

A Silent Yet Meaningful Missionary Presence

On Sunday we celebrated Pentecost. The Holy Spirit promised by Jesus comes and remains with the Apostles and with those who, by listening to their teaching, believe in and welcome the truth about Jesus the Savior and about the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. The Holy Spirit acts in the world in many different ways. At times, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, His presence appears spectacularly through signs and words. At other times, His presence is almost imperceptible, acting in silence. Yet His presence is always powerful and always bears fruit.

My recent visits to different Oblate units have confirmed this action of the Holy Spirit through the Oblate ministry. In some places, Oblates preach, celebrate the sacraments, teach, and engage in many activities to bring Christ and His hope to the people. In other places, which has been part of my recent experience, Oblates are unable to exercise any

public ministry. They cannot organize public events or celebrations. Their ministry consists simply in being present and, through a life and service marked by faith, witnessing to God's love among the people around them.

This silent presence does not arise from fear of proclaiming the Word of God, nor from a lack of initiative. Rather, at this moment, it appears to be the only possible way to bring to the people around them the hope whose only source is Jesus Christ.

May the Holy Spirit give strength and courage to all missionaries, especially to those whose service often remains unseen, hidden yet profoundly important for the mission of the Church, so that they may continue their "silent" mission with fidelity and hope.

Antoni BOCHM, OMI

Cor Unum

FROM THE REGIONS

AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

Perpetual Oblation: "Are we weak enough to be Oblates?"

Today, May 1st, 2026, in the Chapel of the General House in Rome, Scholastic Brothers, Chanel KUYITUKA GIANGA and Alphonse-Thomas KABAMBA MUKUTI, both members of the Province of Congo (DR), made their Perpetual Oblation as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

The Superior General, presided over the Eucharist and received their vows in the name of the Church and the Congregation. Here's Fr. General's homily:

Homily on Perpetual Vows 1 May 2026, Rome

Dear Alphonse and Chanel

"It is not you who have chosen me, but I who have chosen you". You belong to the generation of Oblates who will take their perpetual vows in the year marking the bicentenary of the approval of the Constitutions and Rules. This is a grace, but also a responsibility. What can we expect of you? I dream that you will be the driving force behind the renewal of our Congregation as we enter our third centenary. I dream that you will live the Constitutions and Rules in such a way that many others will want to live as you do, and that the poor will rejoice in having holy and zealous missionaries at

their service. How worthy and holy the undertaking! Do we dare to accept the challenge?

Last Tuesday, the preacher at our monthly retreat, the Provincial of the Mediterranean, asked us the following question: are we weak enough to be Oblates? St Paul said that he took great pleasure in boasting of his weaknesses because in them the power of God was made manifest. Jesus saves the world from sin and death by becoming weak and dying on a cross. Risen, he appeared to his disciples, showing them his wounds, and it is his wounds that have healed us. Jesus invites us to be like him, the wounded Shepherd who heals the wounded people. The life of Saint Eugene de Mazenod is proof of what we are saying: how wounds transfigured in the love of the Crucified One become channels of God's own mercy and a means of sanctification. In this context, we may ask ourselves whether we have allowed Christ to transform our weakness with his grace.

Our vocation is pure grace. 'Before I formed you in the womb, I chose you; before you were born, I set you apart,' the Lord tells us, as he did to Jeremiah. He knows our history, our weakness, our wounds. He knows us and searches us, but he does so with a loving gaze. That gaze is capable of transforming our wounds into a source of grace for us and for the poor. Dear Alphonse and Chanel, are you weak enough to let God reveal his love in your weakness, in your wounds? Are you weak enough to let God transform you into Good News for the poor? One who feels weak asks God every day to assist him with his grace; he learns to trust in Him and not in his own strength; he learns to take risks and try everything because he has experienced that nothing is impossible for God. God is able to make our wounds speak of his love.

The second reading speaks to us of the wisdom of the cross. Called to look at our world through the eyes of the Crucified One, we Oblates learn from him the wisdom of the One who, though rich, became poor; of the One

who, though Lord, became a humble servant, ever obedient to the Father; of the One who, though life, embraced death; of the One who, though holy, redeemed sin by dying on the cross as a cursed man. Dear Alphonse and Chanel, by professing your religious vows, you wish to embrace that wisdom of the cross forever, living the very same way of life as the Crucified One. Through your vows, you commit yourselves to living with Jesus and to living like Jesus, who was chaste, poor and obedient, and who gave his life as an oblation to the Father for the salvation of the world. Jesus invites and calls us to continue this way of life, which is already a proclamation of his Kingdom and the Good News for the world. Do you wish to make your perpetual oblation? Do you wish to be poor, chaste and obedient like Jesus? Do you wish to place yourselves at the service of the poorest, giving your lives out of love for God and your brothers and sisters?

