

OBLATE CONNECTIONS

May 2022 | №54

**EASTER
IN UKRAINE**

MOTHER EARTH
IS CRYING OUT
FOR HELP

**WHEN OUR
WORLD IS
FALLING APART**



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CONNECTIONS

We live in a time when the cold winds of war and oppression seem to be blowing ever more. Daily we see the impact of the cost of living squeeze and the pressure it is placing on more and more families especially those who exist on the margins of our society. Yet we have also seen in recent times great acts of generosity as people have opened their hearts to the people of Ukraine. These gestures of good will help heal our wounds as a society and guide us towards a better future.

Each of us is called by the Lord to play a part in building up our broken world. In his recent message for Vocations Sunday, Pope Francis reminded us, "All of us are called to share in Christ's mission to reunite a fragmented humanity and to reconcile it with God."

Each man and woman, even before encountering Christ and embracing the Christian faith, receives with the gift of life a fundamental calling: each of us is a creature willed and loved by God; each of us has a unique and special place in the mind of God. At every moment of our lives, we are called to foster this divine spark, present in the heart of every man and woman, and thus contribute to the growth of a humanity inspired by love and mutual acceptance."

As we live through these difficult times let us pray that together we may respond to this call and in a particular way may we recognise the presence of Christ in the poor with their many faces.

- Fr. Lorcán O'Reilly OMI



"This year's Easter services had a distinctive ecumenical character as we were joined by about 40 of the refugees from other parts of the country."

"Earth Day is a time to appreciate the wonderful gift of planet earth and to commit ourselves, each and everyone around the world to assure her survival in the future."



**“Go into all
the world
and preach
the gospel.”**



A word from Fr. Oliver Barry, OMI

The theme of the upcoming Oblate General Chapter will be “Pilgrims of Hope in Communion”. Our preparation for this events takes place in the context of the devastating war in Ukraine and the refugee crisis brought in its wake as well as the ongoing impact of the Covid Pandemic. The need for “Good News” is greater than ever. As Oblates of Mary Immaculate with our partners we are called to respond to the reality of the world and the times in which we live. During these days we are also in a time of discernment as to our Mission for the future. We are aware of the challenges in terms of personnel and the rapidly changing reality of the church. However, let us address these challenges in the spirit of St. Eugene of whom it was said “Go to Marseille, there is a bishop there whose congregation is still small, but the man himself has a heart as big as St. Paul’s, as big as the world.” Can we see beyond the problems that can drag us down and embrace the Mission given by Christ himself: He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Mk 16:15.

- Fr. Oliver Barry OMI,
Province Leader

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WHEN OUR WORLD IS FALLING APART

– Fr Ron Rolheiser, OMI

The early years of my adulthood and priesthood were spent teaching theology at Newman Theological College in Edmonton, Canada. I was young, full of energy, loved teaching, and was discovering the joys of ministry. For the most part, these were good years.

However, they weren't always easy. Restlessness and inner chaos find us all. The demands of ministry, the tensions inside community, the obsessions I'm forever prone to, the not-infrequent departure of cherished friends from the community, and the constant movement of people through my life, occasionally left me in emotional chaos, gasping for oxygen, struggling to sleep, wondering how I was going to still my soul again.

But, I had a little formula to help handle this. Whenever the chaos got bad, I would get into my car and drive four hours to our family farm just across the border in Saskatchewan. My family still lived in the house I'd grown up in and I was able to eat at the same table I'd eaten at as a child, sleep in the same bed I'd slept in as a boy, and walk the same ground I'd walked while growing up. Usually it didn't take long for home to do its work. I'd only need a meal or an overnight stay and the chaos and heartache would subside; I'd begin to feel steady again.

Coming home didn't cure the heartache but it gave the heart the care it needed. Somehow home always worked.


Today, the same kind of emotional chaos and heartache can still unsettle me on occasion and leave me unsure of who I am, of the choices I've made in life, and of who and what to trust. However, I cannot drive to my childhood home anymore and need to find the steadying that going home once gave me in new ways. It isn't always apparent where to find this, even amidst a good

community, a still supportive family, loving friends, and a wonderful job. Home can be elusive on a restless night. What one needs to steady the heart isn't always easy to access. Once you've left home, sometimes it's hard to find your way back there again.

So what do I do now when I need to go home and retouch my roots to steady myself? Sometimes a trusted friend is the answer; sometimes it's a call to a family member; sometimes it's a family that has become family to me, sometimes it's a place in prayer or in nature, sometimes it's immersing myself in work, and sometimes I can't find it at all and have to live with the chaos until, like a bad storm, it blows over.

