

OBLATE CONNECTIONS

February 2024 | Nº59



Missionary Oblates
– Always Close to the People

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FREE
PLEASE TAKE ONE

CONNECTIONS

As we enter into the season of Lent this I am reminded of Ron Rolheisers description of the this season, “Lent invites us to stop eating whatever protects us from having to face the desert that is inside of us. It invites us to feel our smallness, to feel our vulnerability, to feel our fears, and to open ourselves up the chaos of the desert so that we can finally give the angels a chance to feed us. That’s the Christian ideal of lent, to face one’s chaos.”

As we continue our journey into the early months of 2024 we are very aware of the chaos unfolding around our world. We can easily feel overwhelmed both an individual level and at a societal level with everything that is going on. Maybe this year during Lent we can try to find some space to anchor ourselves in the love of God so that we will have the strength to face the chaos within and outside ourselves.

One the gospel texts that I have found inspirational during such difficult times is the story of the Storm at Sea. Reflecting on this story, Pope Francis said: “In these

situations and in many others, we too feel suffocated by fear and, like the disciples, risk losing sight of the most important thing. In the boat, in fact, even if he is sleeping, Jesus is there, and he shares with his own all that is happening. If on the one hand his slumber surprises us, on the other, it puts us to the test. The Lord is there, present; indeed, he waits — so to speak — for us to engage him, to invoke him, to put him at the centre of what we are experiencing. His slumber causes us to wake up. Because to be disciples of Jesus, it is not enough to believe God is there, that he exists, but we must put ourselves out there with him; we must also raise our voice with him. Hear this: we must cry out to him. Prayer is often a cry: “Lord, save me!”

In her lifetime Mary never ceased to trust in the God. So with her as our guide and united as an Oblate family let us hold one another in prayer during our Lenten journey as we call out to the Lord and entrust our needs into his caring and welcoming hands.

- Fr. Lorcán O’Reilly OMI



“Reflecting on this Christmas celebration with the Oblates and People of Turkmenistan, I contemplate how this journey has left an indelible mark on my heart.”



A word from Fr. Oliver Barry, OMI

In this first edition of Connections for 2024 I want to wish you a Happy New Year. In "Connections" we endeavour to share something of Oblate life and Mission. It is another means of sharing Good News from the past and present with an eye to the future. Our connectedness is important as we seek to meet the challenges that lie before us. As people of faith we bring peace in the context of the conflicts of our world. We bring hope through our commitment to the theme of our recent Oblate General Chapter as "Pilgrims of Hope in Communion". Through our connectedness we make real the Mission of Jesus when his disciples were identified by the words, "See how they love one another". May the year 2024 be a time when the "Connections" within the Oblate Family continue to bear fruit in faith, hope and love wherever we might be.



- Fr. Oliver Barry OMI
Province Leader



BAD THOUGHTS

– Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

Someone once quipped that we spend the first half of our lives struggling with the sixth commandment – Thou shalt not commit adultery – and the second half of our lives struggling with the fifth commandment – Thou shalt not kill! There's a truth here worth examining.

In the Catholicism I was raised, there was a heavy emphasis on the sixth commandment. Sex and issues related to sex were singled out as being particularly salient in terms of sinful behaviour. All sex outside of marriage was seen as sinful, but so too was sexual fantasizing. If you entertained any sexual fantasies you were required to confess them to a priest in confession. In the vocabulary of the time, this was termed as “having had bad thoughts”. Given human nature and human hormones, assuredly most everyone had “bad thoughts”.

As I grow older, I have come to believe that sexual fantasies (which in fact can have a moral element to them) are not the real danger in terms of bad thoughts. As we age, the bad thoughts we most need to confess have more to do with another commandment, thou shalt not kill. The bad thoughts that most separate us from love, community, and the banquet table have to do with who we are angry at, who we don't want to be in a room with, who we don't want to be at table with, who we want revenge on, who we can't forgive, and people whose energies we cannot bless.

Henri Nouwen once suggested that long before someone is shot by a gun, one is shot by a word, and before one is shot by a word, one is shot by a thought – She is so full of herself! I hate her! I can't be in a room with her! We kill each other in our thoughts, in our judgments, in our hatreds, in our jealousies, and in our avoidance of each other. These are the bad thoughts which we most need to confess.

