

JPIC REPORT



"Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) ministry is at the heart of our mission as Missionary Oblate... JPIC ministry assists Oblates to see more deeply the structures that generate poverty, devastation of the environment, conflict and violence and how we might more fully make the values of the Kingdom more visible and functional."

*Fr. Kennedy Katongo, O.M.I.
(1980-2016)*

JPIC General Director - Rome

A publication of the OMI Justice and Peace/Integrity of Creation Office

From the Director: Fr. Antonio Ponce, OMI

I was born in a tiny rural village in a municipality within the state of Jalisco, Mexico. The population then consisted of no more than 60 families. We all knew each other and were related in some way. My village is surrounded by trees, hills and valleys and has a beautiful river with hot springs where, growing up, I enjoyed



Rural village of del Gavilan, state of Jalisco, Mexico.

swimming and fishing. As a young boy I also spent time exploring the forest searching for beehives, bird nests, etc. I loved being in nature.

One summer vacation when I was about 8 years old, my uncle invited me to help him plant corn on his 14-acre farm. He would steer the yoke of mules and I would follow, planting seeds. To get to my uncle's farm we had to leave early and travel on horseback for an hour and a half. It took us several days to complete the task. I remember after a few days of sowing seeds I approached my uncle and expressed concern that our work could be in vain. "I've noticed squirrels and crows digging up our seeds," I said. "Not one or two but many and I fear they will eat up all the seeds." My uncle replied: "My son, don't you worry. There is enough for them to eat and for us too. We need to continue with our work." I was stunned by his response, but I continued following him and the mules, and

sowing more seeds. Each morning I checked where we first planted seeds to see if any were sprouting. To my disappointment not even one small sign of growth. So, I again went to my uncle saying: "Uncle, no seeds have sprouted. Maybe they all died in the soil." He comforted me: "Son, we have done our part, we need to be patient and give the seeds

time. They are germinating now and will break through the soil in their own time."

We only had a single day of rain the whole time we worked. Again I expressed concern: "Uncle, what happens to the seeds if there isn't enough rain?" In a soothing voice he responded: "Nephew, if there is

no rain in a couple of days the plants will sprout but eventually wither and die. If a drought continues there will be no corn stalks and no harvest for us." "What can we do then," I asked, even more concerned. "When we are done sowing," my uncle said, "we have completed our work; the rest is not up to us. We just need to remain confident." We finished sowing the last rows and completed our work on the farm.

Two and a half months later my uncle invited the whole family to his farm for a picnic. When we arrived I could hardly believe my eyes! The once bare and empty piece of land was now a beautiful cornfield with tall corn stalks and corn ready to be picked. Proudly, I announced how I, with my own hands, planted every single seed. I was thrilled and delighted as I feasted on roasted corn! In the end, persistence, patience and confidence paid off.

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The OMI Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Office coordinates the advocacy efforts of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate on behalf of the interests of the poor and abandoned in the U.S. and in more than 65 countries where the Oblates are in mission.

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News & Happenings...

Rev. Louis Studer, OMI, Appointed New U.S. Provincial



Rev. Louis Studer, OMI was officially announced as the new Provincial of the U.S. Province of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate on April 27, 2017. Rev. Louis Studer, OMI, was born in Wesley, Iowa, in 1949. As one of seven children born to Paul and Sally Studer, he grew up on the family farm.

At 13, Fr. Studer entered the Oblate's Minor Seminary, Our Lady of the Ozarks in Carthage, Mo. While at Carthage Fr. Studer made his decision to pursue religious life. Moving on from high school, he went on to the college seminary program at Lewis University. From there, he entered the

Oblate novitiate in Godfrey, IL, where he professed temporary vows in 1972. He did his theology studies at Weston School of Theology in Boston. He made his perpetual vows in 1975, and was ordained in 1976 at his home parish of St. Joseph's in Wesley.

After a first assignment as Associate Pastor of St. Patrick's Parish in McCook, Nebraska, Fr. Studer, served as principal of St. Henry's Seminary in Belleville, IL, 1977-84. He spent several years more in vocation and formation ministry before being named Director of the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois. While at the shrine, he also assumed the duties of Director of the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate, a major fund-raising ministry of the U.S. Oblates.

After 10 years at the Shrine, Fr. Studer served four years as Director of Christ the King Retreat Center in Buffalo, Minnesota. In 2012, Fr. Studer was appointed Vicar-Provincial / Personnel Director for the U.S. Province of the Missionary Oblates and it is from that position that he now assumes the office of U.S. Provincial.

Meet JPIC's New Volunteer

Bayor Chantal Ngoltoingar is a national of the Republic of Chad located in Central Africa. She is pursuing a graduate degree in social work at the Catholic University of America. Before coming to Washington, D.C. Bayor studied English at a community college in Sanford, North Carolina. She also spent six months working as a volunteer at Haven Lee County, a Shelter offering care to adult women and children. Bayor has published a book about the practice of Female Genital Mutilation in Africa called "L'obscurite sous le Soleil" translated as "Darkness under the sun." The book has been published in French and is available on www.Amazon.fr and the English version will be published soon.



News & Happenings...

OMI JPIC Committee & Staff Join Thousands at Washington, D.C. Climate March



(L-R) Maxine Pohlman, SSND, Christine Huelsmann, Gary Huelsmann (JPIC Committee Chair).