Through the years, I've discovered that a special book can take me home in the same way as driving there once did. Different people find home in different places. One of the books that does this for me, almost without fail, is *The Story of a Soul* by Therese of Lisieux. Not surprising, it's the story of a recessive journey, the story of Therese's own effort at recapturing what her house, home, and family once gave her. But the recessive journey in itself is not what gives this book (which I highly recommend for anyone whose heart is aching in way that unsettles the soul) such a special power. Many autobiographies unsettle more than they settle. This one soothes your soul.

However, remembering alone doesn't necessarily care for the heart and sometimes our memories of home and childhood carry more pathology and pain than steadying and healing. Not everyone's home was safe and nurturing. Tragically, one's initial home can also be the place where our trust and steadiness are irrevocably broken, as is the case often in sexual and other forms of abuse. I was fortunate. My first home gave me trust



“Home is where you are safe. It’s also the place where you experience security and trust and where that steadiness enables you to believe in the things of faith.”

and faith. For those who were not as lucky, the task is to find a home, a place or a person, that caresses a wounded soul.

What makes for a home that caresses the soul?

Home is where you are safe. It’s also the place where you experience security and trust and where that steadiness enables you to believe in the things of faith. I used to drive four hours for a meal or a night’s sleep in order to find that. Today, I need to make that recessive journey in other ways.

It’s a journey we all need to make in times of chaos and deep restlessness in our lives, namely, to find a place, a space, a friend, a family, a house, a table, a bed, a book, or something that grounds us again in security, trust, stability, and faith.

Of course, there are headaches and heartaches for which there is no cure; but the soul doesn’t need to be cured, only properly cared for. Our task is to go home, to find those people, places, prayers, and books that caress our souls at those times when our world is falling apart.

RETREAT OPPORTUNITIES IN CREWE

Icon Workshop

29th June–3rd July Suggested donation £320.00

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. This retreat will offer reflections that inform, inspire and invite interested ‘seekers’ and faithful on a journey through the image and beauty of the icon.

No More Shouting

21st–24th July Suggested donation £240.00

The danger for any of us is that we can become stuck, caught up in “business as usual.” The risk is that our gatherings become more like a club than a family and we drown in a tide of own procedures. Pope Francis has called upon us all to learn the art of accompaniment. It is a way of looking at ourselves, each other and the mission of the Church. It is life giving. We will be able to see more clearly when we have accompanied others in the past and how we might better share the journey together in the future.



Individually Guided Retreats

20th–29th June, 26 Aug–2nd Sep

Suggested donation - 6 day retreat £475

& 8 day retreat £575

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



For Information or Booking

Contact Rachel: +44 01270 568653 or email: rachel.challoner@oblateretreatcentre.org.uk

www.orc-crewe.org

Download a booking form or book online.



CHRIST IS RISEN! HE HAS RISEN INDEED!

The Oblates have a number of different missions in the Ukraine including in the Crimea. Since the onset of the war we have received regular updates on the efforts being made by these Oblates to remain close to the people in their hour of need. The leader of the mission Father Vitaliy Podolan, O.M.I. writes...



As Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, we stand by the people who gather in our churches. Some of our churches and monasteries have become refugee shelters, food, and drug warehouse, and others serve as bomb shelters. In the present situation, we continue to serve people through the administration of the sacraments, the celebration of worship, and moral and spiritual support. We collect humanitarian aid from various parts of Europe in Poland and then deliver it to our parishes, where it is distributed to the needy. We express our sincere and deep gratitude to each of you for your support in our ministry and for the support of those who had to abandon everything to save their lives and their loved ones.



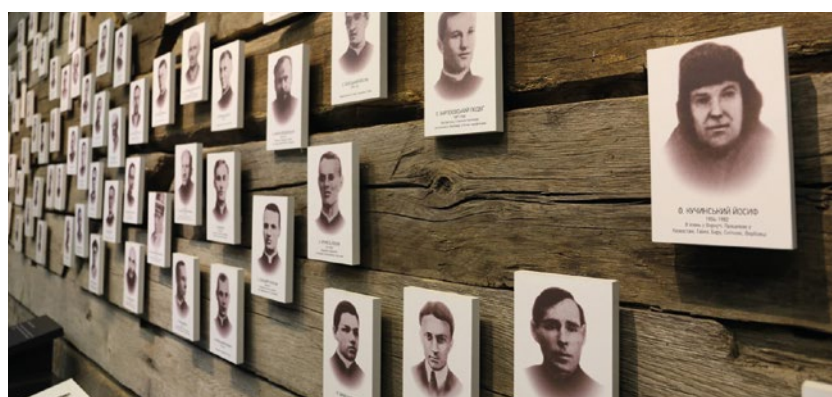
“This year’s celebration of Easter holidays is somewhat different from the usual. First of all because of the ongoing war with Russia, the curfew had to be taken into account.”