The Oblate cross you will receive today is the sign of a covenant of love in which we offer our poor humanity to receive the love of a God who, by dying in Jesus, has conquered death and sin. The cross is not a decorative item; it is the constant reminder of this story of God's love for us. A reminder that urges us to strive always and ever more to love as He has loved us. To this end, strive to live out the CC and RR that you will receive today. Do this and you shall live! If you wish to know whether you are walking in the wisdom of the cross, evaluate your life against the CC and RR and strive always to put them into practice.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks to us of the love between the Father and the Son. At the same time, he asks his disciples to love one another as he has loved them and to remain in his love. He does not call us servants, but friends, because we know him and follow him. Called to be friends of Jesus in community, we are a sacrament of the love of the Trinity. By making your perpetual oblation, you commit yourselves to living out the Lord's commandment of love. Only the love we receive from

Jesus and share in and from the community will save the world from its deadly dynamics. Our apostolic charity, lived out in community, is also a sign of hope and a prophecy of the final world where we shall all be in loving communion with God. Our vow of perseverance manifests Jesus' total love for his Father and for his community, a love to the very end, a love that holds nothing back and that stands the test of time. We persevere in the community and in religious life to proclaim to the world that only love will save it.

Do not be afraid to love God and to let yourselves be loved by Him. Do not be afraid to love your brothers in the community and to let yourselves be loved by them. Do not be afraid to love the poor and to let yourselves be loved by them. Do not be afraid to live

chastity, poverty, obedience and perseverance with radical commitment. Do not be afraid of your weaknesses, your wounds, your vulnerability; let us not be afraid to be Oblates. Jesus tells us that whatever we ask of the Father in his name, he will grant us. With Mary, with all the saints, we pray for you today. With the holy and blessed Oblates, we pray to the Father that, in the name of Jesus, He may grant the holiness of Oblate and missionary life to Alphonse and Chanel, so that they may help all their brothers to live the wonderful vocation to which we have been called, and so that they may be zealous missionaries. May God bless and accompany you to bring to completion the work which He Himself has begun and inspired in you. Amen.

OMIWORLD

EUROPE

The Association of Oblate Institutes of Higher Learning (AOIHL) meets in Rome

The Association of Oblate Institutes of Higher Learning (AOIHL) meets at the General House in Rome from June 1–5, 2026. Representatives from Canada, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and the USA, as well as Father Alberto Ruiz González, OMI, the new holder of the Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies, and Father Paweł Zając, OMI, the Congregation's new Director of Oblate Studies, have gathered at the General House for their annual meeting of reflection and networking.

During their meeting this year, they will interact with the Superior General and members of his Council, attend the General Audience with Pope Leo XIV, visit the Pontifical Salesian University (UPS), and undertake a

walking pilgrimage in the footsteps of Saint Eugene. Father Raymond Mwangala, OMI, Assistant General for Mission, will present the report of the 2026 Assembly of the General Mission Committee, held in Cedara, South Africa, on the theme of Higher Education as Oblate Mission. Delegates to the meeting will also have opportunities to interact with members of the General House community and members of the Studium Generale.

This year's meeting is special for the Association because it coincides with the jubilee celebration of the 200th anniversary of the papal approbation of the Constitutions and Rules.

Raymond Mwangala, OMI Assistant General for Mission

OMIWORLD

LATIN AMERICA

CIAL Asuncion 2026: Strengthening the Heart of the Region

Major superiors and representatives from across Latin America and the Caribbean gathered in Paraguay to pray, reflect, and face together the realities shaping Oblate life and mission in the region.

A gathering for communion

From March 2 to 7, 2026, the Latin American Interprovincial Conference, CIAL, held its assembly at the Central House of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Asunción, Paraguay. Representatives from the different Oblate units of Latin America and the Caribbean came together to strengthen communion among the provinces, share the reality of each unit, and reflect on the challenges and possibilities of mission today. The assembly was accompanied by Fr. Jorge ALBERGATI, OMI, a General Councilor, whose presence helped deepen the bond between the region and the Congregation's Central Government. [OBJ]

The daily rhythm of the gathering was simple and deeply ecclesial. Prayer, community reflection, group work, dialogue, discernment, Eucharist, and fraternal time shaped each day. That balance gave the assembly more than an organizational character. It became a space where the units could listen to one another and walk together. [OBJ] Special gratitude to Frs. Gualberto MIRANDA, OMI, and Zenón BERIKANI, OMI, for putting everything together.