JPIC Staff Join Civil Society Groups at Spring Meetings of the World Bank and IMF



(L-R) Bayor Chantal, 2017 JPIC Volunteer; Daniel LeBlanc, OMI.

From April 17-23, JPIC staff attended sessions at the 2017 Spring Meetings of the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington D.C. Also attending the meeting was Fr. Daniel LeBlanc, OMI, Director of the Oblate office at the United Nations. Staff attended several sessions on topics such as: Impact Investing, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), African Debt Crisis, best practices in Infrastructure projects and building political will for Global Health. The WB/IMF meetings bring together ministers of finance, central bank governors, private sector executives, civil society, and academics to discuss the current world economic outlook.

Dr. Victor Carmona Heading to University of San Diego (USD)



This fall OMI JPIC Committee member Dr. Victor Carmona begins a new position as Assistant Professor of Latino/a Theologies at the Department of Theology & Religious Studies, University of San Diego in California. He was formerly Assistant Professor

of Moral Theology at the Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, TX.

Before joining the Oblate School of Theology, Dr. Carmona worked with the Mexican Catholic Conference of Bishops and the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He also taught at the Jesuit University in Tijuana, Mexico. In these and other settings Dr. Carmona served the pastoral needs of immigrants, the health and education needs of communities marked by urban poverty, and the academic needs of U.S. and Mexican students. Since October 2015, he has served as a member of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Committee for the United States Province of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. *We congratulate Dr. Carmona and pray for God's blessing as he embarks on this new endeavor.*

From the Director *(Continued from p. 1)*

As a missionary working for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, I have to regularly remind myself about these three virtues so I am not discouraged by the many things that threaten to wither the “seeds of justice and care for creation” that are sown. The document *Companion In Mission On Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation* of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate rightly points out: “There are, however, many negative aspects to our world today. Despite the progress made in understanding, scientific insight, communications and technology, seemingly intractable problems persist and the harmful effects of human activity on the well-being of the planet have created an increasingly urgent challenge to the future of humanity.”

What should our response be? There are no easy answers. But this should not discourage us in our efforts and commitment to work for a more just world. In response to the many challenges we face today, we are called to be persistent in our commitment to JPIC ministry. We should be steadfast in sowing “seeds of justice and peace” for the kingdom of God. How or when those seeds will grow we do not know. But it is important to plant



Casa Memorias staff.

them in the soil and patiently wait and hope that at their given time, they will produce fruit and there will be an abundant harvest. And I can say with satisfaction that there are many sowers out there who are quietly but faithfully planting “seeds” in God’s field. In fact, during my visits to Oblate ministries, I often meet and share with many women and men who, in faith, work tirelessly for justice, peace and care for creation.

Earlier this year, I was invited to participate in a workshop on migration, human trafficking and care for creation in Mexico

City, Mexico. There were laypeople, and women and men religious from Costa Rica, Panama, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico, representing hundreds of people who are committed to JPIC ministry.

Also, the end of April, representatives of the JPIC Office in Washington, DC joined thousands of participants in the Peoples’ Climate March, all of them concerned about what is happening to our Environment, Planet, and Common Home. Pope Francis acknowledges the work being done in this regard when he notes that “movements have already made considerable progress and led to the establishment of numerous organizations committed to raising awareness of these (environmental) challenges.” (LS#14).



Workers planting at Casa Memorias.

These are good examples of how people are becoming more committed to JPIC ministry, and there are hundreds more in parishes, schools, cities and countries, where people, moved by their faith, are planting “seeds” of justice and peace in God’s land. May our good Lord give us the patience, persistence and confidence so that whatever seeds we plant, God will help them produce abundant fruit, as the gospel of Mark reminds us:

Jesus said, “This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come.” (Mk 4:26-29).

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Fr. Bill Antone, OMI, Off to a New Assignment

THANK YOU very much for the privilege and honor of serving the United States province as provincial for 6 years. As my time of service comes to an end, I am grateful for the experience. I place it all in God's hands. It is especially a privilege and honor to come to know better my brother Oblates, their giftedness and personal needs.



I am filled with hope knowing that the Oblate presence will continue to have a positive impact throughout the country as well as in Baja California and Zambia even though over the next 10 to 20 years, the number of Oblates will be smaller. We need to grow in our serene reliance on Providence, while redoubling

efforts to recruit young men to consider the Oblate vocation. During these past 6 years, some valiant attempts to make adjustments by downsizing have taken place, but many more adjustments will have to be made in the very near future.

I hope that in the process, the major Oblate values that we hold dear will be upheld, among them: daring, preaching in word and action the Good News, being close to the poor, hospitality, care for one another in apostolic community, justice, peace and the integrity of creation, welcome of immigrants, dialogue, collaboration, education, theological and pastoral reflection and personal and communal prayer and discernment.

I am especially grateful and hope-filled because of our enthusiastic attempts to "renew the province mission." In one form or another, these attempts will have to continue and with greater focus and vision. For many it has been sad to see certain ministries be let go of; as the province moves forward, we may need to discern the relinquishment of even more ministries we are familiar with, so that with our younger men and all able-bodied Oblates, a new and humbler province is created with new commitments.

Over these 6 years, a stack of at least 83 memorial leaflets and obituaries have accumulated on my desk. These deceased Oblates and those who died before the last 6 years have gone on to their reward, and yet they have left us a great legacy. Our elder Oblates who are still working into their 80's and beyond, our infirm Oblates who are committed to the "ministry of prayer," are giving us an example of life-long perseverance

and joy in their vocations. I am very grateful to have come to know better my elder brothers.