Moreover, that is only the crasser way we violate the commandment that demands we not kill each other. We have “bad thoughts” in much subtler ways. We also kill each other whenever we indulge in fantasies of grandiosity, fantasies within which we are the superstar, the one set apart, the one above, the one



superior to others, and the one who sees others as lesser than oneself. Like sexual fantasies, these fantasies also come upon us with a power that makes them very difficult to resist. Like sexual fantasies they beset us instinctually with a warmth that is self-gratifying.

But why are they wrong? What's wrong with indulging in fantasies within which we are the special one, the hero, the one above others?

In short, they are not morally wrong in themselves. It's not a sin to think of yourself as special – particularly since you are! God makes everyone unique and special, and it's not wrong to recognize that inside oneself. Moreover, for a good part of our lives, this can even be healthy. The issue arises later in life, when we reach that time in our lives when we need to begin to scrutinize ourselves more rigorously and courageously vis-a-vis what things inside us are obstacles to our becoming one with everything. Don't let the Hindu or Buddhist sound of that phrase, become one with everything, put you off; that's also what we, Christians, believe will constitute our final state in heaven – oneness with everything – God, others, the cosmic world, and our true selves.

Hence while they are not wrong in themselves, fantasies that massage our separateness from others, our standing apart from them, and especially our superiority to them, are, at the end of the day, a blockage to the unity in love to which we are called and destined. They are also a way in which we kill others, leaving room for only ourselves at the head of the table.

“We kill each other in our thoughts, in our judgments, in our hatreds, in our jealousies, and in our avoidance of each other. These are the bad thoughts which we most need to confess.”

We spend a good part of our lives struggling with the sixth commandment. However, most of us end up with an even bigger struggle with the fifth commandment. The Gospel parable about the Prodigal Son throws light on this. The father (God) has two sons and he is trying to get them both into the house (heaven). The younger, prodigal son leaves the house because he is struggling with the sixth commandment. Eventually though he returns to his father and enters the house again. The older brother, who never leaves home but is just as effectively out of his father's house, is struggling with something else – anger, bitterness, jealousy, and judgment of others. He is struggling with bad thoughts. He is killing his younger brother with judgment, jealousy, and with fantasies of his own moral superiority.

It's noteworthy how this parable ends. It doesn't end with the celebration for the younger brother and his rejoining the household. It ends with the father (God) standing outside the house gently and lovingly trying to coax his jealous, bitter, judgmental, older son out of his bad thoughts.



Sunday Reflections



Each week a reflection on the Sunday Readings is published on our website oblates.ie

These reflections are prepared by Fr. Brian Maher, OMI who writes: “A Gospel reflection is no more than one person's response to the Gospel. We can each respond in our own way and in our daily lives.”

If you would like to receive the reflection please sign up online or email communications@oblates.ie

If you have any comments, questions or thoughts on the weekly scripture reflection, please feel welcome to email Fr. Brian at b.maher@oblates.ie

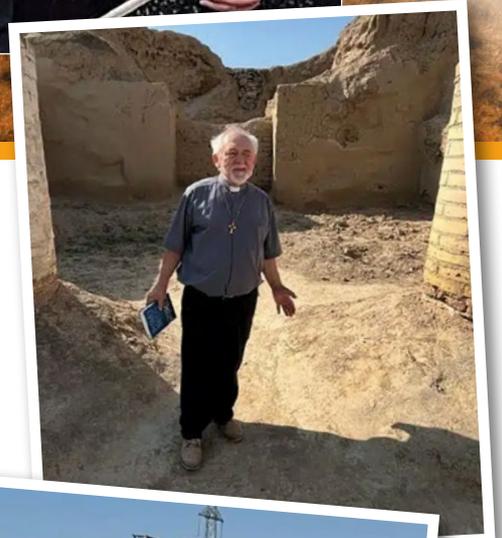
Christmas in Turkmenistan

“The unassuming nature of this Church, mirroring the humility of the manger, serves as a poignant reminder of Christmas —Jesus, born vulnerable and among the poor.”