Among the missions cared for by the Oblates is the Shrine of Our Lady of Tyvriv which includes a Memorial of the Martyrs for the Faith”. The following is a translation of an account of this year’s celebration of Easter at the shrine:

This year’s celebration of Easter holidays is somewhat different from the usual. First of all because of the ongoing war with Russia, the curfew had to be taken into account. The Easter Vigil Liturgy, which usually starts when it’s dark each year, had to start much earlier.

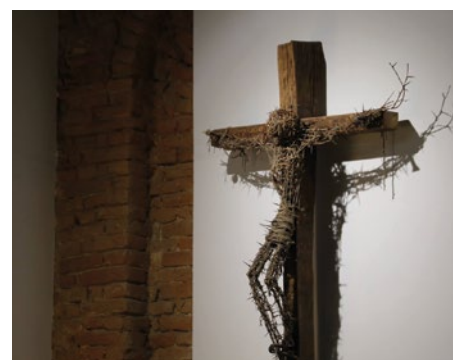
This year’s Easter services had a distinctive ecumenical character as we were joined by about 40 of the refugees from other parts of the country that are currently living with us. Many of these displaced brothers and sisters are members of the Orthodox religion. In addition several of the ‘defenders of our Homeland’ were also present for the services.



In common with Churches around the world we began the celebration on Holy Thursday Eucharist. In these difficult times special emphasis was placed on the traditional foot washing ritual which was led by Fr. Christopher who in his sermon reminded all of us of the true meaning of service.

The following day on Good Friday there were several events: including a walk of witness with our brothers and sisters from the Orthodox church through the streets of Tivrova. We joined together in a common prayer for peace and victory over the enemy invaders.

Next came the celebration of the Lord’s Passion, which was led by Fr. Vadim Roadosh OMI. In his sermon, he spoke to us of the importance of silence, suffering of Jesus Christ and he linked it to the context of the suffering of the Ukrainian people in the time of war.



Finally on Holy Saturday after the day of reflecting at the Lord’s grave, the solemn Eucharist of Easter Vigil began, which was led by Fr. Andrei Cancer OMI. In his sermon, he spoke about the importance of placing our hope the resurrection of the Lord.

In addition to the various religious and prayerful celebration, there was also a celebration of the traditional Ukrainian Easter table: Easter cake, krashanki, sausage and many other delicious dishes. We thank God for this time and ask in our prayer for peace for Ukraine.

