Inside

4-6  Oblates Remain Steadfast Despite Violence in Philippines
7    Oblate Crossings
8-9  Lord of the Ring
10-11 Generous Supporters Help Tijuana Youth Attend World Youth Day After Scam
12-15 A Lifetime of Oblate Ministries
       Bishop Michael Pfeifer, O.M.I.
16-17 Festival of Life
18-19 The Music Man of Holy Angels
20-21 The Missionary Life of a Cowboy Priest
22-23 On the Path To Sainthood
       Servant of God Ovide Charlebois, O.M.I.
24-25 The Humanity Of A Missionary
26-27 My Vocation Story
       Fr. David Kalert, O.M.I.
28-29 Donor Highlight
       Vincente and Dulce Zappata
30    Oblate Crossings
31    The IRA Charitable Rollover
       The Time To Act Is Now!

Front Cover: Bishop Michael Pfeifer, O.M.I. is celebrating 55 years of Oblate ministries.
Back Cover: Young people from throughout Poland celebrate their faith during the Festival of Life. Photo by Grzegorz Szpak.

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

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From the **Provincial**  
*Fr. Louis Studer, O.M.I.*

**Dear Friend,**

Earlier this year I was in India where the Oblates are celebrating 50 years of ministry. While visiting one of our parishes, a Sister came up to me and said something that touched my heart deeply: **"I love working with the Oblates. They love the poor and their hearts are with them."**

Everywhere I went in India I saw these words come to life over and over. In parishes, schools, orphanages and prayer centers, the Oblates have numerous spiritual, social and educational programs specifically created for the poor. Many of these programs are provided to indigenous people, who are the least cared for by the government and society.

At St. Thomas Parish I visited with parishioners who cannot afford to care for their own children. Many of them are day laborers, looking for work each morning to provide food for their family on a daily basis. Helping to meet this crucial need, the Oblates established a youth hostel which houses and feeds 35 children. The Pastor there, Fr. Pragasam Paniadimai, O.M.I. told me, **"The parents of these kids love them and they come often to visit them. But they cannot afford to feed them, at least not every day, so we have to take them in."**

For several years, the Oblates’ United States Province has financially supported the Oblates in India. After my visit I am convinced this has been money well spent, and this arrangement will continue for many more years to come. This partnership has also benefited the Oblates in the United States greatly, as four Oblate priests from India are currently ministering in our country.

I thank you for being a part of our Oblate family which stretches across the globe. You are truly working with us as co-missionaries to improve the lives of poor and needy people. I pray that you have the same feelings about the Oblates as the Sister who I visited with in India: **"I love working with the Oblates. They love the poor and their hearts are with them."**

*Fr. Louis Studer, O.M.I.*  
Provincial, United States Province
Since 1939, the Missionary Oblates have ministered in the Jolo region of the Philippines. This southern portion of the country has been a hotbed for Islamic extremism for generations, and the Oblates have been the targets of their attacks.

Oblates have been murdered, kidnapped and victims of other forms of violence. Despite the dangers, the Oblates have always remained committed to building bridges between Christians and Muslims.

That commitment was on display in January when two bombs exploded at the cathedral in Jolo, killing 27 people and injuring more than 100. The next day, the Oblate Superior in the Philippines, Fr. Charlie Inzon, O.M.I. issued a statement saying the Oblates would not be intimidated by a handful of terrorists.

“We have lost brothers, sisters and friends, and we are in deep grief and sorrow. We are one with their families in this difficult time – for they were also family to us. Indeed, they have died as martyrs, witness to their Christian faith as they braved to stay in Jolo despite constant intimidation and risks.”

The Oblates who minister in Jolo were not in attendance at the Mass when the bombings took place. They were on their way to Cotabato City to attend a celebration there.

Upon returning to Jolo, the Oblates immediately began helping victims of the bombing. Father Larry de Guia, O.M.I., who is a medical doctor, personally attended to the needs of the injured. Several Oblates also helped victims deal with the psychological scars caused by the massacre.
The recent attack was a reminder of the longtime problems the Oblates have had with terrorists targeting them and their places of worship. In 1997, Bp. Benjamin De Jesus, O.M.I. of Jolo was murdered at the same cathedral.

In 2000, Fr. Benjamin Inocencio, O.M.I. was murdered in his car in downtown Jolo. In 2008, Fr. Reynaldo Roda, O.M.I. was killed at an Oblate high school. He was praying at the time and his last words to the murderers were: “If you want me, then just kill me here in God’s chapel!”

Getting Muslims and Christians to live more harmoniously has been a goal of the Philippine Oblates for nearly 80 years, especially in the southern portion of the country where only about three percent of the population is Christian. Shortly after arriving in the country, Oblates started numerous educational and socio-economic projects which helped people regardless of their religious beliefs.

Schools were opened after World War II to educate Muslims and Christians side-by-side. The schools are still in operation today and provide some of the best academic environments in the Jolo region.

Starting in the 1960s, socio-economic development programs were initiated by the Oblates to help Muslims directly. Credit unions and cooperatives were opened in Jolo. An immense housing project was also started there. In Cotabato, the projects include loan programs, distribution of irrigation pumps and seed distribution to farmers.

Today, the Oblates oversee numerous efforts to promote dialogue between people of different faiths. They have created councils for elders and religious leaders to work together on inter-faith issues. Students in their Notre Dame schools take part in programs to promote dialogue. The Oblates’ extensive media presence in the Philippines is focused on peace and justice issues for all people.

