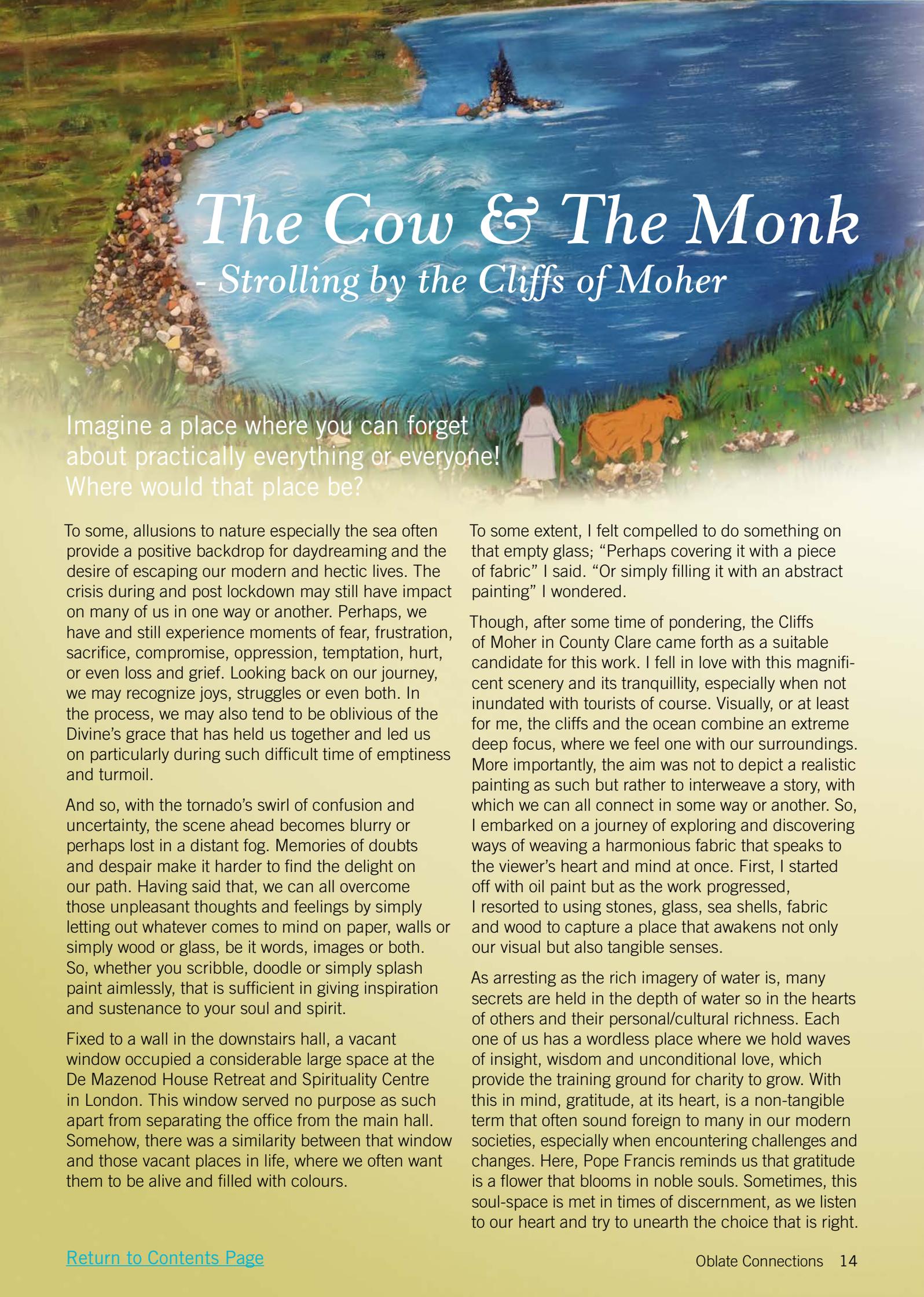
I. - Receipts:	
a) Bishop's grants.	£ 180. --
b) Mass offerings.	£ 25. 10. --
c) Church offerings.	£ 8. 10. --
d) Personal offerings.	£ 15. 10. --
e) Charitable gifts.	£ 3. 12. 6.
f) Various gifts.	£ 5. 7. 6.
	£ 189. 10. --
II. - Expenditure:	
1. - Mass offerings.	£ 180. --
2. - Mass offerings.	£ 25. 10. --
3. - Mass offerings.	£ 8. 10. --
4. - Personal offerings.	£ 15. 10. --
5. - Charitable gifts.	£ 3. 12. 6.
6. - Various gifts.	£ 5. 7. 6.
7. - Church offerings.	£ 15. 10. --
8. - Mass offerings.	£ 25. 10. --
9. - Personal offerings.	£ 8. 10. --
10. - Charitable gifts.	£ 3. 12. 6.
11. - Various gifts.	£ 5. 7. 6.
12. - Church offerings.	£ 15. 10. --
	£ 189. 10. 6.