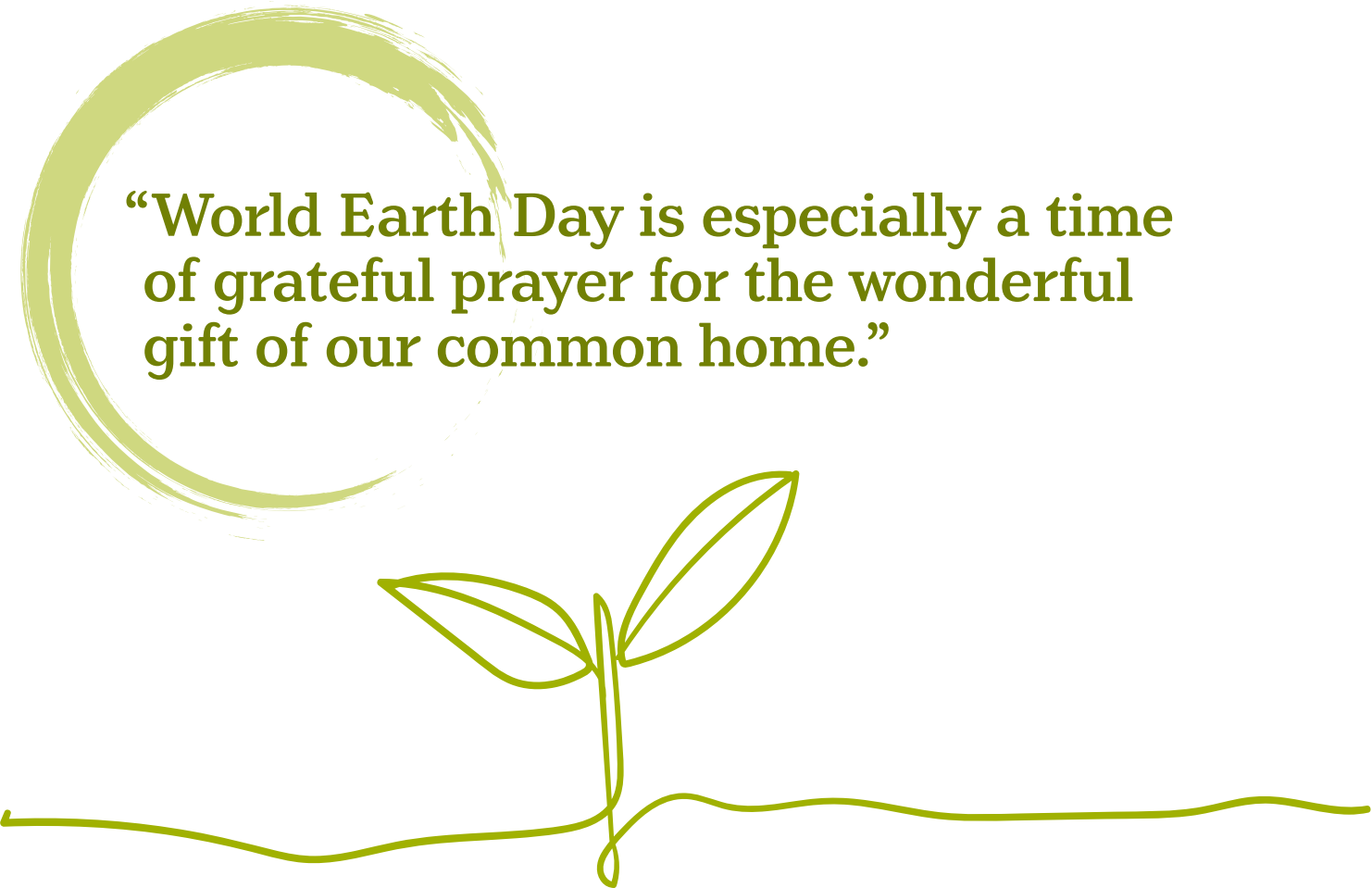


MOTHER EARTH IS CRYING OUT FOR HELP

On World Earth Day which we celebrate annually on April 22nd, “Mother Earth” is crying out for help to all of her “children”, all inhabitants of the planet to urgently care for her and repair the damage that is being done to the earth, which Pope Francis calls “Our Common Home -- Our mother is crying out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her”. The earth can indeed be called a “Mother”, as she provides for what we need to live.

Earth Day is a time to appreciate the wonderful gift of planet earth and to commit ourselves, each and everyone around the world to assure her survival in the future. The theme of Earth Day 2022 is “Invest in Our Planet”... Climate change and global warming caused by human beings cannot be denied. Sadly, each year we see the great numbers of disappearance of plants and animal species which will never be known nor seen by our future generations because they have been lost forever. This is the moment for new zeal and courage to preserve and protect the health of Mother Earth. In accord with the Theme of Earth Day we seriously need to ask what will we, what will I invest to protect and preserve our common home? It begins in small ways with each person, in our homes and in our families.

Earth Day, I believe calls us to focus our attention on two major issues to show more care for and repair the damages done to Mother Earth. First, all on planet Earth need to “listen to the cry of Mother Earth” as regards the pressing issue of climate change with global warming and linked to this is a new and lively respect for biodiversity. Climate change is the critical concern for the very survival of the planet itself. The latest report from the U. N’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change points out that the dangers of climate change are mounting so rapidly that they could soon overwhelm the ability of both nature and humanity to adapt, creating a frightening future in which floods, fires, storms and famine displace millions, species disappear, and the planet is then irreversibly damaged. Startling heat waves at both of Earth’s poles are causing alarm among climate scientists. The rapid rise in temperatures at the poles is a warning of disruption in Earth’s climate systems and are strong signal of the damage humanity is wreaking on the climate. Pope Francis when speaking on “the devastation of the environment, that an integral ecology emphasizes human beings are deeply connected with all the creation. When we mistreat nature, we also mistreat human beings at the same time. Every creature has its own intrinsic value that must be respected”.



“World Earth Day is especially a time of grateful prayer for the wonderful gift of our common home.”

The Pope also points out the great demands for the urgent care of our planet as we listen to both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor who are most affected by climate change. Water and climate change are inextricably locked together. Two billion people are living without access to water. The warming caused by huge consumptions on the part of rich countries has repercussions on the poorest areas of the world.

We also need a deeper and clearer understanding of biodiversity which is intricately connected to climate change. Earth day calls for a new and deeper respect for all life on planet Earth especially human life. Today this respect for the connections of all life is expressed in the term biodiversity. Biodiversity or biological diversity refers to the great wealth of beings that live on planet earth as well as the delicate equilibrium of interdependent and interaction that exists between them and the physical environment that hosts and conditions them. This biodiversity is translated into different ecosystems of which examples can be found in forests, wetlands, jungles, deserts, coral reefs, mountains, seas, and polar zones. Biodiversity is closely linked to human activity and our lifestyle as mentioned already. A dynamic biodiversity recognizes and appreciates the close relationship and dependency of planet earth with other celestial bodies especially the sun and moon. Earth day is a time for all of us, governments of the world, churches, businesses, families, and individuals to seriously ask the question, how can I, we invest more care and stewardship for all life on the planet.