“Over the past decades, our people – Christians, Muslims and Lumads – have been striving to work together to bring forth harmony, peace and progress to this land,” said Fr. Inzon. “It is our hope that this recent tragic incident may not be a source of division, but rather a strong reason to build up a community that is centered on the values of peace, dialogue, friendship, love and solidarity that transcends religion, culture or belief.”

“My heart bleeds for my people”

For 20 years, Bp. Agelito Lampon, O.M.I. presided over the Apostolic Vicariate of Jolo in the Philippines. As the
leader of the Catholic faithful in the region, Bp. Lampon was a target of Islamic extremist. The bombing at his cathedral took place on the last day of Bp. Lampon’s tenure as the Bishop of Jolo. He was in Cotabato City preparing to be installed as the new bishop there.

“I have a heavy heart, and the heart is bleeding for my people who perished in the Jolo cathedral bombings,” said Bp. Lampon. “I have known those regular churchgoers who died in the blast. They have become my family, my brothers and sisters, my heart is really bleeding for them. It’s a big emotional upheaval and yet my faith tells me to continue extending a hand of friendship, in inter-religious dialogue.”

Bishop Lampon admits that he was very apprehensive when he was named Bishop of Jolo in 1998. His predecessor and longtime friend, Bp. Benjamin De Jesus, O.M.I. had been killed outside the cathedral and it was clear that extremists didn’t like the new bishop who was outspoken in support of reconciliation between Muslims and Christians.

“But the risk for the good of our people is part of the package deal of being appointed Bishop of Jolo,” said Bp. Lampon at the time.

Over the next 20 years, Bp. Lampon traveled almost always with armed guards. He reached out to the poor and needy in all corners of the vicariate, regardless of their faith. Bishop Lampon said he was fulfilling a core characteristic of being a Missionary Oblate – to serve the most abandoned without regard to one’s own comfort or endangerment of life.

Bishop Lampon explains that when times get tough he always remembers the advice given to him by Fr. Maurice Hemann, O.M.I. one of the first Oblates in the Philippines: “Wherever you are assigned, as long as you love God and the people, you will always find something good to do.”
New President Named at OST

Father Sylvester David, O.M.I. has been selected to be President of Oblate School of Theology (OST) for a period of five years. Father David was the Vicar-General of Durban archdiocese in South Africa and a former head of St. Joseph’s Theological Institute (SJTI) in Cedara, South Africa. He will be the institution’s first African head when he is installed as President on August 1, 2019.

Born in Durban, South Africa in 1953, Fr. David’s priestly studies began at SJTI and later he studied scripture in Rome. He holds a doctorate in Biblical Theology.

Father David is currently working with OST President Fr. Ron Rolheiser during the time of transition. Father Ron has served as OST President for 13 years and will continue to teach at the school and serve as a mentor to Fr. David.

St. Joseph’s Scholasticate Turns 75

In 1943 a team of Oblate missionaries from France established St. Joseph’s Scholasticate in Cedara, South Africa. Over the years, St. Joseph’s has grown into one of the most productive Oblate formation programs in the world as it continues to nourish and mold fervent priests and brothers for the local Church and beyond.

Father Neil Frank, O.M.I., Provincial for the Oblates’ Southern African Province, said the scholasticate has always brought contextual theology to bear on the current social-political problems in Africa, such as poverty, land issue, corruption and limitations in education. He also noted that the scholasticate has grown to become a resource for all of Africa and today it is no longer dominated by South Africans.

“This has increased the inter-cultural experience and has enriched our lives,” said Fr. Frank. “It also provides a good basis for clarifying what are the African questions that need to be addressed and seeking the African answers to them.”
Father Charlie Banks, O.M.I. has probably never been described as flashy in his entire life. The unassuming missionary priest prefers to deflect attention away from himself and instead concentrate on serving God in humble ministries.

But on his right hand is an eye-catching ring. Father Charlie wears it not because he desires flashy jewelry but because it symbolizes how people can impact the lives of others in simple, unassuming ways.

The ring is a Texas A&M University class ring. It was given to Fr. Charlie by a student that the Oblate priest had been counseling at the school about a calling to religious life. When the young man decided to enter the seminary, he gave Fr. Charlie his class ring in appreciation for his advice.

At first, Fr. Charlie wasn’t quite sure what to do with the unique gift. Since he was never a student at the school, Fr. Charlie didn’t know if it was appropriate for him to wear such a ring. A close friend and Aggie graduate checked with the Texas A&M Association of Former Students and explained the 12-year ministry of the priest at the Catholic Center for the university’s students. Father Charlie was given quick approval to wear the ring in recognition of his significant impact on the lives of many students over the years.

Father Charlie began his association with Texas A&M in 2006 when he was invited to help direct a “Busy Student’s” retreat. The following year the priest in charge of St. Mary’s Catholic Center asked him to consider coming weekly on Mondays to minister to the students while the local priests have a day off.

“It is really an honor to minister at St. Mary’s each week. I am inspired by the large number of students who participate in the life of the Church there. At every Monday afternoon Mass we count about 200 attendees. On weekends the numbers are in the thousands,” said Fr. Charlie.

On early Sunday afternoon Fr. Charlie drives three hours from his home in Lord Of The Ring
San Antonio to the university in College Station, Texas where he spends the night in the Center’s rectory. After a full day with the students, he spends another night there and then makes the return trip home on Tuesday morning.

“One of the great gifts of the church to the Aggies is Fr. Charlie Banks,” said Bp. David Konderla, Bishop of Tulsa, who previously served as Director of Campus Ministry at the school. “He has shown us what fidelity to mission looks like, and we are richer for his presence and wisdom.”