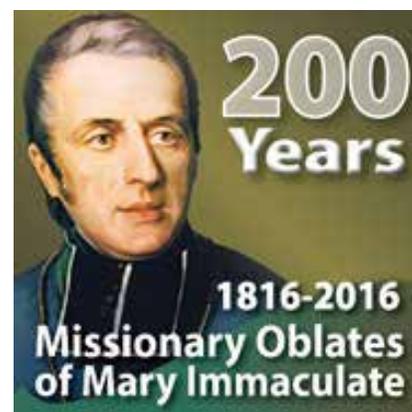
I am also grateful to see the tremendous work quietly and heroically being done by those Oblates in both "internal" and "external" ministries, most of the time going unnoticed! And right alongside them I am grateful to the hundreds of dedicated laywomen and men, other religious, associates, benefactors, partners, parishioners, volunteers and employees who collaborate with the priests and Brothers of the province in the spirit and charism of Saint Eugene. We are happy to have received in the recent past the valuable contribution of Oblates from Zambia, India, Canada and Sri Lanka as members of the province, including others in first formation who are with us from other Units: India, Bangladesh, Kenya, Canada, Australia, and Zambia. Certainly the value of intentional "interculturality" which was emphasized at the General Chapter is something we are being given an opportunity to learn as a province.

Success will depend not only on leaders within the province but on the intentional authentic contribution of each Oblate to care, to share, to listen, to learn and to work together in a team-like spirit:

Near the beginning of my 6 years of service, the Congregation celebrated the beatification of the Spanish martyrs. We are now graced with the powerful witness of the 17 Laotian martyrs who were beatified in Vientiane, Laos, in December, 2016. 6 of them were Oblates. What a glorious company of missionaries to intercede for us! We look forward to a special celebration at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows on June 17-18, 2017. May that celebration, at the beginning of a new province administration, be a sign of our deep commitment to the Gospel, the Good News for the poor, with their many faces.

Blessings of Peace and Joy!

--Bill Antone, OMI



U.S. Immigration Reform and Support for Refugees

By: George Ngolwe

Within the first 100 days of his administration, President Trump signed executive orders on immigration to build a border wall and deport millions of undocumented immigrants. The executive orders will increase the number of migrant detention centers, expand enforcement priorities and expedited removal, engage local law enforcement officers in enforcement and penalize sanctuary cities. Other executive orders suspend refugee resettlement and will ban travel of nationals from six Muslim-majority countries.

Missionary Oblates joined religious communities including U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference to condemn the executive orders. We also joined other faith and human rights organizations in sending a letter to President Trump calling for the protection of young immigrants who were previously granted some legal benefits by President Obama. The letter was signed by over 450 diverse faith organizations.

As policymakers debate the merits of these enforcement-only immigration measures, U.S. Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate remains on the front lines helping refugees and migrants feel welcome, and offering solidarity and pastoral care. Here are some recent examples:

Father Kevin Collins, OMI, pastor at St. Eugene de Mazenod Catholic Church in Brownsville, TX recently received media coverage for his stance against local bill SB 4, which if enacted will allow local enforcement officers to deputize as immigration agents. JPIC is pleased to see Oblates take a moral stand and speak out to uphold trust between the authorities and immigrant communities.

In Godfrey Illinois, Oblate staff and novices from Immaculate Heart of Mary Novitiate, as part of their pastoral encounter, joined hundreds of other religious communities in a solidarity march for immigrants and refugees in St. Louis, MO.

At the Oblate parish of Our Lady of Hope in Buffalo, NY, a culturally diverse and vibrant youth choir put on a production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. The story is touching because many of the performers were refugees from Africa and Asia who came to the U.S. The story appeared in local newspapers including the *Buffalo News*.

With a history of offering pastoral care to Irish and French immigrants, today the Oblate parish of St. Patrick in Lowell, Massachusetts offers pastoral care to new immigrant communities of Hispanic, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and

Burmese Catholics. They help refugees transition to a new life in the United States by supporting classes in English, American citizenship and nutrition.

In the March 2017 pastoral reflection “*Living as a People of God in Unsettled Times*” the US Catholic Bishops Conference provides guidance on how Catholics might “bring our words of solidarity for migrants and refugees to life.” The pastoral reflection calls on Catholics “to accompany migrants and refugees who seek a better life in the United States. They suggest that each one of us:

Pray for an end to the root causes of the violent hatred that force mothers and fathers to flee their homes in search of economic and physical security for their children.

Reflect on the Church’s teachings on migration and become familiar with the rationale that informs the Bishops’ engagement on this issue in the public square.

Meet with newcomers in your parish. Listen to their stories and share your own. Many Catholic parishes across the country have programs for immigrants and refugees both to offer comfort and help them understand their rights. The more we come to understand each other’s concerns the better we can serve one another.

Take Action as our faith calls on us to not only welcome the stranger but also advocate for the dignity of all individuals. While we respect the right of the federal government to control borders and ensure the security of us as Americans, people of faith believe these orders do not accomplish these goals. People of faith should urge Members of Congress to pass legislation to nullify or block implementation of the recent immigration and refugee-related executive orders.