World Earth Day is especially a time of grateful prayer for the wonderful gift of our common home with all its resources and pray for better care for all creation. We prayerfully reflect as individual believers and communities on this fitting opportunity to reaffirm our vocation to be stewards of creation, to thank God for the wonderful handy work which has been entrusted to our care. The more we care for all life on the planet, for the beauty and marvelous gifts of all creation, the more we realize that there exists in nature a certain reciprocity that as we care for creation, we realize that God through creation cares for us. We all need to imitate an action plan of some churches and schools for individuals, for children, families, and agencies to foster an integral ecology by following a seven-step plan. The seven action steps: commit to a greater use of renewable energy and reduction of fossil fuels; defend human life from conception to death; endorse ecological economics, such as sustainable production and fair trade; adopt a simple lifestyle and keep clean the portion of earth entrusted to each family and preserve water and avoid pollution; to rethink and redesign ecological education and recover a spiritual vision of God's creation; and emphasize community involvement.

As we listen to the cry of the earth on Earth Day, each one is called by God, by the nature that surrounds us to invest and show mercy to our common home.

- Bishop Michael Pfeifer OMI, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of San Angelo, USA.



Tower Hill Mission

It is important to recognise the long and wonderful history of the Christian mission of the community known as English Martyrs, Tower Hill.

But what of this mission today, right now in the year 2022? As a very noble figure once said of another place; “Being able to bow to the past but not be bound by it”.

The Tower Hill Mission as a place sits in the heart of the London of commerce and trade. The faces of her people are that of the peoples of the whole world. The languages she speaks are of the peoples of former British colonies and of the new migrants who clean her streets and offices and who operate her transport system. Not to forget the festival of world foods that can be enjoyed on the street and in peoples homes.

These same people form the Tower Hill Mission and they bring into the life of this community their spirituality and traditions. It is the responsibility of this mission to create a home in this church where they are both welcomed and included. In doing this, we are aware of the “elder community” who have remained and maintained the spiritual life of the parish.

The challenge and struggles that are borne in people’s domestic lives should naturally impact on the local mission. This is where the Gospel response needs to be found so people can feel true support and compassion.

Reaching out ecumenically and working together in partnership with other Christian Church is a genuine and necessary way to build positive relationships and create inclusion within the wider society. Finding common ground together with the local Muslim community for the social good and improvement of the area truly breaks down barriers and builds up positive relationships.



1950's

The recent listening that took place as part of the Synodal process aired many views on a range of ‘hot’ issues for the Church. These issues are not possible to be shelved or closed off by the Church authority and it is sincerely hoped that courageous decisions will be made in the light of Gospel Values.

There is the saying that all politics is local, it is probably true also that the mission of the Church is firstly local. Developing and building on that mission with the inclusion of everyone is the real and only way to grow. The conclusion of the report of the parish community to the Synodal process reads:

Listening to the parishioners as part of the synod process was incredibly insightful. Generally, people seemed aligned on the relevance and role of religion and Mass in their lives, especially during the pandemic. However, opinions on the direction of the Church for the future and the role of the Church in society were more varied, ranging from a desire for the Church to become more inclusive to some concern and fear about change and what it would mean to the Church.



1960's



Procession 1977



English Martyrs Parish, 2015

In all instances, people were very open to listen and engage in meaningful dialogue with each other. There was patience, generosity, and kindness in all the discussions, and everyone appreciated the importance of respecting all viewpoints which were aired. There was a general feeling that, as a Parish, we were called to be more involved in our community and help those around us, especially the less fortunate and marginalised.

The social, political and ecclesial realities throughout the world are in a prolonged and seismic period of change. There are many voices clamoring to be heard, and not all are able to listen above the noise and shouting.

This is such an opportune time for us to create the environment of listening so that all the hopes and concerns of the ecclesial communities, the People of God are being heard. Pope Francis invites us "to ask ourselves what it is that God wants to say to us in this time."

Listening to one another and building on a long history the community of Tower Hill will continue to keep the flame of faith alive in the heart of the city. We do so with the belief that even as we seek the Lord, he will always come with his love to meet us first.

- Fr Ray Warren OMI & Fr. Alex Angodage don Joseph OMI



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In March 2021, Fr Oliver, leader of the Oblates in Britain and Ireland, invited a small group to come together with the dual task of preparing for the worldwide Oblate Lay Associations Congress that will take place from May 27 thru May 29, and then to represent the lay people of these islands by attending the European regional event of the Congress that will take place in Kokotek, Poland.