Father Banks Honored By Catholic Television

In February, Fr. Charlie Banks, O.M.I. was honored with the St. John Vianney Award at the Catholic Television of San Antonio (CTSA) Leadership Luncheon. He was honored for his extraordinary pastoral care, his dedicated service in campus ministry and his leadership in vocations and formation.

“I was shocked when I heard about the honor because I am the first priest from a religious order to receive it,” said Fr. Charlie. “But I really want the honor to be about the Oblates and not me.”

Father Charlie was ordained in 1966. Much of his earlier ministries focused on preparing young men for religious life or working in parishes throughout Texas. In 1991 he was elected Vicar Provincial of the Oblates’ Southern United States Province which began a long tenure of administrative roles with the Oblates.

In recent years Fr. Charlie has served as a Vocation Director and is currently the Superior of the Oblate Madonna Residence in San Antonio where close to 30 Oblates, both retired and active, currently live. †
Father Jesse Esqueda, O.M.I. was excited to be able to offer 19 youth of his Tijuana, Mexico parish a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel to the 2019 World Youth Day (WYD) in Panama. The youth were excited too; for a year and a half, they worked hard to raise money for the trip.

The group raised over $20,000 and the money was placed with a Mexican travel agency specializing in travel arrangements for groups heading to World Youth Day. In addition to the Oblate group, the travel agency was handling travel arrangements for 11 dioceses in Mexico and had collected a grand total of $500,000.

All seemed in order until Fr. Jesse received the shocking news on Monday, January 14 that all the money for the group was gone. Tragically, they were the victims of an elaborate scam. They were devastated; their trip was planned for January 19 and there was no way to raise the funds in time. Or so they thought.

Father Jesse recounted the events on Monday that revealed the scam: “A group from the Diocese of Zacatecas planned to attend the WYD pre-events and was instructed to make a bus ride to Mexico City airport to transport them to Panama. When they arrived at the airport, they were met with confusion by airport personnel about their promised chartered plane to Panama. With attempts to contact the company for explanations, calls were unanswered and their contact person was nowhere to be found. Needless to say, word spread fast to the other 400+ youth that had used the same company.”

“The youth are devastated with this reality,” Fr. Jesse said. “Our youth worked for over a year to save money to go to Panama. They sold thousands of tamales, washed hundreds of cars, sold countless raffle tickets and participated in many other fundraising events to raise enough money to pay for their trip. We don’t know what the next step is at
this point. We paid over $20,000 to the company for arrangements for airfare, ground transportation, lodging and meals. The youth were looking forward to this great event and to see Pope Francis. This was going to be the first trip outside of Mexico for most of the youth from our group.”

The night after the discovery, Fr. Jesse called an emergency meeting to inform the kids. He said the kids were crying, heartbroken and expressed doubt that they could go. Some said they gave up hope knowing they wouldn’t be going.

In this seemingly hopeless situation, the Oblates decided to offer a glimmer of hope to the despairing youth. Bishop Michael Pfeifer, O.M.I., Bishop emeritus of the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas began canvassing his list of contacts. In addition, Fr. David Uribe, O.M.I., Director of the Oblate Missionary Society (the fundraising arm of the Oblates) asked the Charitable and Planned Giving department to see if they could do anything to help.

The team of fundraisers made a goal to replace the stolen money within three days. By Wednesday, phone calls by Bp. Pfeifer and Fr. Uribe to Oblate donors began replacing the lost travel funds at a surprisingly fast rate. The calls continued as the group inched toward the goal.

On January 17, just before noon, a donor pledged the remaining amount. Within the span of four days, a heartbreaking act of thievery became a story of generosity and love.

Father Jesse was happy to share that he and his group arrived in Panama safely:

“We FINALLY made it to Panama!! THANK GOD, we were able to buy flight tickets, get lodging and register for the WYD events at the last minute. However, the only possible journey for us was Tijuana to Mexico City to San Jose, Costa Rica then 19 hours on a bus from Costa Rica to Panama City! It was a long journey but we were HAPPY TO TAKE IT!!

“Words cannot fully express the gratitude we feel for your concern, support and prayers! This was a TRUE MIRACLE of Love. Tragedies turn in to blessings with FRIENDS LIKE YOU!”

When the youth were asked what advice they would give others preparing for the next World Youth Day, they were quick to offer some profound words of wisdom: “Never give up; overcome money, people and circumstances.” “Be spiritually prepared through prayer.” “Live in the moment, always having faith and always be thankful.” †
Bishop Michael Pfeifer, O.M.I.

Bishop Michael Pfeifer, O.M.I. is a lifetime Missionary Oblate. When he was born in 1937, Bp. Pfeifer immediately became part of the Oblate family. His parents were parishioners at St. Joseph Parish in Alamo, Texas in the Rio Grande Valley, one of the earliest Oblate ministries in the United States.

In the 1920s the Oblates built a church for Catholics in the area. Helping to build that church was Bp. Pfeifer’s dad, Frank, who would bring bricks from 15 miles away in a horse-drawn wagon to the building site. As a boy Bp. Pfeifer served Mass at the parish.

Frank Pfeifer and his wife, Alice, could see in their son a love for the Catholic faith and priesthood even at a young age. They predicted that one day their son would become a bishop, something mom included in her prayers.

“Mom didn’t tell me about her bishop prayers until after I actually became one,” said Bp. Pfeifer. “If she had told me earlier I might have told her to pray for something else.”