Support and advocate for co-sponsors of the BRIDGE Act, a bipartisan effort. Missionary Oblates JPIC supports the BRIDGE Act (Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy) of 2017. As Catholics, we believe in protecting the dignity of every human being, especially the dignity of children. Under the BRIDGE Act, young people who came to the United States as children would maintain their eligibility to work and live in the U.S. so long as they meet certain requirements such as showing a commitment to education or honorably serving in the military and having no history of serious crime.

Keeping Vigil in Paris

By: Fr. Seamus Finn, OMI

I arrived in Paris for a 48-hour stay on March 16th after a series of meetings in Rome over the previous ten days. After a nice afternoon walk along the Seine and by the Cathedral of Notre Dame, I wondered why I had planned such a short visit to this wonderful city. So much history and so many works of art and architecture to enjoy. I also found myself recalling the historical connections of the founder, St. Eugene De Mazenod, of the Missionary Oblates with the churches in this great city.

Searching for Direction

St. Patrick's Day itself found me participating in a meeting of the UNIAPAC Think Tank (association of Christian business leaders), which meets annually, where I was invited to offer some comments on the history of Faith Consistent Investing, and to comment on the intersection of Catholic Social Teaching principles and asset management. The alignment of the principles with the UN Principles for Responsible Investments and the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 were also included in my presentation. The session was hosted at part of the complex of the Bank of France and close by the Louvre and the Palais Royal.

Much of the daylong agenda included a number of other topics that focused on the opportunities and challenges that are on the horizon for those institutions and organizations that are committed to making a contribution to development. As might be expected, issues like disease, food safety, sustainable agriculture, potable water and access to capital were on the agenda. Alongside these issues the participants wrestled with the appropriateness of and access to the numerous advances that are achieved through scientific research in various fields, advances that have been achieved through automation and technology and the commitment to respect the rights of indigenous, tribal and native peoples. All these were to be considered within the context of a very quickly expanding human population and a still to be measured carrying capacity of the earth.

The encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, published in 2015 by Pope Francis, provided an appropriate background for the agenda of this committee as the encyclical continues to be studied and discussed in so many fora across the world. One of the pivotal issues raised in the encyclical and that has occupied a number agendas in recent years is the role and responsibility of the private sector, especially corporations, in promoting development. This has become particularly acute as many governments have adopted austerity budgets at home and

drastically cut their foreign assistance budgets.

The role of the for profit private sector that is represented by corporations and more recently also positive impact investment funds, has not always been obvious or prevalent, though corporations have frequently been generous donors to specific funds or associated with projects that have been organized to respond to specific needs. They have also been recognized for their responses to requests from local communities where their corporations are active, their factories are present, or they have developed a customer client base over time.

The explicit acknowledgement, in the framework for the promotion and achievement of the UN sustainable development goals, of the need for the active inclusion of the private sector in realizing the identified goals has been both praised and criticized. Implicit in this acknowledgement is the recognition that the public sector will not be able to raise the amounts of capital that will be needed. Those who have been critical of this proposal have raised a number of questions and objections, most of whom arise from a general suspicion about the "mixed motives" that they associate with any institution that has been established to "make a profit" for the owners.

This criticism poses very specific and direct challenges to endowments, foundations and philanthropies that have been established to address specific social or environmental issues, or to advocate for changes in public policy that are necessary to either remove or put in place policies to respond to specific issues. The assets and resources that many of these institutions use or contribute to specific donor agencies or charities were raised through investments in the shares and other investable products of corporations, that in some instances have contributed to the social or environmental malady that must be reversed. The pollution of natural resources, marketing of unhealthy products for consumption, production of tobacco or other addictive substances, are all examples of such activities.

Keeping Vigil

On Friday evening, after the meeting, as I walked towards a restaurant on Rue Notre-Dame de Victories, I was approached by a young woman who was searching for the basilica of Notre-Dame des Victories. Seasoned traveler that I am I presumed it must be nearby and immediately pulled out my smartphone to get the precise coordinates. She looked on quizzically and was more at ease when I showed her how the basilica was

(Continued on p. 14)

Collaboration at La Vista Ecological Learning Center

By: Sr. Maxine Pohlman, SSND

There is an African proverb that says, “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Over many years of experience doing programs, hosting workshops, and engaging in projects, we have found this statement to be a sure guide. These few examples illustrate this reality.

La Vista has been a member of the Intercommunity Ecological Council of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious based in St. Louis, MO for many years. Earlier this year thirty members gathered to celebrate our 15th anniversary, rejoicing in all the work done by the Council such as giving workshops on climate change, bringing speakers to the area, planting trees, participating as a group in Earth Day celebrations, educating on timely ecological issues, and supporting one another’s events. We also honored our deceased members, including Bob Aaron, OMI, who was a member until his death in 2009. Month by month we gather and feel the strength of our collaboration as we strive to be a voice for our threatened planet in the St. Louis Metro area.



Student volunteers from Marquette High School.

In March I also met with parishioners from two parishes in St. Louis for a day of reflection on Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si*. Holy Trinity is an inner city parish that networks with Saint Anselm’s, located in a more affluent part of the city. The event offered a unique opportunity to explore the message of the encyclical with people of varied backgrounds. Learning and discussing in this setting created a depth of meaning beyond what one group could expect meeting alone.