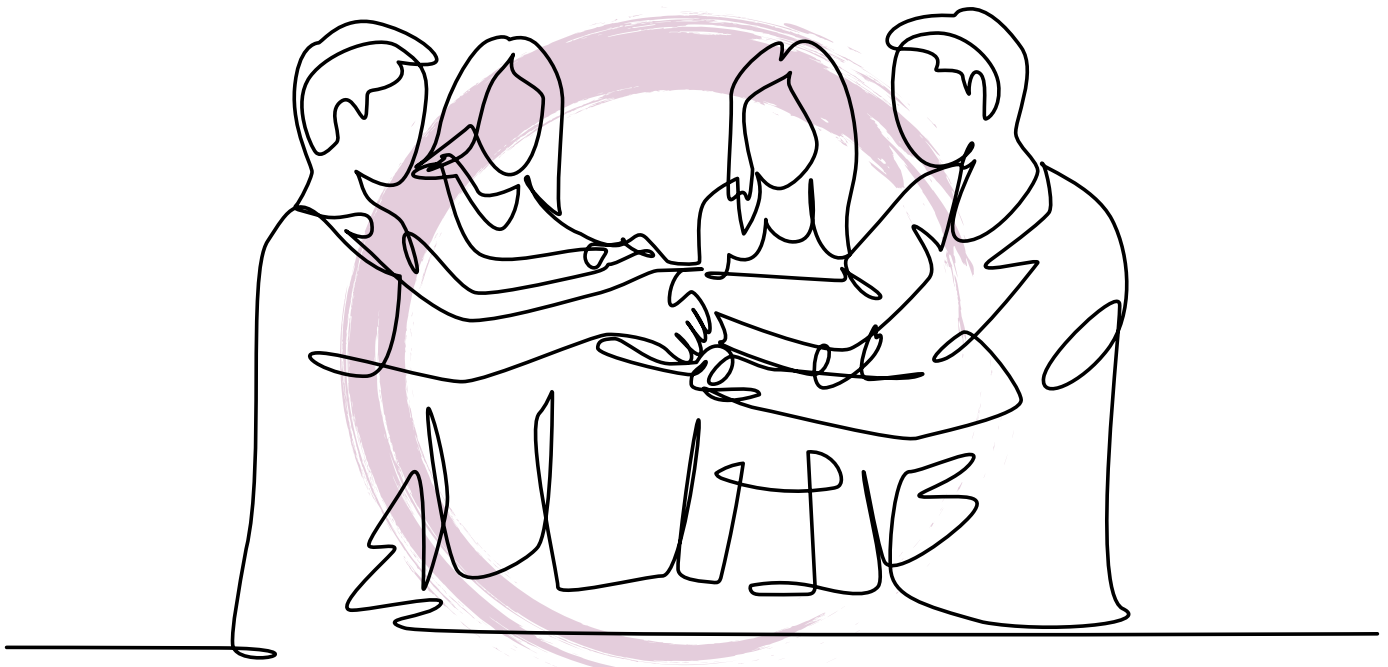
In September 2016, the 36th General Chapter, a representative gathering of Oblates from all over the world, took place in Rome. Among the many decisions and actions of that Chapter was a mandate, "... to call an international gathering of members of various lay groups ..." having as its theme: "Living as Oblate People." It was decided that this mandate would be delivered through a Congress that seeks to: "celebrate, connect, and commission the thousands of people throughout the world who share, live, and work with the Oblates, all in their own way and inspired by the charism of St Eugene."

Fr Oliver's invitation to Pauline Thomas, Kirk Jacob, and myself, was about bringing this to life. Our task was to develop a programme of preparation for the Congress that would be based on engaging with the hundreds of lay people throughout Wales, Scotland, England, and Ireland, "who share, live, and work with the Oblates" in the different ministries of which we are, individually, a part. These included Oblate parishes, Friends of St Eugene (FOSE), Partners in Mission (PIM), and the Lourdes Pilgrimage. Of course, there are many people who are not directly involved in any of these areas of Oblate mission but who, nonetheless, strongly identify with, and are inspired by, the charism of St Eugene. Their voices could not be excluded. This was our task and for almost fourteen months, we have tried to do this as best we can.

LAY CONGRESS 2022

A central theme of our efforts over all these months has been to make every voice count. Our goal has been to authentically represent the reality of the lived experience of Oblate people. We saw our task, therefore, as being to make real the voices of lay people, to listen to what is being said, to explore what is being understood and then, with all that we have learned, to represent the lay people of Ireland and Britain in Kokotek and by extension, to the wider Oblate world. Perhaps the most important word in all of that is the word, 'listen.'

We came together to carry out the work of this task in the middle of a pandemic. We knew the questions to be asked but how do we go about answering them? In-person meetings were impossible and what's more, people are spread over a wide geographical catchment area making personal contact even more difficult. There was also the case of competing calls on peoples' time, especially the pre-Synodal activities in many dioceses. We decided to create a survey, available both online and on paper, and follow this with an online 'Conversation Evening' when what was learned in the survey might be explored in greater detail.