The Oblate presence in Turkmenistan dates back almost 26 years. Despite Turkmenistan’s predominantly Muslim population, the people of Turkmenistan have been very welcoming. Currently, the Oblate community in Turkmenistan comprises two members: Fr. Andrzej MADEJ and Fr. Paweł KUBIAK. They fulfil the roles of missionaries and official representatives of the Holy See, serving as the sole Catholic priests ministering in the country’s only Catholic Church. Recently they were joined by Fr Chicho, the world wide leader of the Oblate family, for their celebration of Christmas. This is his short reflection this experience

Beneath Turkmenistan’s star-studded sky, I embraced Christmas alongside the smallest Oblate community in the Congregation. Reflecting on this Christmas celebration with the Oblates and People of Turkmenistan, I contemplate how this journey has left an indelible mark on my heart.





The profound light foretold by Isaiah, destined to liberate a people immersed in darkness, manifested itself in the night as a discreet candle—hidden, noticed only by Mary, Joseph, and a handful of shepherds. Its smallness extends to all, seeking to illuminate our own limitations. Fragile, as it craves the care and shelter of each of us, akin to shielding a delicate candle flame from the wind. Such is Jesus, the light of nations, the prince of peace, aspiring to illuminate the world through our delicate testimony, passing His light from one to another to free us from all violence and bestow upon us genuine peace.

Turkmenistan, a crossroads of paths and cultures, a cradle of religions, now bears witness to the Oblates, sent by the Latin rite Church for a fresh start. Engaging in dialogue with other religions and the local society, they emerge as architects of peace, fostering diplomatic relations and exploring ecumenical avenues to proclaim Jesus.

Just as Jesus did, and in His spirit, they ignite hearts with the radiance of the Gospel, selflessly serving the most destitute for solace, frequently inscribing new chapters in the Acts of the Apostles. A magnificent mission, one for which we express our gratitude to God as pilgrims of hope in communion.

Thus, two Oblates have pioneered novel pathways for the Church in these lands. The unassuming nature of this Church, mirroring the humility of the manger, serves as a poignant reminder of Christmas —Jesus, born vulnerable and among the poor. May this reflection post-journey ignite a collective commitment to sow hope and foster communion with unwavering enthusiasm and love.

– Fr Chico, OMI



The Journey of an Oblate Student



“I consider it a great blessing to be able to call myself an Oblate and say that I am a part of this religious family.”

My name is Bro. Carl Peter Lanigan, I'm an Oblate scholastic (another word for student) from Darndale in North Dublin currently studying in Rome. I have been asked to write a short article which might give an insight into the day-to-day life of an Oblate student today.



The community where I live is officially the Oblate scholasticate for the Mediterranean province (which comprises Italy and Spain primarily) but we are a very diverse group: the senior Oblates are from Italy and Spain, but bring with them many years of missionary experience in Korea, Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. The students come from Italy, Romania, Croatia, Senegal, Ireland and until recently Germany, the Czech Republic, Paraguay and Venezuela too. Everyone of course brings with them their own experience, story and culture, and together we make up the Scholasticate of the Blessed Oblate Martyrs at Vermicino.

The life of an Oblate scholastic has three primary elements: prayer, work and study. As a community we come together in the morning, at midday and in the evening for communal prayer and Holy Mass. The chapel is the first place where we see each other in the morning as a community and the last place at night. Our founder, St Eugene, believed that all Oblate communities should have a chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is kept, and described the Eucharist as the gathering place where all Oblates dispersed throughout the world could meet. I consider it a great gift to live in a place where we have access to the Blessed Sacrament at all times, and often need to remind myself of how great a gift this truly is.

Our work is varied. In community each scholastic has a responsibility, be it in the garden or kitchen, in upkeep and maintenance of the house, or in hospitality, preparing rooms for guests etc; we are always kept busy in this regard. An Oblate scholastic generally spends between five and seven years at the scholasticate, it becomes like a home to us in many respects, and so we do what we can to make it feel like one. Outside of the community we have both ordinary and extraordinary pastoral placements. The ordinary pastoral placements are generally in local parishes where we go every week, for catechism, animating Masses, youth meetings etc. Some scholastics also have their pastoral placement in a nearby prison, and others with a local scout troop etc. Extraordinary pastoral placements are less frequent. Each scholastic, for example, is generally required to participate in one parish mission every year. Parish missions were once a big part of the ministry of the Oblates in Britain and Ireland. In short a group of Oblates will go to a parish where we do not have a presence and spend between a week & ten days there, animating Masses, preaching, visiting schools and families etc. This reality is still a big part of the ministry of the Oblates in Italy and requests still come from parishes throughout the country.