In April twenty students from Marquette High School in nearby Alton, Illinois spent two days sharing their youthful energy at La Vista. They spread many wagonloads of wood chips in the Pollinator Garden as the new season of growth was beginning to appear. It was a special learning opportunity for the young people as they discovered the importance of providing for pollinators that are losing their habitats. On another part of the land other students learned about invasive honeysuckle which is crowding out native oak and hickory trees and native wildflowers, reducing food sources for insects and animals. They really got into the spirit of the task as they cut down the honeysuckle and carried it off to be burned. It was really a pleasure working with young people from our area.

Of course, on a daily basis, we are grateful to collaborate with the Novitiate Community as we work together in a variety of ways. All of our collaboration makes this Oblate ministry rich and vibrant.

Sister Maxine Pohlman, SSND, is the director of La Vista Ecological Learning Center, a part of the Oblate Ecological Initiative.



**OMI JPIC Has Launched
a New Website.
Check it out at:**

www.omiusajpic.org

Saving the Amazon Rainforest - Indigenous Leaders Unite in Washington DC

In March, a delegation of Indigenous leaders from Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Brazil arrived in Washington D.C. bringing stories of the challenges facing indigenous communities in the Amazon forest. Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM) members including Cardinal Claudio Hummes (Brazil) and Archbishop Barreto Jimeno (Huancayo, Peru) were also in the U.S. to give testimony before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The delegation shared how some companies operating in the Amazon forest discriminate and abuse the human rights of local people and some national governments disregard the rights of Indigenous peoples. With support from the Interfaith Working Group



REPAM delegation speaking on panel.

on Extractives (Oblate JPIC is a member), meetings were scheduled for the delegation to meet with officials from the U.S State Department, USAID and Members of Congress. The group also gave public briefings at Georgetown University and Catholic University of America. Other presentations were made to diverse faith based and human rights audiences around Washington DC. Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate works in several countries of the Amazon region in Latin America and strongly advocates for the rights of Indigenous peoples and the protection of the Amazon forests.



Some members of the REPAM delegation with Missionary Oblates staff Janice Cooke (second from left).

Oblate JPIC Partner AFJN Host Dialogue for DR Congo Leaders

Oblate JPIC partner organization, Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) held a series of events in Washington, D.C. to encourage dialogue on the national reconciliation process in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). AFJN convened a briefing with Minister of Information H.E. Lambert Mende Omalanga to talk about the country's current state of affairs and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' role in brokering peace. The Catholic Church in DRC has expressed concern over recent and alarming incidents of vandalism of Church properties and attacks against clergy.

A second briefing, *Road to a Peaceful Democratic Power Transfer in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Challenges & Opportunities*, was convened featuring Senator Mokonda Bonza, president of the political Party "Convention des

Democrates Chretiennes" and Member of the opposition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and signatory to the December 31, 2017 political agreement on DRC's stalled elections and the upcoming political transition.

The Missionary Oblates JPIC is a member of AFJN that has for a long time advocated for peace in the DRC, and called for an end to economic exploitation, pillaging of natural resources, senseless killings of civilians and the destruction of communities. AFJN continues to call on DRC leaders to uphold human rights, justice, transparency, and adherence to the constitution.

Oblate JPIC actively participated in these briefings. Since 1931, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate has had a vibrant missionary and pastoral presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Three Part Harmony Farm is Having an Incredible 2017 Season *By: Gail Taylor*

Farming has a cumulative effect, and this spring it is evident that we have been putting years of hard work (and many, many cubic yards of compost) into the fields. Waves of bright green mini lettuce heads, kale and collards, spring onions and other spring veggies are coming along. The very small fronds of the tops of carrots are also now visible in the fields, next to a sea of weeds that cropped up after a recent rain.

About half of the tulips planted along the 4th street fence adjacent to the offices of the U.S Conference of Catholic Bishops came back to bloom again in early April, so in May we added in sunflowers, zinnias and marigolds to keep the flowers blooming all summer long.

Our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is an incredibly important part of the farm, that can't be understated. This year we increased our membership by 50%, largely because of the 34 families of Lee Montessori School located across the street from the farm. Their garden club and PTA teamed up to organize a CSA pick up every Thursday after school through June 22. We also added an additional porch pick up in Brookland, NE Washington, DC because many people new to Brookland now hear about the farm on neighborhood list serves or just drive by and see us when they are walking their dogs. People are incredibly enthusiastic about supporting a farm in their neighborhood. So each Tuesday and Thursday we harvest and pack overflowing bags of fresh veggies for 134 members. We send out 57 packed bags by 3:15 pm and then the remainder come to a community center near Howard University where we have tables set up until 8 pm.

The farm continues to network with other farmers in the area. This year we have expanded our partnership to include a peony farmer based out of Upper Marlboro, MD. Bahiyyah Parks of EcoBlossoms brings flowers to the farmers market and CSA. She is also the one who carefully chose all 17 peony plants that we planted at Three Part Harmony farm. I see the pink peeking out of one of the buds, so I think we should have peonies blooming soon.

For our recent CSA, we also got duck eggs from Erik deGuzman of Dicot Farm located in Waldorf, MD. He spent a year apprenticing at the same farm where I trained. When I buy from other farms for the CSA, our customers get to have items that we don't or can't grow like eggs, mushrooms, and honey. I also have a chance to support new farmers, and offer an outlet for folks who are not located right in the city.

Each year, the farm is able to make one major purchase through generous donations that match our small income from vegetable sales. This year we finally bought a minivan, which has been on the wish list for three years!!! A generous anonymous donation made this possible. We've only been using it for a few weeks but already it has been such a blessing, and my knees are so grateful because I've been biking so much these past few years as the farm has been in its infancy and we couldn't yet afford a vehicle.