In addition to his parents, Bp. Pfeifer was also encouraged to pursue his calling to become an Oblate by his older brother, Ted, and his cousin, James. Both Ted and James would become Missionary Oblates. In 1964 Bp. Pfeifer spent the summer ministering with his brother in rural Oaxaca, Mexico. Father Ted had been ordained in 1959 and was at the start of a legendary ministry in Mexico among the poorest of the poor.

The summer in Mexico may have been the most difficult and happiest time in Bp. Pfeifer’s life. He would ride horseback to remote villages where parishioners gathered in large groups to receive the sacraments. Bishop Pfeifer fell in love with the place and the people.

After his ordination in December 1964 Bp. Pfeifer was assigned to Mexico, but it wasn’t with his brother in Oaxaca. Instead he was assigned to Mexico City where he served in leadership roles at the Oblate-run school, Colegio Vista Hermosa. Some of his students became seminarians and eventually Oblate priests and brothers.

After working at the schools, Bp. Pfeifer was assigned to parishes in the slums of Mexico City and to lead the mission promotion office. The parishes were vast, with as many as 100,000 people in their boundaries. Bishop Pfeifer was then named the Superior of the entire Oblate ministries in Mexico. He was instrumental in preparing the Mexico Province to become independent of the United States.
Bishop Pfeifer’s time as Superior in Mexico was the start of a long ministry as an administrator for both the Oblates and at the diocesan level. In 1981 he returned to the United States after being elected Provincial of the U.S. Oblate’s Southern Province.

One of Bp. Pfeifer’s proudest accomplishments as leader of the Southern Province was the establishment of a foreign mission in the African nation of Zambia. Bishop Pfeifer traveled throughout Zambia with the local Bishops and Oblate General Counselor to search out a proper place for the new Oblate mission. He wanted to find a place that fulfilled the Oblates’ charism of serving the poorest and neediest people, and to empower them to become future leaders while also fostering Oblate vocations. He eventually found the city of Lukulu, and sent four Oblates from Texas there to begin the mission.

“It was a tough decision to go to Zambia because we had to give up some of our more successful parishes in the U.S. Southern Province,” said Bp. Pfeifer. “But Zambia has been a boom for us as far as both ministry and vocations.”

When his time as Provincial of the Southern Province would come to an end, Bp. Pfeifer expected to head to Zambia to once again serve as a foreign missionary priest. But someone else had a different plan. In 1985 Pope John Paul II named Bp. Pfeifer the Bishop of the Diocese of San Angelo in Texas, fulfilling his mom and dad’s prophecy that their son would one day become a bishop.

“The announcement came out of the blue and at first I didn’t really want it,” said Bp. Pfeifer. “I was kind of hoping that they had made a mistake and that they really wanted my older brother Teddy.”

But Pope John Paul II did indeed want Michael Pfeifer to head the Diocese of San Angelo. At the time, it was rare for bishops to come from the ranks of religious orders. But Bp. Pfeifer quickly adjusted to diocesan life, and San Angelo became his home for nearly 30 years, making him one of the longest serving bishops in the United States. He was the first Oblate priest ever to be named a bishop of a diocese within the United States.

The Diocese of San Angelo is vast, consisting of 29 counties in western

Continued on page 14
Texas that is the size of Ohio. But the Catholic population is relatively small, about 77,000 people or about 12 percent of the entire population. During his time as Bishop of San Angelo, Bp. Pfeifer calculated that he drove more than one million miles using seven cars.

Although he was the Catholic Bishop, Bp. Pfeifer didn’t limit his ministry to just Catholics in the diocese. He showed up at many Protestant churches and functions, including Sunday School classes. He opened the local retreat center to non-Catholic retreats and events.

“His official title is Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, but to us, he’s really the Bishop of the entire San Angelo community,” said Rev. Nathaniel Hankins of the First United Methodist Church of San Angelo. “We think of him as our bishop too.”

At the age of 75 Bp. Pfeifer offered his retirement to Pope Benedict XVI. He then waited, and waited. After five months Pope Benedict surprisingly resigned the papacy, so Bp. Pfeifer remained on as Bishop of San Angelo. It took one year and eight months since he tendered his resignation before Pope Francis finally accepted it.

“My health is good so I feel blessed that I can still have a very active ministry,” said Bp. Pfeifer. “All of my prayers, and those of my mom and dad, have been answered.”

A Lifetime of Brotherly and Fatherly Love

When Bp. Michael Pfeifer O.M.I. talks about his older brother, he doesn’t hide his admiration: “Teddy was my brother, and also my hero.”

Father Ted “Teddy” Pfeifer, O.M.I. was born five years before his younger brother Michael. And in many ways Michael followed in his brother’s footsteps. They both became Missionary Oblate priests, and both were foreign missionaries in Mexico.

But as Fr. Michael started being assigned leadership roles with the Oblate community there. Today he continues to help out the San Antonio Diocese by giving retreats, taking part in Days of Recollections and presiding at Sacraments such as Confirmation.

In addition to these diocesan duties, the Oblates gave Bp. Pfeifer an office at their fundraising offices where he helps to raise money for Oblate ministries around the world, especially for his beloved missions in Zambia. Bishop Pfeifer also helps out with Mass and programs at the Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto and Tepeyac de San Antonio, the main worship space for the Oblates in San Antonio.

“My health is good so I feel blessed that I can still have a very active ministry,” said Bp. Pfeifer. “All of my prayers, and those of my mom and dad, have been answered.”
Oblates and in the Church, Fr. Teddy was taking on roles that went well beyond a missionary priest.