Last year I participated in a parish mission in Cagliari on the island of Sardinia. It was my first experience of a mission and I enjoyed it very much. We were a group of six Oblates and one laywoman. We spent ten days in a parish on the island where we were hosted by local families for that time. In the mornings we would meet young people at the bus stop on their way to school and visit the sick and housebound. Mass would be celebrated daily where different Oblates from the team would preach, and we would animate meetings for different groups of the parish (kids, teenagers, families etc) in the evenings. We would often be stopped on the street by people curious to know who we were and what we were doing, and from these encounters came many invitations to different homes in the parish. There was always something to be done but the experience was very rewarding and our encounters for that week were only positive.

Study is another reality of our life. An Oblate scholastic generally studies philosophy for two years and theology for four. During the week we travel to university together in the morning for classes, and return home in time for lunch. At university we meet a diverse array of students, religious and lay, from around the world and many friendships are formed here. In this sense university is for us more than just an academic reality. The academic aspect is however an important part of our formation because it prepares and gives us a solid foundation on which to preach and transmit the faith as Oblate missionary brothers and priests in the world. We are privileged to be able to study at some of the greatest universities and centres of learning in the Church today, and so we need to be able to see this aspect of our life as more than just a necessity but a gift that few have, and for this reason we make the most of it.



In short the life of an Oblate scholastic today is a varied one, but a great one. I consider it a great blessing to be able to call myself an Oblate and say that I am a part of this religious family. These are formative years in the life of all Oblates, and are always remembered - for the good and for the not so good. Please do pray for our Oblate scholastics in Europe and elsewhere that they may be sustained and supported in their vocation. And please also encourage young men to consider our way of life - the Church needs them. Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate.

THE STORY OF THE DE MAZENOD DOOR, CANADA



“I pray that we can continue to meet our community’s need for support. We are here to serve our guests. We offer them kindness and compassion while helping to meet their most basic human need for food.”

Given the tough economic times facing Canadians, and the nation-wide housing crisis, 2023 has been a most challenging year at De Mazenod Door Outreach. The hardships faced by people in our community are motivating our entire team to do more for the people we serve in Hamilton, Ontario’s inner city!

De Mazenod Door was named after St. Eugene de Mazenod, the founder of the Oblates and the patron saint and intercessor for the poor.

Our guests, who come to the De Mazenod Door for daily meals, are often unhoused or underhoused, living in poverty. Many are living with critical illnesses, injuries and disabilities, and may be coping with addictions and mental health issues.

While the need for the daily meal program continues to grow, the dedicated staff and volunteers find the will-power and the faith to answer the call, and in return, we get to bear witness to the Holy Spirit working among us.

De Mazenod Door officially opened a new state-of-the-art commercial kitchen at St. Patrick Catholic Elementary School on Sept. 1. The blessing and ribbon-cutting ceremony was led by Bishop Douglas Crosby, OMI, of Hamilton. Bishop Crosby was the first person to sign the door, which was taken from the St. Patrick Parish’s Pastoral Centre where the outreach ministry originated. The physical door will be on display in the new space.

The new kitchen provides ample space for volunteers to prepare breakfast and lunch meals that are served every day, year-round, to the growing number of people who are struggling with food insecurity in Hamilton.

The daily meal program is seeing an alarming increase in the number of meals served. As of Aug. 31, there were 99,457 meals served, compared to 85,955 in the same period in 2022. Almost 4,000 meals were served in one September week; on several occasions, between 600 and 700 meals were served in a day.

“We are struggling to keep up with the need, and the need keeps growing,” said Fr. Tony O’Dell, OMI, pastor at St. Patrick Parish. He and Fr. Jarek Pachocki, OMI, established the outreach program in the summer of 2012.