to be distributed, all held about 20.  
 to be distributed at church from 1910.  
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### The War and the Mission

When the Great War of 1914-1918 broke out, the Bretons were summoned back to France to serve in the French forces. Over the coming years Christians of different churches would learn to look kinder on one another and Oblate catholic missionaries would one day be welcome in Blaenau Ffestiniog.

– Catherine Mullins, Archivist

The background of the page is a painting of a coastal scene. In the foreground, a person in a white robe stands on a grassy bank, looking out at the sea. A brown cow is walking beside them. The middle ground shows a rocky shore with a small structure or monument. The sea is a vibrant blue, and the sky is a lighter blue. The overall style is soft and painterly.

# *The Cow & The Monk*

## *- Strolling by the Cliffs of Moher*

Imagine a place where you can forget about practically everything or everyone! Where would that place be?

To some, allusions to nature especially the sea often provide a positive backdrop for daydreaming and the desire of escaping our modern and hectic lives. The crisis during and post lockdown may still have impact on many of us in one way or another. Perhaps, we have and still experience moments of fear, frustration, sacrifice, compromise, oppression, temptation, hurt, or even loss and grief. Looking back on our journey, we may recognize joys, struggles or even both. In the process, we may also tend to be oblivious of the Divine's grace that has held us together and led us on particularly during such difficult time of emptiness and turmoil.

And so, with the tornado's swirl of confusion and uncertainty, the scene ahead becomes blurry or perhaps lost in a distant fog. Memories of doubts and despair make it harder to find the delight on our path. Having said that, we can all overcome those unpleasant thoughts and feelings by simply letting out whatever comes to mind on paper, walls or simply wood or glass, be it words, images or both. So, whether you scribble, doodle or simply splash paint aimlessly, that is sufficient in giving inspiration and sustenance to your soul and spirit.

Fixed to a wall in the downstairs hall, a vacant window occupied a considerable large space at the De Mazenod House Retreat and Spirituality Centre in London. This window served no purpose as such apart from separating the office from the main hall. Somehow, there was a similarity between that window and those vacant places in life, where we often want them to be alive and filled with colours.

To some extent, I felt compelled to do something on that empty glass; "Perhaps covering it with a piece of fabric" I said. "Or simply filling it with an abstract painting" I wondered.

Though, after some time of pondering, the Cliffs of Moher in County Clare came forth as a suitable candidate for this work. I fell in love with this magnificent scenery and its tranquillity, especially when not inundated with tourists of course. Visually, or at least for me, the cliffs and the ocean combine an extreme deep focus, where we feel one with our surroundings. More importantly, the aim was not to depict a realistic painting as such but rather to interweave a story, with which we can all connect in some way or another. So, I embarked on a journey of exploring and discovering ways of weaving a harmonious fabric that speaks to the viewer's heart and mind at once. First, I started off with oil paint but as the work progressed, I resorted to using stones, glass, sea shells, fabric and wood to capture a place that awakens not only our visual but also tangible senses.