For 44 years Fr. Ted ministered in some of the poorest and remote mountain villages of Mexico. He fulfilled all of the spiritual needs of the people, and much more. Father Ted was at times a mechanic, a carpenter, a doctor who delivered hundreds of babies, and a dentist who pulled thousands of teeth.

“None of the children were vaccinated in those days. There were no doctors and there were no medications,” said Fr. Ted. “So I did as much as possible.”

Father Ted was much loved by the people in the mountains. But he was hated by gang members and drug lords when he started turning over information about murders in the mountains to authorities. One time Fr. Ted was ambushed by gunmen while driving his Jeep. When he made it to safety he found 12 bullet holes in the roof, just inches from his head.

“I knew that I was risking death, but the people I had come to serve were risking danger every single day and they had no way to flee to a place of safety,” said Fr. Ted. “I was scared, but I also remembered who had sent me there, and the powerful lesson Jesus had given to every priest in the parable of the Good Shepherd: the hireling flees when the wolf comes, but the shepherd stays to protect his sheep.”

Father Ted suffered a major stroke in 2011 and was forced to return to San Antonio, Texas for medical care. But he never forgot his beloved parishioners in the mountains of Oaxaca, Mexico. In San Antonio Fr. Ted took part in Sacramental duties such as hearing Confessions. He also opened a small carpentry shop where he made items like tables, shelves and birdhouses.

On April 19, 2018 Fr. Ted passed away peacefully at the Oblates’ Madonna House, a community for elder and infirmed Oblates. His younger brother, and greatest admirer, was there when he took his final breath.

Father Ted was buried at the Oblate Cemetery, just a short walk from his brother’s office. At his burial, a small Teddy Bear was put on his grave, an appropriate symbol for the fatherly Teddy Pfeifer, who was also a bear of a man when it came to helping the poorest of the poor. †
Twice a year, youth from about 20 Oblate parishes in Poland take part in the Festival of Life, a gathering of young people who celebrate their faith and Oblate identity. The festival rotates between different cities throughout Poland and can involve 1,500 participants. These photos were taken by Grzegorz Szpak during the most recent festival. Additional images can be viewed at Grzegorz’s website: grzegorzszpak.pl.
When Robert Chambers was laid to rest in January, in his hands was an Oblate Cross from the Missionary Oblates. It was an appropriate gesture for a man whose life had been interwoven with the Oblates for 87 years.

“Mister Chambers was truly a pillar of our parish (Holy Angels in Buffalo, New York),” said Fr. John Madigan, O.M.I. who knew Mr. Chambers for more than 60 years. “He was a gentle soul who was loved by everyone who knew him.”

Mister Chambers will be remembered by Holy Angel parishioners primarily for a musical legacy that stretched more than 100 years. His mother, Francis, was appointed the church organist in 1912 and Chambers was the organist at nearly every Mass, funeral, wedding and other parish events through 2017.

“I love the church. I love the music. I love the ministry. It’s a great gift,” said Mr. Chambers in an interview with the Western New York Catholic newspaper in 2017. “It’s a wonderful place to serve with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. I just enjoy every minute of it. It’s a great opportunity to thank God for the many gifts and graces that we have all received.”

Mister Chambers had a lifelong connection to Holy Angels Parish. His parents met as members of the parish choir. As a boy, Mr. Chambers’ musical talents were already being put to use as he played a march on the piano every day as his classmates filed into Holy Angels School.

Francis Chambers ministered as the organist at Holy Angels for 60 years, from 1912 to 1972. She was named an Honorary Oblate in 1963. In 1947 Robert Chambers began sharing organist duties with his mom and eventually became the primary organist for the parish. Mister Chambers has also been honored as an Honorary Oblate and carried the Oblate Cross that had belonged to his mother.
In addition to his long legacy at Holy Angels, Mr. Chambers also influenced generations of young men at Bishop Timon High School in Buffalo. Mister Chambers started as an English and Latin teacher and eventually served as the school’s principal for 25 years. In 1978 the students dedicated their yearbook to their Principal with a simple sentence: “No individual has sacrificed more for the Timon community than Mr. Robert H. Chambers.”

After Mr. Chambers’ death, he was remembered on the school’s Facebook page for “creating a climate where each of us, student and teacher, could work to our maximum capabilities. He had time for everyone – a senior student officer, a bewildered freshman, an irate faculty member, an anxious parent, a clerical worker or a visiting alumnus.

He was an unending example of a gentleman.”

Upon retiring from Bishop Timon High School, Mr. Chambers devoted most of his time to Holy Angels Parish. In addition to his music ministry, he also served as a pastoral associate and was involved in nearly every aspect of parish life.

Mister Chambers saw serving the Church as a calling. He said he enjoyed every day that he spent at Holy Angels because it was a chance to work with the Oblates and to minister to the people of the parish.

“The Oblates are a wonderful congregation,” said Mr. Chambers. “They gave me an opportunity to serve the Lord and to answer His call.” †
When Fr. Harry Schuckenbrock, O.M.I., was nine years old, he began herding cattle in Texas. For the past 60 years, he has been herding the faithful to a better understanding of the Good News.

“I was baptized by an Oblate so I guess you can say they have been part of my entire life,” said Fr. Harry.

Born and raised in a farming community in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, Fr. Harry didn’t really know any priests other than Oblates. The Oblates ministered in rural areas and were rather eccentric. Young Harry admired them greatly. The boy assumed that cowboy hats and boots were standard attire for a Catholic priest since his Obate pastor wore them.