“When I stand in this modern new kitchen, I am in awe of how far we’ve come, from our humble beginnings when we started giving out sandwiches and coffee to our neighbours who came to the door of the church,” said Fr. Tony.

“I pray that we can continue to meet our community’s need for support. We are here to serve our guests. We offer them kindness and compassion while helping to meet their most basic human need for food. We simply couldn’t do it without our community partners, generous donors and our many volunteers.”



“With the help of many dedicated volunteers we are producing a whole bounty of goodness while cultivating a community of love and compassion.”



De Mazenod Door relies on donations and sponsorships to support our programs, and volunteers to deliver all these programs. In addition to the daily food security program, De Mazenod Door has expanded its ministry in 2023 to include the following priority areas:

De Mazenod Housing is an intentional approach to housing for people leaving the shelter system. It provides long-term, safe housing in a sober-living environment. Launched in 2020 during the pandemic, the ministry now houses 16 individuals in two congregate living houses (Eugene’s Place for men, and Mary’s Ark for women), and two apartments, Eugene’s Pad 1 and 2. Two more apartments are being renovated for tenants to move into this fall: Eugene’s Pads 3 and 4.

De Mazenod Farm grows fruit and vegetables for the kitchen and provides an environment for students to learn about horticulture and farm animals, as well as a place for inner city individuals and families to visit and volunteer, close to the city where people can “get away” and relax in nature. The farm is meant to be a place of tranquility and peace for all.

Fr. Tony and Fr. Jarek were thrilled to welcome animals to the farm recently, and our De Mazenod and parish community is referring to them as ‘Noah’s Ark’, as the animals arrived two by two. Miniature goats, horses, donkeys, kittens, ducks, ram sheep and other animals now call the farm home, and there is the promise of horse rides in the future for children.

The farm welcomes volunteers and visitors from every walk of life including frontline workers, those suffering with autism, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), acute stress disorder (ASD), anxiety and other challenging mental illnesses. Two of our goats, TJ & Sutton, have already visited and brought joy to a local nursing home! Beyond focusing solely on the farm’s yield of produce to feed the hungry, we wish to develop the farm’s potential as a sacred, welcoming space to nourish the spirits of those struggling.

“With the help of many dedicated volunteers we are producing a whole bounty of goodness while cultivating a community of love and compassion,” said Fr. Tony.

Humankind Gifts is a social enterprise gift shop selling new items and donated artisan crafts and artwork, with all proceeds going back to De Mazenod Door outreach.

– Bridget Saulnier and Diane Downey
(Originally published in the Oblate Spirit Magazine)



TIME TO COME HOME

“We require a new and universal solidarity.” (LS. 14)

These prophetic words of Pope Francis send shivers down the spine as we try to come to terms with the year just gone, now scientifically verified as the hottest year ever on planet earth, our common home.

Will these be shivers of hopelessness or of a new resolve to come home to who we really are as universal kin? “Make your home in me as I make mine in you... as the Father has loved me so I have loved you. Remain in my love. (Jn 14:3,9).

That love unfolds a universe which is a communion of subjects, each one sacred, beloved, unique, precious, different but not separate in the amazing web of life’s interbeing-ness. We have always been within God, within the cosmic whole, and we are destined to be with God for all eternity. “Contemplative vision is the vision that says” you are good as you are because you are the sacrament of God’s love.” (Ilio Delio) Encouraged by this assurance, as we begin this new year let us imagine for a moment:

What would a world be like that is born of a mindset wherein all is ONE and INTERCONNECTED? What if we really understood that my being partakes of your being and that of all beings? In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis is acutely aware of this when he urges all people to a conversion that: “entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion (LS.220)

It is so heartening to recall and hear anew the words of Fr. Chico, Fr. Oliver and feedback from the participants in the 2023 Oblate Assembly as they stressed “on-going conversion” in areas of community life and mission, collaboration with our lay colleagues and the growing challenge of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

(JPIC). The Spirit, alive and active through the Assembly, was indeed urging a new spirit of Synodality, of working together in love and trust, opening hearts and minds, hinting that something fresh was happening among participants heralding a new and prophetic shift from “international communities” to “intercultural communities” – a Kairos moment indeed!