“The Congress is about you as lay associates and it is your voice that matters.”

The result was more than we had hoped; 173 people completed the survey and c. 40 people attended the Conversation evening. It was a very heartening level of engagement. The number of respondents was such that we could rely on the responses and feedback as giving an answer to our question, viz. “what is the reality of living as Oblate people in the Anglo-Irish province.”

What we learned about the reality of Oblate lives was immensely encouraging. People identify as having a strong connection with the Oblates through parishes, the pilgrimage, as well as FOSE and PIM. What’s more, the extent to which the online resources have impacted on the lives of people, providing “nourishment and companionship” during the lockdowns, nurturing faith, and developing a greater awareness of “Oblateness” is remarkable. This growing level of connection has created a corresponding wish to strengthen that connection. Most wished to find ways in which to grow, strengthen, and deepen the connection that they experience today. More than four in five confirmed that being an Oblate influences their lives, both how they live and how they view the world around them.

Another significant insight that came from the survey and the Conversation Evening was the wish to be part of a visible expression of the Oblate charism in the public arena, giving public voice and expression to the marginalised and the poor.

In summary, what we have learned is that there is tremendous life in the Oblate people of Ireland and Britain, people whose daily lives are influenced by the charism of St Eugene, who want to deepen that experience, understand better what it means to be an Oblate person and then, to live that more fully, being true to the call to serve the marginalised and those whom society in general does not consider to be of any worth.

The Congress is the most important event taking place in the Oblate world this year. From the beginning, our central focus has been to engage lay people, not just for those who recognise the Oblate within but those also who are part of our family and have yet to discover this. A small group will go to Kokotek; there will be an even smaller group in Rome. But you can be a part of it.

There will be a gathering in Crewe over the days of the Congress and each afternoon, Crewe will link up with the Congress from Rome and join with the rest of the Oblate world. But you don’t have to go to Crewe. Watch out for the announcement with the link so that you can connect from home. Ask in your parish; get in touch with one of the FOSE or PIM team; contact the Lourdes team. And of course, you’ll find the link on Facebook and on our website.

This is not something you want to miss so save the dates, get the link, and join in. The Congress is for you!

– Gerard Bennett

St. Eugene's Visit of 1850 to England

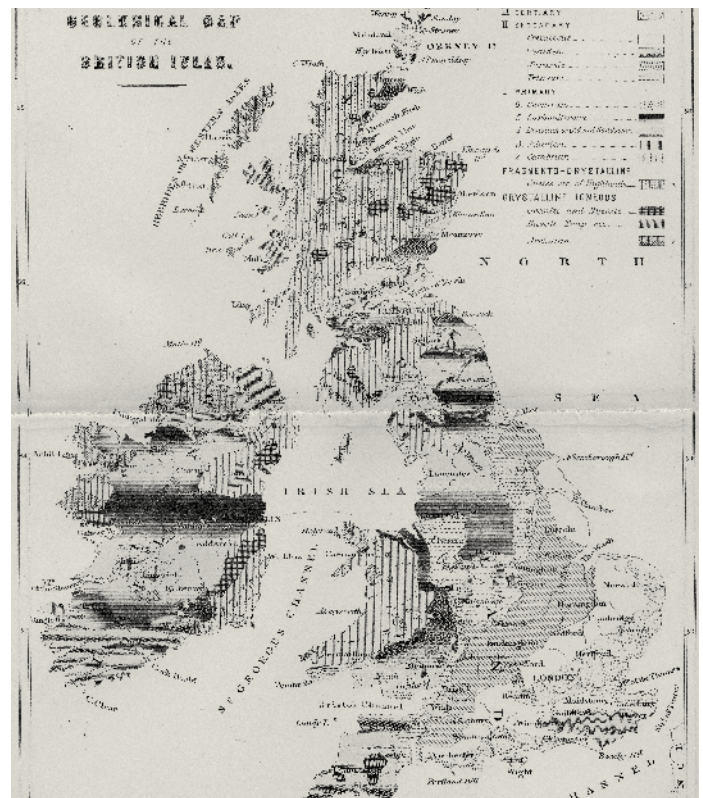
Today we would say that he had set the Oblate mission well and truly on the synodal pathway.

The main thing on any feast day is 'the joy of love' - to use Pope Francis's beautiful expression. On Eugene's feast day - May 21 - we remember Eugene's love for the people of Britain and Ireland. It was immense. And we joyfully reciprocate it with our love. His love for us was a nurturing love and it flowered when he came twice to Britain - first in 1850, and then in 1857. In this short article we gratefully recall the 1850 visit and the love that it manifested.