The Schuckenbrock farm was along one of the few roads in the area and the Oblates would travel it frequently, often stopping by the farm for a bite to eat and fellowship. As a child Fr. Harry remembered trying to sleep while his dad and the Oblates played cards, smoked, joked and caused quite a ruckus.

“The Oblates were just part of the family and my dad loved them,” said Fr. Harry. “Mom on the other hand didn’t really care for them. The Oblates would give her suggestions on how to cook and she wasn’t having any of that.”

Harry became an altar boy at his church and the Oblates began pestering him about becoming a priest. He kept making excuses to avoid religious life. As a freshman in high school, Harry was a self-described “big deal” in his local Future Farmers of America chapter and he was convinced his future was on a farm.

But the Oblates kept planting the seed of religious life inside the young man. Eventually a calling developed and Harry agreed to spend his sophomore year of high school at the Oblates’ St. Anthony Prep Seminary in San Antonio, Texas.

“I never regretted my decision to go to St. Anthony. The education, both academic and spiritual, was top notch,” said Fr. Harry.

Ordained in 1959, Fr. Harry spent much of his ministry as a pastor at Oblate parishes in Texas, including Brownsville, Houston and Port Isabel. The parish hall at one of Fr. Harry’s former parishes is named in his honor.

In addition to his pastoral work, Fr. Harry also served as Superior of St. Anthony Prep Seminary, headed a diocesan program of Marriage Encounter, and for seven years was the Religious Education Director for the Diocese of Brownsville.

“That assignment was right after Vatican II so everybody was trying something new and it was all over the place,” said Fr. Harry. “It was an exciting time for the Church.”
During his later years of missionary work, Fr. Harry was in reduced-active ministry, helping out Fr. Jim Erving, O.M.I. at Our Lady of Refuge Parish in Roma, Texas. Father Jim reinvigorated Fr. Harry’s missionary spirit, and the elderly Oblate was active in numerous parish ministries. Sadly, Fr. Jim would be diagnosed with brain cancer, and would succumb to the disease at the age of 43.

“Father Jim was truly a character who treated me beautifully,” said Fr. Harry. “He was always so positive, even when his body was failing.”

Father Harry moved to Madonna House, a community for elder and infirmed Oblates in San Antonio, on his 80th birthday. It has been his home for the past five years.

“I spent much of my life doing head religion. Now at Madonna House I can focus on heart religion,” said Fr. Harry.

Father Harry loves the minimal schedule at Madonna House. Outside of daily Mass, meals and a few organized activities, he is free to do whatever he likes. Father Harry enjoys reading, usually in his favorite chair with a picture of Oblates on horseback on his wall and a cowboy hat on the dresser. He now tends to stay away from books on theology, preferring to avoid “head” religion so he can focus on “heart” religion.

Recently Fr. Harry reread To Kill a Mockingbird. The novel strikes a chord with Fr. Harry who also witnessed the effects of profound racism in the South. In the book, as the lawyer Atticus Finch walks out of the courtroom, the African Americans rise as a sign of respect for the noble Atticus. A man turns to Atticus’ daughter and tells her, “stand up, your father is passing.”

The same thing could be said about Fr. Harry – “stand up, your Father is passing.”
Servant of God Bishop Ovide Charlebois, a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, is on the path to sainthood. This holy man’s Cause for Beatification on the diocesan level began August 15, 1951. The Cause was then introduced in Rome in 1979, followed by the validity of the diocesan inquiry in 1986. The Congregation for the Causes of the Saints received the recommendation in 2001, and it will be passed to the cardinal, archbishop and bishop members of the Congregation for voting. Should the cause pass the vote, the Pope then receives the recommendation. The Pope’s approval would allow Servant of God Bishop Charlebois to be known as Venerable Bishop Charlebois. Beatification and Canonization are the final steps of the lengthy and complicated process.

Bishop Charlebois was born in Oka in Québec, Canada on February 17, 1862. He joined the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1883 and was ordained to the priesthood on July 17, 1887. His first assignment was to Western Canada where he dedicated his entire remaining years.

Father Charlebois lived a busy and productive life, to say the least. For 16 years he lived alone at the mission of St. Joseph at Fort Cumberland in northern Saskatchewan in the Diocese of Saint Albert, working amongst the indigenous people. In 1900, he was given administrative responsibility for the surrounding missions, including one at The Pas, Manitoba and most of the lower Saskatchewan River. In 1903, he went to the Industrial School at Duck Lake, Saskatchewan and managed to put the financially troubled facility on a firmer economic basis.

Father Charlebois was named Vicar Apostolic (Bishop) of Keewatin, Manitoba in 1910. He was installed on March 7, 1911 and resided in The Pas where he remained for the rest of his life.

At 48 years old, Bp. Charlebois found himself traveling by canoe or dog sled for his pastoral visits. His personal journal recounted some of the struggles he encountered during his first pastoral tour in 1911. He wrote, “I covered 2,000 miles by canoe and...”
50 miles on foot through the forest. I slept on the ground 60 times, under the protection of the small tent in which I celebrated Mass so often. I visited 14 missions, totaling 4,500 Catholics. Six of these missions had never been visited by a bishop. I confirmed 1,100 Amerindians whose fine dispositions greatly edified me.” This courageous bishop made similar expeditions tens of times.

Bishop Charlebois worked tirelessly at the difficult task of organizing his vast mission with patience and courage, until he died at age 71 on November 20, 1933. He had fallen ill while traveling by dog team to a community south of The Pas. He was buried in a small Roman Catholic cemetery of The Pas overlooking the Saskatchewan River. His remains were transferred to the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Cathedral in 1955.