The challenge now and into the future is to be open to the more. Community embraces and includes all creation, all beings, that amazing creativity of God pulsating through every being urging us into oneness “For in God we live and move and have our being”. (Acts 17:28).

We, all beings, share the same atoms, minerals and chemicals as the stars...we are stardust! Beings of light-enlightened beings! We evolved in deep time c.14 billion years ago and carry the unique wisdom of our evolving universe in every fibre of our being. We are genetically and energetically related to the entire community of creation, all beings sustained by the living systems of the universe: sun, air, water and soil as well as the companionship of each other in the community of creation. What energy, wisdom, mutual support and hope as we face an unknown future especially in the knowledge that our universe is constantly evolving and changing, continuing to flare forth in newness!

“The greatest illusion in the world is the illusion of separation”. Albert Einstein.

Pope Francis writes: “Creation is of the order of love (LS. 77), which calls us together into universal communion”. (LS. 76) This calls for a change of heart -getting to the roots beyond the symptoms - an integral ecological vision as Pope Francis advocates in *Laudato Si*,

“The divine is the enfolding of the universe, and the universe is the unfolding of the divine.”

“Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. (LS. 139).

To come home is undoubtedly the great work of our time, the challenge is to join planet earth, our common home, as a participating member rather than a dominating force. One strategy might be to allow earth to convert us through restorative justice, working from the heart with a genuine desire for mutual healing, justice and dynamic partnership into the future for the wellbeing of all life. This is a process of unlearning false assumptions and beliefs – that we are somehow not of earth – and embracing our true identity as one species among multiple species in the wondrous web of life in our Common Home.

“If we could see ourselves as Earth rather than Earth as existing for us- our perspective is transformed”.
– Anne Primavesi

The journey in re-connecting with our deepest roots necessitates an ecological spirituality whereby all creation is respected and protected for the common good. Our world today faces the largest ecological and humanitarian crisis as a result of unprecedented global warming and climate change – largely human induced. All of us are challenged to conversion. In our Oblate family we are taking this very seriously. We gather in faith and hope with colleagues globally seeking ever more creative ways of responding to the emerging needs of our time. The consequence of centuries of devastation of earth and people are many and complex, may we strive to live ourselves into the emerging world-view of oneness in diversity by continuing to:



- Nurture our essence, faith – our particular light to the world
- Preserve the living systems: sun, air, water & soil
- Mitigate climate change, promote biodiversity
- Develop sustainable technologies over fossil fuels
- Promote equality and justice, fairer distribution of vital resources
- Challenge the scourge of militarism, deadly weaponry, corporate greed, exploitation – all forms
- Weave enlightenment, understanding, reconciliation, peace, hope

“We need joy as we need air. We need love as we need water. We need each other as we need the earth we share”. – Maya Angelou

Sr. Nellie McLaughlin is author of *Out of Wonder* and *Life's Delicate Balance*. She has given a very accessible interview on the following link which we highly recommend:
www.mercyworld.org/library/nellie-mclaughlin-rsm429/



A Saint for Today

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux said, “I will spend my heaven doing good on earth. I will let fall a shower of roses.” In a similar proclamation, Saint Teresa of Calcutta wrote, “If I ever become a saint—I will surely be one of ‘darkness.’ I will continually be absent from heaven—to light the light of those in darkness on earth.” Both statements indicate how these two saints intended to intercede from Heaven.

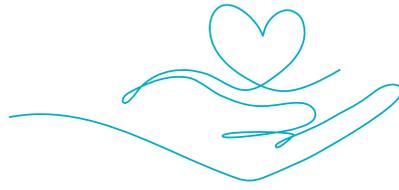
Saint Eugene de Mazenod did not leave a declaration as these two did. Yet, if the lives of both Saint Thérèse of Lisieux and Saint Teresa of Calcutta are examined, it should come as no surprise that these two saints would choose to intercede from Heaven in this manner, for this is how they interceded for others during their lives. Therefore, if we want to know how Saint Eugene de Mazenod wishes to intercede from Heaven, an examination of his life will yield an answer.