Facing the realities of the mission

The assembly addressed several important matters touching the life of the Congregation

in the region. Among them were the inter-chapter reports of the units, initial and ongoing formation, the situation of the interprovincial novitiate, community life, pastoral mission in different regions, and the ongoing reflection on restructuring. The participants also reviewed the work of the continental commissions, including youth, lay associates, formation, communication, and justice and peace. [OBJ] These themes show clearly where much of the conversation in the Oblate world is now taking place. Formation, communion among units, and new ways of organizing mission are at the heart of the regional agenda. They are the region's response to its challenges. [OBJ]

Hope rooted in prayer and fraternity

Some of the most meaningful moments came outside the formal sessions. The participants visited the future house of the Interprovincial Novitiate in Asunción, which has become a concrete sign of hope and unity for the region and the oblate world. They also made a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Caacupé, patroness of Paraguay, where they celebrated the Eucharist and entrusted the life and mission of the Congregation to Mary's intercession.

The week concluded with a fraternal cultural celebration and ended in an atmosphere of gratitude and shared joy. The report, signed by Fr. Gualberto, OMI, describes the assembly as a positive moment of encounter and joint discernment that strengthened communion among the units and renewed the mission of the Oblates in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Gualberto MIRANDA, OMI

Advancing the Mission: The Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies Welcomes New Leadership

Oblate School of Theology (OST) has named Father Alberto Ruiz González, OMI, as the new holder of the Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies, succeeding Father Frank Santucci, OMI. The appointment was commemorated with a chair transfer luncheon on May 8, 2026, at the OST campus in San Antonio, attended by faculty, administrators, and the Kusenberger family.

The establishment of the Kusenberger Chair began in 2016, on the 200th anniversary of the foundation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, when the first step was taken to establish an institution dedicated to the study of the charism, life, spirituality, and mission of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Through the vision and dedication of former OST presidents Father Ron Rolheiser, OMI, and Father Billy Morell, OMI, the idea was presented to Deacon Robert and Ruth Kusenberger, HOMI, who gave a generous endowment to make the Chair possible. In 2017, on the final day of the bicentenary celebrations in Rome, the Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies was inaugurated.

“This generous gift of Bob and Ruth Kusenberger made it possible for the Oblate charism to be shared, deepened, and enhanced through classes and studies at OST,” said OST President Father Louis Studer, OMI. “The Oblate Charism, the gift of the Oblate Congregation to the life and mission of the Church, lies at the heart and purpose of OST.”

Throughout the Chair’s nine-year history, Oblate Studies has been approached in a serious, organized academic manner. Four Oblates have earned a Master of Arts in Spirituality degree with a specialization in Oblate Studies, all of whom are making significant contributions in their ministries by spreading the knowledge they acquired during their education at OST. More than 30 Oblates have taken

Oblate Studies as elective courses for their Master of Divinity degree, enabling them, as missionaries, to transform the lives of others through their profound understanding and embrace of the Oblate charism. Members of other religious congregations have also enrolled in Oblate Studies and have applied the methodology of these Mazenodian-focused courses to their respective congregations, founding figures, and missions. Additionally, Oblate Studies has served as a training ground for Oblate formators and lay leaders within Oblate family groups from around the world.

The Kusenberger Chair has contributed to various publications, including the production of a commentary on the Oblate Constitutions and Rules. This great achievement involved the work of over 180 people and was translated into English, French, Spanish, and Polish. Many of those who contributed to this publication were students who took Oblate Studies courses. In addition to academic learning, the Kusenberger family endowment has enabled the Kusenberger Lecture to be held annually for the past six years, with the most recent lecture held at OST in early May.

“This venture has been blessed without any doubt. For most of these years, Father David Muñoz, OMI, and I worked together to bring these things about,” said Father Santucci. “After nine years, I feel very much like a parent who has given birth and nurtured a child that is turning out very beautifully, and I am very happy to be able to hand this over to the capable hands of Father Alberto Ruiz.”

Father Ruiz González is set to officially begin his new role on July 1, 2026, eagerly preparing to implement his passion for study, his devotion to the Oblate charism, and his mission-driven vision for the continued success and growth of the Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies. As the new Chair holder, he hopes to explore how the Oblate charism’s global presence can be better understood through unique regional perspectives. He also seeks to examine certain Oblate figures and highlight models

who exemplify specific virtues, with the goal of presenting concrete examples that inspire others to imitate them.