As arresting as the rich imagery of water is, many secrets are held in the depth of water so in the hearts of others and their personal/cultural richness. Each one of us has a wordless place where we hold waves of insight, wisdom and unconditional love, which provide the training ground for charity to grow. With this in mind, gratitude, at its heart, is a non-tangible term that often sound foreign to many in our modern societies, especially when encountering challenges and changes. Here, Pope Francis reminds us that gratitude is a flower that blooms in noble souls. Sometimes, this soul-space is met in times of discernment, as we listen to our heart and try to unearth the choice that is right.

Over the course of the painting, a monk and his cow emerged strolling alongside the lush green grassy path overlooking the cliffs. The monk rested his glass made shoe firmly on the ground, while still holding onto his wooden staff. He then took a deep breath inhaling the fresh salt-filled sea air and told the cow:

“Isn’t this place incredibly magical?”

The cow lifted her head up having just had a delicious herby snack and said:

“My dear monk, the earth is our common home and we are all connected”.

Just as the monk cares for the cow, she is also, I suppose, providing the milk and butter for the community as well as the fertiliser. The cow knows this place very well and she knows the monk too - There is a harmony between them. Also, the sheer beauty of the scene they are looking upon and drawing us into call me to realise God’s power and magnificence.

On some level, his journey must have also been arduous and lengthy, and perhaps marked by times of no thoughts, feelings, insights or inspirations. In a way, his solitary walk of mystery, although accompanied by his cow, resembles our journey and solitary walks in many ways. Despite this, many of us often feel that we are also companioned even when we feel alone.

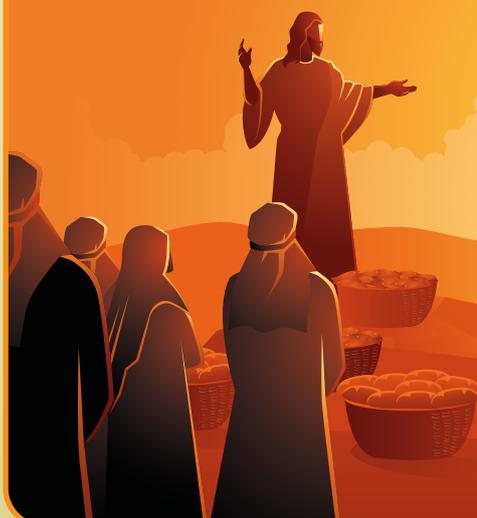
As you know, in our prayer, there comes the reminder that we have not been abandoned in this place to wander alone; we are always loved and never alone.

Needless to say, when painting or looking at a picture, we usually associate the image with a story, an encounter or an experience. This maybe positive or negative and we often see ourselves in the heart of the picture. On the surface, this maybe another idyllic scene but as we take a close look and reflect on the imagery of the cliffs, we realise that, they too, have withstood the elements for so long and yet look as majestic as ever be. Hence, when embracing the steadfastness of those cliffs, fires of excitement are awakened, an energy full of hopes and visions with focused determination and commitment. All in all, the moral heart of this painting is, as we tune in to the voice of silence not only over the Cliffs of Moher, but also within us, we get to hear the voice of the Divine too.

– Chaher Rhomaei



## Sunday Reflections



Each week a reflection on the Sunday Readings is published on our website [oblates.ie](http://oblates.ie) For over five years Br Michael’s weekly reflection has enriched, challenged and comforted so many people around the world. Fr Brian Maher has recently taken over the preparation of these reflections from Br Michael Moore. Fr Brian writes: “A Gospel reflection is no more than one person’s response to the Gospel. We can each respond in our own way and from our own situation.”

**If you like to receive the reflection please sign up online or email: [communications@oblates.ie](mailto:communications@oblates.ie)**

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We are looking for a dynamic individual to appoint to the exciting new role of Communications Officer to support the work of the Oblates. The role will involve the delivery of proactive and coordinated external digital communications through a range of channels.

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Screening will be applied and not all applicants will be called for interview.  
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If you would like to share your thoughts or ideas with us please contact: Fr. Lorcán O'Reilly, OMI, Oblate Retreat Centre, Wistaston Hall, 89 Broughton Lane, Crewe CW2 8JS or email: [oblate\\_partners@btinternet.com](mailto:oblate_partners@btinternet.com)

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