The goal of Saint Eugene’s life on earth was and is now in Heaven to serve the most abandoned in the world and to save souls. The strategy Eugene employed in reaching out to the abandoned was to recognize their humanity, first and foremost.

Then, he would go about converting them. “We must lead men to act like human beings, first of all, and then like Christians, and, finally, we must help them to become saints,” he taught his oblates. Thus, in examining the life of Saint Eugene de Mazenod and seeking his intercession, a person will relate to the struggles of his life and see that this saint is a human being, too. As Pope Paul VI said, “We want to discover in saints

whatever brings them closer to us, rather than what sets them apart. We want to put them at our level as human beings...That way, we stand the chance of having confidence in them—we can share with them the common and burdensome state of our earthly experience.” Saint Eugene wants to empathize with our burdens, for he, too, experienced burdens.

In the life of Saint Eugene, a multitude of persons can find something to which they can relate. The problems plaguing the world today are the same problems with which Eugene dealt in his day. People still struggle with anger, causing divisions and hurt feelings. Families still find themselves becoming refugees, placing many in foreign lands without their consent. The divorce rate remains high, causing grief for children who have done no wrong and inspiring animosity between spouses. Governments continue to threaten the open practice of religion, forcing many to fear that their way of life might soon be jeopardized. Prisoners are still shunned, denying the opportunity for forgiveness. Religious education continues to be inadequate, perpetuating ignorance of the true teachings of the Church. The poor remain, plagued by starvation and other anxieties. Some priests still fail to develop proper preaching skills, leaving many of the faithful without spiritual guidance. Faith continues to be forced out of the public square, further secularizing the culture.



“Come, then, and learn what you are in the eyes of God... All you who are burdened with misery... listen to me! You are the children of God, the brothers of Jesus Christ, co-heirs of His eternal kingdom, the cherished portion of His inheritance.”

Yet, no person who suffers from any of the issues mentioned above need be defined by their struggles. Saint Eugene refused to let the pains of his youth stop him from realizing the Lord's plan for him, and the problems he faced as an adult could not stop him from carrying out his ministry. All who feel abandoned can look to Saint Eugene and his example of not being defined by the struggles he endured. Eugene knew who he was in the eyes of the Lord, and he desires to help everyone make the same discovery today:

Come, then, and learn what you are in the eyes of God... All you who are burdened with misery...listen to me! You are the children of God, the brothers of Jesus Christ, co-heirs of His eternal kingdom, the cherished portion of His inheritance...There is an immortal soul within you, made to the image of God Whom it is destined to possess one day; a soul redeemed at the price of the Blood of Jesus Christ, more precious in the eyes of God than all the riches of the earth, than all the kingdoms of the world; a soul He considers more desirable than the government of the entire universe.

Through relating to Saint Eugene, we encounter virtue and love. We see our inherent dignity, and we can then draw close to the Lord. From Heaven, Eugene burns with zeal for the salvation of our souls. His intercession can help us act like humans, then Christians, and finally become saints.