Father Ruiz González shares, “I will try my best to continue nurturing and developing this important work for the good of Oblate School of Theology and our congregation. I will strive to reciprocate by helping people deepen their faith through the Oblate Studies Chair, and I hope to live up to these expectations with the grace of God.”

Oblate School of Theology expresses deep gratitude to Father Santucci for successfully pioneering the Kusenberger Chair of Oblate Studies and growing this effort into what it is today. Father Santucci’s passionate service in teaching and preaching about the life and ministry of St. Eugène de Mazenod has laid a firm, lasting foundation for this Chair to continue with hope and confidence. The School also thanks Father Ruiz González for his willingness and generosity to carry forward the spirit of St. Eugène and “leave nothing undared for the Gospel.”

Bianca Soto

Kenneth Thorson, O.M.I., Appointed Bishop of Prince Albert, Canada

The Holy Father has appointed the Reverend Kenneth Thorson, member of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.) as bishop of the diocese of Prince Albert, Canada.

Curriculum vitae

Msgr. Kenneth Thorson, O.M.I., was born on 19 September 1966 in Saskatoon, in the diocese of the same name.

He entered the Congregation of Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1992, and was ordained a priest on 21 May 1999.

He has held the following offices: Parish vicar and parish priest of Saint Patrick in Saskatoon (1999-2003), Member of the community of the Oblates in Birmingham, England (2003-2008), Formator of Missionary Oblates and vocational

director in Ottawa (2008-2013), Provincial vicar (2013-2018), Provincial Superior (2019-2025) of the Canadian O.M.I. Province of Lacombe.

Holy See Press Office

Message from Bishop-Elect Ken Thorson, O.M.I. to the Faithful of the Diocese:

OMIWORLD

Navigating Technology in Light of Magnifica Humanitas

Fr. Raymond COOK, Provincial Superior of the United States Province, has addressed a letter to the Superior General entitled “Navigating Technology as Oblates – Reflection on Magnifica Humanitas.” In it, he offers a timely and thoughtful response to Pope Leo XIV’s first Encyclical Letter, *Magnifica Humanitas*, published on May 25, 2026, which reflects on safeguarding the dignity of the human person in the age of Artificial Intelligence.

Drawing from both personal interest and missionary conviction, Fr. Cook highlights the challenges and opportunities that new technologies present for the Oblate charism today. His reflection invites the Congregation to discern how best to proclaim the Gospel and serve the most abandoned in an increasingly digital world, responding with creativity, responsibility, and fidelity to our mission.

Below is his full letter.

May 25, 2026

We are Human

Navigating Technology as Oblates – my reflection on *Magnifica Humanitas*

Dear Father General,

As most of you know, in the early hours on May 25, 2026, we finally received Pope Leo XIV’s first Encyclical Letter, *Magnifica Humanitas*, addressing the safeguarding of the human person in the time of Artificial Intelligence. As an old tech nerd, I was ecstatic that

Pope Leo would be addressing AI as well as many issues connected to AI, both good and bad. I really could not put it down. There is of course more to the document than I will reflect on here, but I wanted to start somewhere and focus on how technology intersects with our charism. As Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, I recognized in this document an urgent, direct mandate to reassess our missionary ministry within the borders of the United States Province and beyond. It's getting late in the evening, and I really want to offer this to the province as soon as possible!

Our founder taught us to leave no stone unturned by trying everything, to look around and be active in a broken world, and to find our place among those whom society has pushed aside. In post-Revolutionary France, St. Eugene reached out to the rural poor, the prisoners, and the forgotten on the peripheries. Today the USA is located in the epicenter of global digital power, and the concept of the "periphery" has changed. The poor and marginalized can no longer simply be defined by geography or lack of material resources, but by structural, technological exclusion as well. Magnifica Humanitas warns that we are living through a "change of era" rather than a mere human progress. For Oblates, I think this means our missionary zeal must enter the digital "construction sites" (16) where human dignity is actively being compromised.