Readers will recall that Casimir Aubert had set up the Oblate mission as a regular province of the congregation on 1 January 1849. The general situation was rosy, but Eugene now wanted to see it for himself and especially the situation in Ashbourne which was giving rise to grave anxiety. In 1848 one of the Oblates had exceeded his authority and assumed an enormous debt to purchase this property, pledging all the Oblate property in England as security. A disastrous scandal was threatened.

Eugene was 68 years old when he made this arduous journey. He had left Marseilles in France on 27 May 1850 and travelled by horse-drawn coach through the whole of France, and parts of Germany and Belgium, visiting numerous Oblate missions and transacting his business. He came finally to Ostend where he took the boat for Dover on 17 June. He went up from Dover to London by boat. Fortunately, he was blessed with very good weather for his trip, for he was a bad sailor.

His visit to Britain involved more continuous travel and visiting with Oblates and bishops, priests and leading Catholics, many of them of the aristocracy, as well as baptizing and confirming many converts, and carrying out an ordination in Maryvale. It would last until 27 July when he reembarked at Dover for Calais.



He had visited Maryvale, on the outskirts of Birmingham, a community of five Oblate priests, seven scholastics, five novices, and two Oblate Brothers, living a life of remarkable 'regular observance and fervour'. As well as the local catholic community, it was serving Ashbourne.

Aldenham was a fervent community of three Oblate priests and two Oblate Brothers whose mission was proving fruitful and extended to Bridgenorth, Wenlock and Middleton.

Everingham was a fervent community of four Oblate priests, two scholastics and one Oblate Brother, whose mission extended to Pocklington and Howden.



London Docks



Penzance was 'the cradle of our Congregation in England', with outreach to Camborne and Helston, which had brought a small local congregation to the level of more than two hundred and fifty fervent Catholics in a protestant stronghold.

Liverpool was a community of three Oblate priests and two Oblate Brothers doing 'incalculable good' among the poor.

Manchester was an active mission, where Eugene laid the first stone for a church the Oblates were planning.

There was no Oblate mission in London though there was a proposal for an Oblate mission in the London suburbs which did not much attract Eugene. Eugene visited the East End of London. He experienced the plight of the poor and wanted an Oblate mission in this part of London.

To sum up, he has rallied his men and made a striking impression of gracious nobility on the various dignities he has met. Today we would say that he had set the Oblate mission well and truly on the synodal pathway.

It is clear from the tone of the report he made of his visit that it had been a great consolation to him as a missionary and founder. Eugene's own human qualities shine out. When he states his reason for his visit in his Act of Visitation he puts the personal element before the administrative one. "I came", he said to the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation in England, some of whom he knew already, others whom he was meeting for the first time, "for the purpose of visiting you, in spite of my great age". He is astonished at the immensity and turmoil of London. He loves the beauty of the countryside and of the church architecture he sees and is enthralled with the railway as a comfortable and swift means of transport. He never once refers in his letters to a 'language problem', although he has no English. He is agreeably surprised at the welcome he gets in a Protestant country – and even by the English weather. He refuses to allow any difficulties to dampen the consolation he is receiving.

However, he looks deeper. He puts his men on guard against a tactic of the Devil and in words of his own repeats Wiseman's observation that the time has come for the Catholics of England to come out of the catacombs and live their faith fully in the open without compromise. For the Oblates this means living the Rule without compromise! He has also signalled to them the importance of the preaching ministry. This call heralds what will be a truly heroic response on the part of a new preaching band. We can infer from these remarks what must have been the topic of many of his conversations with his men. They must surely also have talked about the importance of moving into urban ministry. This was very much on Eugene's mind before going on the journey and remained so afterwards.

Eugene returned to Marseilles in good heart for the General Chapter in the following month. The status of the mission in England as the 'British Province' was assured.

– Fr Michael Hughes, OMI



UKRAINIAN APPEAL

Fr Vitaliy Podolan OMI is the head of the Oblate Mission in Ukraine and he writes...

On behalf of all Oblates belonging to the Delegation in Ukraine I wish to express my great gratitude for all your support and the help of each of you. We sincerely thank everyone who supports us and the people entrusted to our care in this hard time of war with the troops of the Russian Federation. The Oblates remain with the people. We open our houses and churches and shelter those who seek refuge.

Many of you have the opportunity and desire to support our mission financially. Thanks to it, we will be able to help people and for this we will be very grateful. Thank you for your prayer and solidarity with Ukraine and the Oblates who are there. May God give us peace, may Ukraine succeed in defending its freedom.

Donations can also be sent to:

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If you would like to share your thoughts or ideas with us please contact: Fr. Lorcan O'Reilly OMI,
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