We have two new incredibly amazing members of our staff this year. Cristina Flores is a native of Los Angeles who moved to DC last year. She is a Spanish/ English interpreter and works part-time at a clinic. Jon Berger is someone who I met through the food justice community. He quit his campus organizing job

a couple of years ago and now is pursuing a possible farming career.



Pesticide free vegetable seedlings from Three Part Harmony Farm with Farm Manager, Gail Taylor working in the background.

farm next year. So the pressure is on, in my 12th year farming, to now help train the next generation.

It goes without saying that the surprise return of winter in mid March threw us for a loop! We got back on track and expect to have a great season. We're already looking forward to a wonderful summer, and of course before we know it the time will come to plan the annual fall festival again.

And last but not least, I am doing a work trade with a local photographer this year who receives vegetables in exchange for taking photos of the farm. Tyler Grigsby already has taken beautiful photos at our festivals. This is a chance to have more consistent photos throughout the year. Tyler set up an instagram page where he posts photos each week! Visit the page at this web address: www.instagram.com/3phfarm.

Parishioners Intercede for Victims of Human Trafficking During Lenten Stations of the Cross

By: Mary O'Herron

The Mid-Atlantic Coalition Against Modern Slavery (a Chapter of the US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking) works to end human trafficking through participation in education of its members and the public, advocacy for the rights of victims and justice for the perpetrators, and, if possible, facilitating the provision of direct services to victims.

The Coalition sponsors three public events:

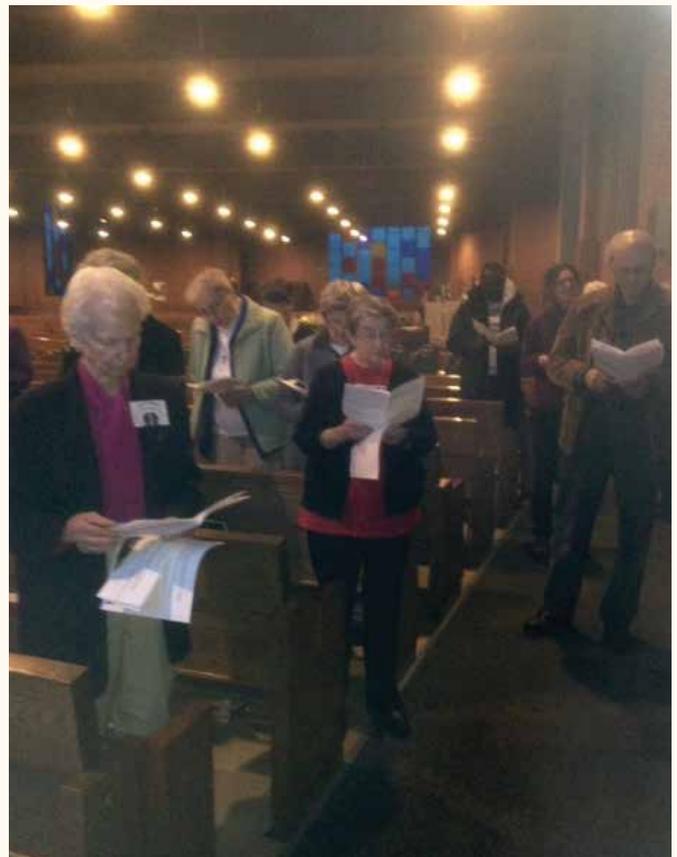
- A Prayer Service around February 8 each year on the feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita, patron saint of trafficked victims.
- Silent Prayer and Public Witness on a busy intersection in downtown Silver Spring, Maryland six Saturdays a year;
- And Stations of the Cross with a focus on human trafficking during Lent at a local Catholic Church.



Parishioners from St. Camillus Church.

On March 20, 2017, the Mid-Atlantic Coalition Against Modern Slavery (MACAMS) sponsored Stations of the Cross focusing on Human Trafficking at St. Camillus Church in Silver Spring, MD.

As a cross was carried from Station to Station, the story unfolded of a young woman, unable to secure a job in the town where she lived and whose dad and the rest of her family faced starvation. She was wooed by a young man to accompany him to a new and “happy” life in another country. There she found that she had been lied to and brought to a horribly painful life of beatings and prostitution until she dies a lonely and brutal death. At each Station,



Praying for human trafficking victims during Lenten Stations of the Cross.

two prayers were said:

- “We gratefully remember and praise you, Jesus, because your life teaches us how to live as your disciples.”
- “Jesus walked this path. By the sharing of His steps, may we confirm our solidarity with all trafficked people and be inspired to action.”

In addition, at each Station, a verse of the *Stabat Mater* (Catholic hymn to Mary) was sung. The Stations used for this program were taken from those written for Pax Christi, USA, by Rev. Sebastian L. Mueecilli. A reception followed the Stations offering attendees an extended opportunity to learn more about the efforts of the Coalition and about human trafficking in general.

OMI Lacombe, Canada: Moved by the Spirit

By: Erin Ryan, OMI Associate

On Friday April 7th, 2017, the Providence Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul, Kingston, Ontario, made a legacy gift of \$2.5M to Saint Paul University in Ottawa to establish the *Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality*.