In order for Servant of God Bishop Charlebois to eventually be considered for sainthood, favors must be documented. The following favors have been attributed to Bp. Charlebois thus far:

1952
A couple from Sakitawasik, near Canoe Lake, Canada had a 10-year-old boy who suffered from renal colic. As medicine could not help, the family prayed the novena for the intercession of the Servant of God Ovide Charlebois and, after two weeks, the boy was without pain.

1955
A woman from Forestville, Canada reported that she gave birth to a healthy child after a difficult pregnancy. The woman knew Bp. Charlebois personally. After the bishop’s death, she continued asking his intercession. She is convinced that she gave birth to a healthy child because of the Servant of God’s intercession.

1990
A 51-year-old woman from Pelican Narrows, Canada reported that she was suffering from leukemia. She received cortisone therapy for two years and could not walk anymore. Her grandfather, who knew Bp. Charlebois personally, continued to ask the intercession of the Servant of God Charlebois for her healing. The grandfather would come and touch his granddaughter’s face and head with a third-class relic of the Servant of God. The whole family prayed the novena for nine months. The woman was completely healed, got married and had five children.

2008
An Oblate from The Pas, Canada claims that an elder from a First Nation (Indigenous peoples) in Canada had been healed from cancer of the lung years ago. On his way to surgery, the man had stopped in The Pas to pray at the tomb of the Servant of God Charlebois. When the man arrived at the hospital in Winnipeg, the doctors found that there was no cancer traceable.
When he is ordained a Missionary Oblate priest in about two years, Bro. Eugene Mwape Mule, O.M.I. will already have the missionary part of his job description well established. In his journey to the priesthood, Bro. Eugene has so far been a missionary in his native Zambia, Cameroon, the United States and now Canada.

“For the Oblates everything begins with humanity. The Oblates have taken me to people who needed me in several different ways,” said Bro. Eugene. “I get to live the instructions of our founder, St. Eugene De Mazenod: ‘We must first of all lead people to act like human beings, and then like Christians and finally, we must help them to become saints.’”

Treating people like humans first has been part of Bro. Eugene’s Oblate journey from the very beginning. He grew up in the copper mining region of Zambia in a family of miners. As a teenager he began to sense a religious calling but it wasn’t very strong at first. He attended a program for potential vocations with a group of friends who had a stronger pull to religious life. Ironically, Bro. Eugene is the only one from the group who is still pursuing the priesthood.

Brother Eugene said he was attracted to the Oblates because of their willingness to minister to people most in need. This was particularly true when Bro. Eugene was a pre-novice working at Our Lady’s Hospice, a place where the Oblates and other religious congregations care for the dying who have no other place to go.
“These people were very poor and they had no family,” said Bro. Eugene. “I was a brother to them, listening and being a companion as they approached death. It was a ministry of presence, a ministry of humanity.”

After his philosophy studies as a pre-novice, Bro. Eugene’s Oblate journey took him around the world. He spent two years studying theology in Cameroon where he also became fluent in French. He spent a year at the Oblate Novitiate in Godfrey, Illinois and three years as a student at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas.

Currently, Bro. Eugene is spending a year of pastoral work about as far away from Zambia as possible, with the native people of Canada. He is ministering at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton.

Sacred Heart is the official parish for the Catholic First Nations People in Edmonton and the surrounding area. It is a unique community where members use symbols, music and rituals which are part of native culture.

“I have been given this opportunity to experience a different perspective of ministry,” said Bro. Eugene about his assignment in Canada. “Thanks to the Oblates I continue to minister among the poor with their many faces.”
My vocation story began around the seventh grade when an Oblate Vocation Director came to my school and talked to us about the priesthood. At that time I was thinking about maybe becoming a doctor, or another profession that would help people. But when he talked about sharing the message of Jesus with others, I thought this might be something that I could do.

So I decided I would go to St. Henry’s High School Seminary in Belleville, Illinois. When it came time I got cold feet, and I didn’t go. Instead I went to a regular high school. The following year I met the same Oblate at a World Mission Exhibit in St. Louis. I stopped by the Oblate booth and he recognized me. I told him that I had changed my mind. He said that if I changed my mind again to come and see him.

As a freshman in high school I reconsidered my vocation, and I told my parents I would like to go to the high school seminary. So we went to see the vocation director. During our visit he brought up the question if I wanted to become a diocesan or Oblate priest. I didn’t know the difference. I looked at my mother, who was a convert, and she didn’t know the difference. I looked at my father, a lifelong Catholic, and he didn’t know the difference. So my mother said, “He wants to be whatever you are,” and he was an Oblate. And that’s how I became an Oblate.

At St. Henry’s there were eight Oblates on the faculty. I would watch them in prayer in their little chapel, and listen to them sing. I also saw them laughing and having fun all the time, and that sense of community appealed to me. They were not by themselves living alone in a rectory. Instead, they were filled with a missionary spirit, and I found that exciting.

After the high school seminary I went to the novitiate. At that time I was starting to ask the tough questions. What is this all about? What is faith all about? I took first vows and then went to the major seminary. After three weeks I got the shock of my life. The superior called me and a classmate into his office, and told us that we were selected to go to Rome to study. My classmate was thrilled, I was not.
I gave the superior three reasons why I should not go. First, I had just made first vows and I wasn’t real confident in my calling to the priesthood as an Oblate. Second, there were more intelligent people in my class, including Francis George who would become the Archbishop of Chicago. Third, I would be gone for seven years and I would not be allowed to come back home. I knew I would get homesick.