- Alex Hey

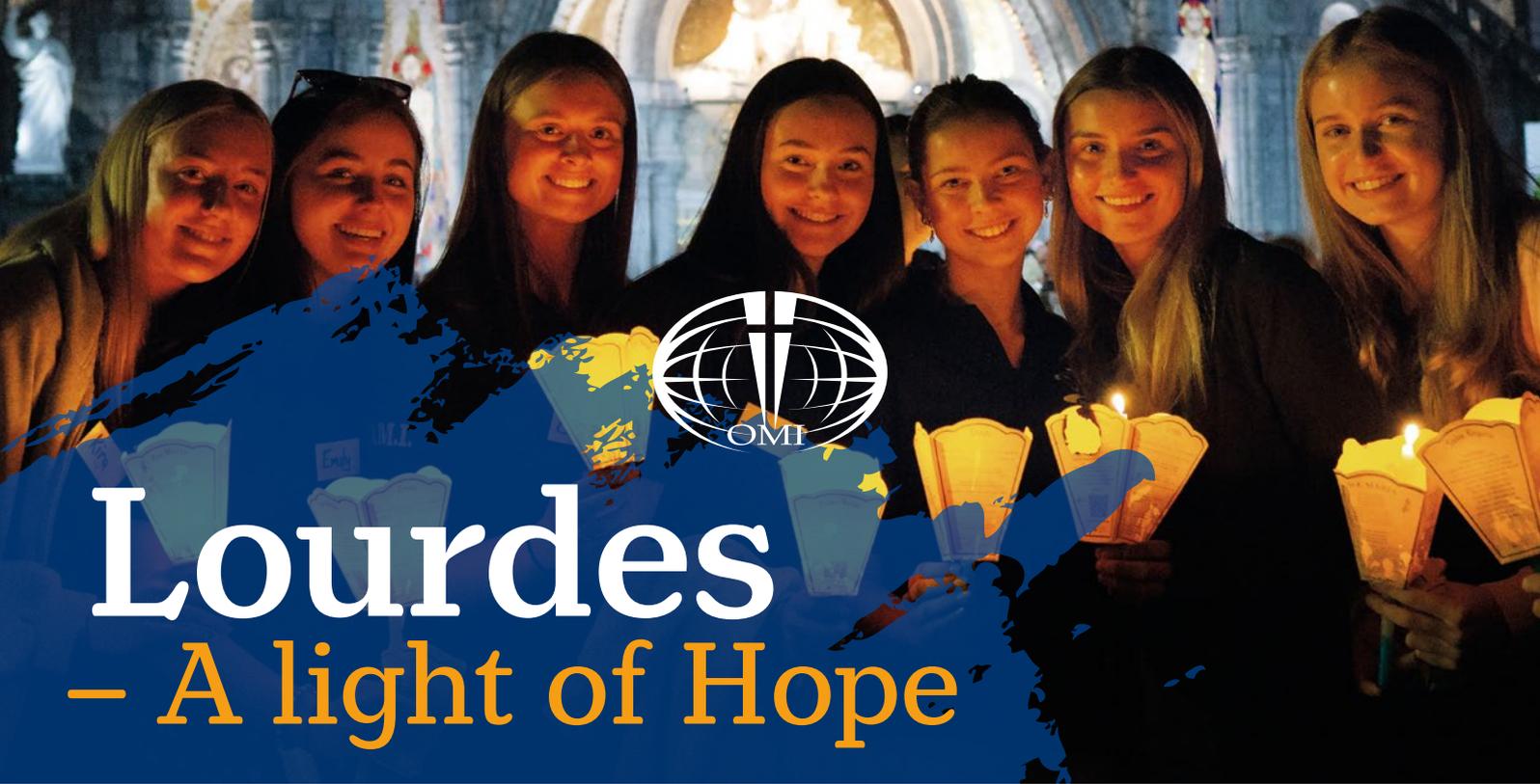


Prayer for Wounded Families

Almighty and loving God, you led St. Eugene de Mazenod through the sufferings and challenges of a broken family to a life of holiness. Through his constant intercession bless those whose relationships are damaged and broken.

Grant them the gifts of understanding, patience, love and courage to overcome the problems of life. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord.

Amen.



Lourdes

– A light of Hope

15 - 20 September

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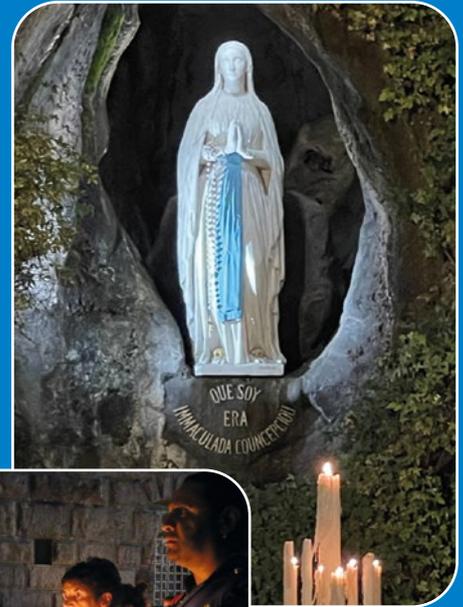
FLIGHTS: MANCHESTER – BORDEAUX – 5 DAYS

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