Active Dehumanization

To start, I recognize that capitalistic corporations stand as the main drivers of the digital revolution. Pope Leo notes, the control over infrastructure, data streams, and automated computing power does not rest in public stewardship, but within private, transnational corporate monopolies. In our local U.S. communities—from the inner cities to underserved rural communities—this concentrated "technocratic" shift is beginning to generate unprecedented imbalances in power and wealth. Pope Leo states:

"Technology power takes on an unprecedented, predominantly 'private' aspect, which makes it even more challenging to discern, govern and direct such power toward the common good... We must avoid the 'Babel syndrome,' namely the idolatry of profit that sacrifices the weak, a uniformity that neutralizes differences, and the pretense that a single language—even a digital one—can translate everything, including the mystery of the person, into data and performance." (5, 10)

He then goes on to say that there is a great risk of dehumanization in this new era. Thus, as Oblates we are called upon once again to teach people that they are first and above all; human. We see what Leo calls this "Babel syndrome" disrupting secular families and even religious communities daily. The union of automation and reproductive AI systems is accelerating job insecurity, deskilling workers, and transforming human labor that is optimized solely for financial gain. When corporate choices sacrifice employment under the guise of efficiency, they introduce a destructive paradox: material advancement alongside the regression of humanity. For the youth in our Oblate parishes and ministries, the predatory "digital attention economy" (170) monetizes human vulnerability, fueling isolation, a severe crisis in mental health, and structural dependencies that actively dismantle interior freedom.

Connecting the Oblate Charism to Modern Formations of Slavery

St. Eugene de Mazenod's desire was that we give preference to the most abandoned, those treated as less than human. Magnifica Humanitas looks into the darker side of this technological frontier that I have not given much thought to until now. The encyclical speaks of new, covert forms of global servitude that are directly tied to the U.S. digital economy. The user experiences designed in Silicon Valley are often built upon deep exploitation of others. Millions of marginalized workers, often working under demanding conditions for minimal wages, spend their lives data-labeling and

moderating disturbing, traumatic content to train large language models. Furthermore, criminal networks now routinely utilize online platforms, anonymous profiling, and algorithmic tools to recruit and exploit the vulnerable, reducing humans to data packets within global commerce circuits (173).

As Oblates in the United States, we cannot remain passive spectators to this new colonization of life. We must recognize these spaces as our contemporary mission fields. To ignore the ethical challenges of the digital shift is to become complicit. St. Eugene called us to adapt our language to ensure the poor could hear the liberating truth of the Gospel; today, we must master the language necessary to disarm these modern algorithmic “monopolies of AI.” (109)

The Way of Nehemiah: A Practical Mandate for Missionaries Oblates

Rejecting the inevitability of an inhumane future, Pope Leo calls us to adopt the “way of Nehemiah,” (10) to minister as Oblates within our local realities and rebuild the walls of fraternal charity “brick by brick.” (241) We are explicitly called to treat the digital landscape as a “new continent to be evangelized,” (238) requiring mature, courageous missionaries. We Oblates must respond with concrete, intentional actions across our apostolates:

Parish Ministry as Centers of Physical Counterculture: In today’s world we have experienced lack of human connection, our Oblate parishes could become spaces that protect and encourage face-to-face community and Eucharistic solidarity. We can intentionally cultivate times of silence, relational closeness, and outreach to those feeling isolated by technological shifts, reaffirming that the human heart remains the place where God dwells (16).

Educational Alliances and Youth Advocacy: Our schools (OST), formation houses (Tempi-er, Borzaga, Novitiate), and young adult and youth ministries can form an active educational alliance. We need to provide our young

people and formandi with robust tools for “digital sobriety,” (170) teaching them to recognize data manipulation and defend their “ontological dignity” (52) against a world that commodifies attention with clicks and likes. This requires supporting each other, and those we serve, who are struggling to resist the pervasive influence of corporate platforms.

Standing with the New Faces of the Poor: As Technology changes the labor landscape, I wonder if our social ministries that we support as Oblates can adapt to assist workers facing unemployment. Is there a way that we can work with local labor initiatives, community groups, and educational centers? Can our JPIC office provide challenges to corporations to assert the dignity of human labor over capital and productivity indicators? I find these questions to be very challenging.

Remaining Human and Christian so that we can become Saints

Our missionary call in today’s world IS challenging, but it is filled with theological hope. As Oblates we should not be intimidated by the rapid pace of technology. We are presented with an opportunity to enter the “construction sites”

of our time—our parishes, urban centers, border ministries, and digital spaces—with the heart of Eugene. By placing the human person at the absolute center of our ministerial choices, we ensure that the “rejected stones” (16) the poor, the digitally exploited, the lonely, and the marginalized—become the very cornerstones of a welcoming, fraternal church. I propose that we foster a way to engage in a zoom conference to share ideas of what we could do to be a voice in the digital world in order to create intentional non-digital spaces from our major institutions. I welcome any thoughts or ideas as we continue to unpack this profound document we have received today.

Through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, our patroness, and St. Eugene de Mazenod, I

pray for the courage to remain profoundly
human in this digital age.

Peace,

Raymond Cook, OMI Provincial US Province

Ray COOK, OMI

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