The superior listened to my reasons and said that they were not good enough. So I packed up my things, met with my family and told them that I wouldn’t see them for the next seven years. I wasn’t happy.

We were sent to Rome by ship, the cheapest way possible. My classmate got seasick by the time we got to the Statue of Liberty. I actually enjoyed the cruise. It took five days to cross the Atlantic and another five days of stopping at ports before we got to Naples. We arrived in Rome on October 14, 1958. Five days earlier, Pope Pius XII had died. I was so grateful to him, for a very selfish reason.

We were supposed to start classes the day after we arrived. But because Pope Pius had died, everything was cancelled for a few weeks. That allowed me to get adjusted to a new language and a new culture. It was quite a shock. Our home was just a block from the Coliseum. I was in a dormitory with seven other seminarians and conditions were stark. I joked it would be easier to live at the Coliseum.

The language of the house was French, and I didn’t speak French. In the streets it was Italian, and I didn’t know Italian. And everything at the university was taught in Latin. At first it was a terrible experience. I took vows for one year and I was counting down the months, weeks and days until I could leave.

But at the end of the first year I thought I could maybe make it one more year. I had received a letter from my mother and she knew I was homesick. But she reminded me that I was also seeing some wonderful things in Rome, and meeting people from all over the world. She said don’t wish your life away.

After that I began to appreciate life in Rome. With the election of Pope John XXIII things were getting very exciting, and when Vatican II started it was a great time to be there. Over time my decision to become an Oblate priest became clear. I was ordained in 1964 and this year I am celebrating my 60th Anniversary of first vows. As an Oblate priest I have had some wonderful experiences.

I am so grateful that my parents and the Oblates stuck with me during my vocation crisis. My life as an Oblate priest has been magnificent. Since becoming a priest, I can say that I have never ever had any doubt that this was the right thing for me to do. ✠
When Vicente Llamas and Dulce Maria Zapata were married in July 2015, they asked for no wedding gifts. Instead, they wanted their wedding to be a catalyst for improvements to be made at the Missionary Oblates’ mission in Tijuana, B.C., Mexico.

Vicente and Dulce asked their guests to make donations to “Proyecto Tijuana.” The couple had a connection with the Oblates in Tijuana. Their nephew, Lester Antonio Zapata, was a student at the Oblates’ Prenovitiate in Tijuana and is currently finishing up his studies for the priesthood in San Antonio, Texas.

Shortly after their marriage, Vicente and Dulce began making weekly trips from their home in Pacoima, California to Tijuana to work with the Oblates. They were joined by friends, family and fellow parishioners at Mary Immaculate Parish in Pacoima.

At the prenovitiate in Tijuana, there was a need for an enclosed patio area where meetings and other events could take place. Vicente, a carpenter specializing in roofing, began to put in motion construction of the enclosed patio just two months after their wedding.
completed in July, 2016 sporting a plaque with the message “Patio los amigos de San Eugenio,” “Patio of the friends of St. Eugene.”

“It’s impossible to name all the people that made this project a reality, but we would like to give special thanks to Antonia Sandoval and family because they really helped us a lot,” said Dulce.

The patio was not the end of Vicente and Dulce commitment to the Oblates and the poor they serve in Tijuana. Shortly after the patio was finished, the young couple was invited to visit Laura Davila, a young single mother who had been electrocuted at work in a factory when she stepped on a bare electrical wire.

Laura miraculously survived the accident but was badly scarred and needs a wheelchair to get around. The Oblates learned about Laura and her family from their cook at the Prenovitiate house. Laura was trying to raise her son, Jovanny, while living with Laura’s mother, Maria, in a dilapidated shack. Maria was supporting the three people by scavenging and selling scrap metal.

After visiting with Laura and her family, Vicente and

Dulce immediately began “Proyecto Laura.” With repeated weekend treks from Pacoima to Tijuana, Vincent, Dulce and their friends constructed a simple home for Laura and her family.

“All we are doing is what God is calling us to do for others in need,” said Dulce. “We learned this from the Missionary Oblates.”

Vicente and Dulce are now looking for their next project, one that will probably take place later this year when the Oblates move into a new neighborhood in Tijuana. They remain committed to improving the lives of their less fortunate brothers and sisters, a commitment that was born at their wedding. †
Father Roy Snipes, O.M.I. has been nominated as the Rio Grande Citizen of the Year by the Editorial Board of The Monitor newspaper in McAllen, Texas. In nominating Fr. Snipes, the editorial board noted that “for more than 25 years he has served as the spiritual leader of his congregation, has transcended his role over time, and is now much more to the surrounding communities, his parishioners and the people of the Rio Grande Valley.”

In 1992 Fr. Snipes secured a couple acres of land adjacent to La Lomita Chapel, the mother church to Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish. Father Snipes has held summer camps there, just yards away from the Rio Grande River, for members of his parish as a way to reconnect with the environment.

“We need to spend more time at the river, we need to get away from the computers and get out of institutionalized mediocrity and sterility,” said Fr. Snipes.

**Vocations Growing in Oblate Congregation**

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*Of whom 45 are bishops, one is an Apostolic Prefect.

FR – Fathers  B1 – Brothers with perpetual vows
B2 – Brothers with temporary vows  PD – Permanent deacons  Schol – Scholastics
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• If you are age 70½ or older you may direct transfers from your IRA to a qualified charitable organization such as the Missionary Oblates.

• Your donation does not count as taxable income.

• The gift must be made directly to Oblate Missionary Society, Inc. from your IRA account. You must not withdraw your funds prior to making the gift.

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Festival of Life

An Oblate evangelization celebration for youth. - Poland