Saint Paul University, founded by the Oblates, had identified the need for leaders to integrate into their professional practice the values of social justice, enhanced human development, sustainability, diversity and inclusion.



Providence Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul present legacy gift to St. Paul University, Ottawa, Canada.

Over the past 156 years, this religious congregation of Sisters has been dedicated to serving with compassion and trusting in Providence. From the four sisters who arrived from Montreal in 1861 to care for the poor, the aged and the orphans in Kingston, they have expanded their ministry to found orphanages, schools, hospitals, long-term care homes and hostels across

Canada. In 1967 they began ministry in Guatemala and Peru. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate had also arrived to minister in Peru in the 1960s. One of the Oblates they met and worked with there was Brother Leonardo Rego, OMI. What a fortuitous meeting that ended up being!

Brother Len, as you know, is the director of JPIC for the OMI Lacombe Province and currently holds the position of Oblate in Residence at Saint Paul University. From his long acquaintance with them he is very familiar with the Providence Sisters'



Providence Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul of Kingston.

vision and how they want to prepare future leaders with the knowledge and skills they will need to meet the challenges of our ever changing world.

Brother Len saw the potential connection between what Saint Paul University wanted to achieve and what he heard from the Providence Sisters regarding a future-focused legacy that reflected their mission and values. After numerous discussions between the Sisters and the team at Saint Paul University, it was determined that this was a good fit.

The official ceremony on April 7th was a touching celebration of these remarkable, dedicated and most generous Sisters and a grateful academic institution that has now launched this new department: *the Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality*.

Symbols are important and, in addition to the exchange of certificates and words of thanks and congratulations, there was a very beautiful moment at the end of the ceremony when Saint Paul University presented each of the Providence Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul of Kingston, Ontario, Canada who



Brother Len, Director of JPIC for the OMI Lacombe Province receives a hug from a Providence sister.

attended, with a large, long stemmed, orange rose. The color was not chosen just because it reflects Saint Paul University's colors, but because orange roses are a combination of yellow roses, symbolizing friendship, and red, symbolizing love. A perfect description of the partnership between these two extraordinary institutions.

Congratulations to Saint Paul University for this important initiative and to the Providence Sisters for their gift. Congratulations also to our Brother Len for being the catalyst to make this happen. What a wonderful and inspiring example of the good that one person can generate through listening and bringing like-minded people together.

OST Partners on Water Justice Institute and Fracking Tour

Oblate School of Theology, partnering with peaceCENTER, served as the only site in San Antonio from among 80 partner sites around the world for an international and interactive conference on water justice that coincided with International Water Day on March 22. The event highlighted the need for initiatives in the areas of access, droughts, pollution, rising tides, and flooding. With live feeds from Trinity Church Wall Street in New York City; Melbourne, Australia; London, England; Cape Town, South Africa; and The Great Barrier Reef, OST participants had their questions addressed by speakers via social media. Trinity Institute speakers included Barbara Boxer, Christiana Zenner Peppard, Winston Halapua, Thabo Makgoba, Katharine Hayhoe, Maude Barlow, David Toomey, Kim Stanley Robinson, and others.



OST participants discussed how water justice issues play out in their own communities in San Antonio and abroad, and strategized on ways to spread the message and address the problem back in their communities.

After the conference, Sister Elizabeth Riebschlaeger of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation organized a “fracking tour.” Participants saw first-hand how the natural gas extraction process leads to water contamination.

Fracking is an intense industrial process that involves the extraction of natural gas from deep underground. Sometimes water mixed with sand and chemicals are pumped under extremely high pressure to fracture rock formations and release the natural gas.

The practice is occurring all over the U.S. but is most widespread in Pennsylvania, Colorado and Texas. Reports of illnesses, air and water contamination, blackened ground and animal deaths near fracked wells have raised alarm in these communities.

During the tour Sr. Elizabeth shared her vast knowledge on local and national fracking processes and their environmental implications. She conducts these local tours to hydraulic fracturing and deep directional drilling sites for anyone who is interested.



Keeping Vigil in Paris *(continued from p. 7)*

identified by a blue dot on the screen. We walked together for a few minutes, made a few quick turns on the narrow streets, and immediately came upon Notre Dame des Victories.

We parted and she stepped quickly toward the front entrance and disappeared. I paused for a moment and as I was already late for my engagement, I wondered about stopping in to see what attracted my companion. It was nearly nine o'clock in the evening and I wondered what kind of event might be taking place at that hour, a Friday night, and St. Patrick's Day at that. I assumed my friends would understand so I turned and entered.



To my surprise the basilica was full to overflowing with a very diverse congregation of mostly younger people. The atmosphere was solemn and the silence

broken by the voice of someone leading the group in a solemn meditation that was interrupted by an antiphonal biblical chant. The darkness was broken by light from numerous candles and flares that were scattered throughout.

I left after a brief visit and joined my colleagues for dinner where we debriefed on the topics of the daylong meeting and discussed some of the more thought provoking aspects of the different presentations on development, gene therapy, sustainable banking and responsible investing, and talked about what if any follow-up actions might be appropriately aligned with the mission of the Church in the world. With seven different nationalities represented at the table there were numerous points of view and analyses presented and discussed.

Throughout the meal I looked a few times at the little poster that described the purpose of the gathering that I picked up earlier. It said the event was organized by the "Sowers of Hope" and the question for reflection and prayer that evening was "Is it possible to love?" A very interesting and profoundly philosophical question that was being considered

in the presence of the Lord.

More than two hours later as I retraced my steps back in the direction of the hotel where I was staying, I noticed some small groups of people gathered in front of the basilica and I decided to go back inside. Much to my surprise, the church was still quite full and the readings and chanting continued. I sat for a while and then noticed that the young woman who had asked for directions earlier was still sitting at the end of one of the pews. Her fellow pilgrims were either seated, standing, or kneeling on the floor as they participated in the worship.

This time I stayed longer and moved toward the center of the church to get a closer look. A small choir was accompanied by a solo piano player, while others pressed closer to the sanctuary where they joined in communal prayer or left their candles of remembrance or petition.

I left just before midnight while many pilgrims were still inside and walked slowly to my hotel. Was I really in Paris, in the capital of the eldest daughter of the Church? Was Patrick the missionary, on this third Friday of Lent, ploughing open some old furrows that would nourish the faith of the recent immigrants from numerous former colonies and distant places, and at the same time rekindling the faith of these welcoming youth of Paris who were gathered together in this sacred space?

(Continued on p. 15)



Cardinal Urges Participants at Prayer for Christian Unity Gathering to Live a Unique Statement

By: Fr. Harry Winter, OMI

As Antonio Ponce, OMI, and I took part in the 2017 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, held in Minneapolis May 1-4, we listened to a first ever message from a cardinal to the participants of this week (started in 1969 and held annually). Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, asked us to examine and live together the short and vital 5 page statement “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World, Recommendations for Conduct” The document can be found on the Vatican’s website.



Most Rev. Denis J. Madden, retired Auxiliary Bishop, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore and Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

One reason the document is so extraordinary is that it was approved by three very different groups: the World Council of Churches, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and the World Evangelical Alliance. Another reason is that it begins by affirming “Mission belongs to the very being of the church,” and then bonds social justice, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.

Although approved in late January, 2011, we are all puzzled and disturbed that this statement remains virtually unknown. The 400 participants in the Week of Prayer have resolved to make it publicized.



Participants of the National Workshop on Christian Unity 2017.

Keeping Vigil in Paris

(continued from p. 14)



The image of that great basilica filled with so many young people late into the night in Paris, gathered in prayer and to wonder about the possibility of love and where to find the seeds of hope in their lives and in today’s world, remains with me. It makes me wonder about the many who are looking for reasons to hope, paths to loving relationships and increasing harmony with the earth, with strangers and migrants they have yet to meet. In a period of disruption and anxiety that is reflected in so many ways and in so many spaces, may the seeker in all of us be united with those in our midst who are searching for a reason to hope and be fulfilled by the Easter experience of new life and meaning.

Conclusion

The Catholic tradition, as was most recently emphasized in the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* by St John Paul II, breathes through the two lungs of faith and reason and directed through the discipline of faith seeking understanding and truth. Providentially, I think St. Patrick was reminding me of this reality through my opportunity to participate in these very different events in Paris.

Garden for Hospice Launched in Tijuana, Mexico

By: Fr. Antonio Ponce, OMI & Rowena Gono

Several months ago JPIC staff explored funding opportunities to launch a “Hospice Vegetable Garden Initiative” at Albergue Las Memorias A.C. in Tijuana, Mexico. The Albergue Las Memorias (Hostel of Memories) is a 12-year old residential hospice facility and the only one of its kind in Tijuana. It provides care and refuge for approximately 130 indigent men, women and children infected with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Many residents have been abandoned by their families. Albergue Las Memorias offers them shelter, medical attention, and if it comes to that, a place to die in dignity. It also gives them an incentive to stay off drugs and alcohol.



The project’s objective is to invest in a supplemental and reliable food source as the shelter often struggles with having enough for residents. The garden will also serve as a space for encounter and therapeutic activity for patients still physically active.

To fund the project, JPIC initially pursued foundation grants but had no success. Strongly believing in the facility’s vision, we reached out to groups at an Oblate parish and other interested individuals. “Families for Life” and “Projection Ministry of Santa Rosa” were among

those that offered financial support. From Santa Clarita, CA families forming the movement “World Marriage Encounter” also donated to the project. While some gave financially, others volunteered their time to work on the garden. Able-bodied patients at the shelter also helped.

So, in the month of April, and with enough funds to purchase the necessary materials, JPIC director, Fr. Antonio Ponce OMI, together with volunteers began the preparation and planting process. The initial work involved building garden beds, laying soil and planting seeds that will produce peppers, carrots, corn, tomato, cabbage, onion, cauliflower, lettuce, kale, cucumber, radish, green beans, scallion, and peppermint. It is hoped the garden will eventually produce surplus vegetables that can be sold locally. Money from vegetable sales will contribute to the upkeep of the facility.



(L to R) Gerardo Escobar, volunteer from Santa Rosa Church, Sergio Borrego R. Albergue Las Memorias associate director, Fr. Antonio Ponce, OMI, JPIC director.

It took two weekends to prepare the soil and install the garden beds and another to plant vegetables. If all goes well, we expect to harvest the garden’s first crops sometime in summer 2017. Because volunteers provided much of the labor, money was left over to invest in a solar water heater system at the shelter. They had been using wood to heat water because they could not afford gas.

We are very grateful for all those who made this initiative a reality. *Please keep the Hospice Vegetable Garden Initiative in your prayers and stay tuned for our future updates on its progress.*