

# OBLATE CONNECTIONS

October 2026 | N°69



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# CONNECTIONS

When she was told that she would be the Mother of Jesus, Mary went with haste to share her good news with Elizabeth. She didn't keep this news to herself. Bernadette, having seen Our Lady at the grotto, did not stay there; she went and told others what she had experienced. She too went and shared her good news with others; she didn't keep it for herself. Each of us too, are also called to share with others what we saw, heard, and experienced while we were in Lourdes. Like Bernadette, we too are asked to share our good news of being a pilgrim with our friends and family. As we do this, we become missionary disciples. Through the quality of our lives, we can repeat the words of Mary, 'The Lord has done great things for me'.

- Br. Michael Moore OMI



THE WORLD  
WILL BE SAVED  
BY BEAUTY

“Lourdes gave me an opportunity to reflect, appreciate what I have, and strengthen my faith. I returned home with many new friends, endless memories and a greater sense of gratitude.”



OUR TIME IN LOURDES



ST MICHAELS  
100 YEAR ANNIVERSARY



LIVING WATER

## A word from Fr. Lorcan O'Reilly, OMI

All of us experience moments when the road ahead is uncertain—when life changes, familiar things no longer seem quite so certain, or we simply wonder what comes next. Perhaps that is why the words at the heart of this year's Lourdes theme speak so powerfully: "Hail, Full of Grace, the Lord is with you."



During our recent pilgrimage we reflected on the Angel's words to Mary: "The Lord is with you"; "Do not be afraid"; and "The Holy Spirit will come upon you." Mary did not know where her "yes" would lead, but she trusted that God was with her and then set out to serve another.

That invitation is also ours. Whatever our circumstances, we are reminded that God is present in the ordinary realities of our lives and often becomes visible through the kindness, friendship and service we offer one another.

This edition of Oblate Connections reflects something of that spirit at work across the wider Oblate family. Together, these stories remind us that, even in times of change and uncertainty, there are many signs of hope and grace among us, and many reasons to trust the simple promise: the Lord is with us; do not be afraid.

- Fr. Lorcan O'Reilly OMI  
Province Leader



**"I am so proud to be a part of the Darndale Foodbank. It's a place where hard work meets heart, where community spirit thrives, and where every volunteer plays a crucial role."**

# The World Will be Saved by Beauty

– Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

**I**n the movie *The English Patient* there's a very heartwarming scene. A number of people from various countries are thrown together by circumstance in an abandoned villa in post-war Italy. Among them are a young nurse, attending to an English pilot who's been badly burned in an air crash, and a young Asian man whose job is to find and defuse landmines. The young man and the nurse become friends and, one day, he announces he has a special surprise for her.

He takes her to an abandoned church in which he has set up a series of ropes and pulleys that will lift her to the ceiling where, hidden in darkness, are beautiful mosaics and wonderful works of art that cannot be seen from the floor. He gives her a torch as a light and pulls her up through a series of ropes so that she swings like an angel with wings, high above the floor and is able with the help of her torch to see beautiful masterpieces hidden in the dark.

For her, the experience is one of exhilaration; she has the sensation of flying and of seeing wonderful beauty all at the same time. When she's finally lowered back to the floor she's flushed with excitement and gratitude and covers the young man's face with kisses, saying over and over again: "Thank you, thank you, thank you for showing this to me!"

And from her expression, you see too that she is expressing a double thanks: "Thank you for showing me something that I could never have come to on my own and thank you for trusting me enough to think that I would understand this, for trusting that I would get it!"

## **There's a lesson here?**

The Church needs to do for the world exactly what this young man did for his nurse friend; it needs to show the world where to look for a beauty it would not find on its own, a beauty that is hidden in darkness. And it needs to trust that people will "get it," will appreciate the richness of what they are being shown.

Where might the Church find such hidden beauty? In the deep rich wells of its own history, and in nature, in art, in science, in children, in the energy of the young, and in the wisdom of the old. There are treasures of beauty hidden everywhere. The Church's task is to point these out to the world. Why?

Because beauty has the power to touch and transform the soul, to instill wonder and gratitude in a way that few things have. Confucius understood this. That's why he suggested that beauty is the greatest of all teachers and why he based his philosophy of education on beauty. People can doubt almost anything, except beauty.

Why can't beauty be doubted? Because beauty is an attribute of God. Classical Christian philosophy and theology tell us that God has four transcendental properties, namely, God is "One, True, Good, and Beautiful." If this is true, then to be touched by beauty is to be touched by God; to admire beauty is to admire God; to be shown beauty in hidden places is to be shown God in hidden places; to be in awe of beauty is to be in awe of God; and to feel that awe is to feel a homesickness for heaven.

The renowned theologian Hans Urs Von Baltasar highlighted how beauty is a key component in how God speaks to us and how that should color how we speak about God to the world.

However, we shouldn't be naïve in our understanding of this. Beauty isn't always pretty in the way that popular culture perceives it. Granted, beauty can be seen in the spectacular colors of a sunset, or in the smile and innocence of a child, or in the perfection of a Michelangelo sculpture, but it can also be seen in the wrinkles of an old woman and in the toothless smile of an old man.

God speaks through beauty and so must we. Moreover, we must believe enough in people's sensitivity and intelligence to trust that they, like the nurse in *The English Patient*, will appreciate what they are being shown.

“beauty has the power to touch and transform the soul, to instill wonder and gratitude in a way that few things have.”

In a famous line (often quoted by Dorothy Day) Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky writes: The world will be saved by beauty. What's the logic here? How might beauty cure the many ills which beset us?

Here's Dostoevsky's algebra: In the face of brutality, what's needed is tenderness; in the face of hype and ideology, what's needed is truth; in the face of bitterness and curses, what's needed are graciousness and blessing; in the face of hatred and murder, what's needed are love and forgiveness; in the face of the kind of familiarity that breeds contempt, what's needed are awe and wonder; and in the face the ugliness and vulgarity that pervades our world and our evening news, what's needed is beauty.



### *A Prayer in Perplexity*

O mysterious and creative Spirit,  
as our awareness of this vast universe grows,  
we frequently feel lost in all its complexity.

We wonder who you are,  
and how you sustain all things  
in both concord and chaos;  
who can ever plumb the depths of this mystery,  
and the manner of your loving presence to us all?  
Strengthen our trust in your loving providence,  
our confidence in your saving power in all creation,  
and our hope that our frail existence  
can safely pass through death  
to on-going life with you.  
We make this prayer through your Anointed One,  
Jesus, whom you have made lord of all. Amen.

Richard Haslam, OMI



OBLATE FAMILY LIVE

# Rosary for PEACE



Join Pope Leo XIV in praying for peace this October



**9PM EVERY EVENING IN OCTOBER**

Join on Zoom:  
Scan QR code or  
use Meeting ID:  
815 5256 0500



Join on Zoom or follow online  
Subscribe to our YouTube channel  
Email [communications@oblates.ie](mailto:communications@oblates.ie)



# St Michael's 100 year Anniversary

Our Church, St. Michael's, Inchicore, Dublin, was one hundred years dedicated a Catholic Church on Sunday, 26th April, 2026.



St. Michael's originally served as a garrison chapel for the adjacent Richmond Barracks, before becoming a Roman Catholic church in April 1926. Built in the early 19th century, the church provided religious services for soldiers in Richmond Barracks, which later acted as a holding centre for 1916 Easter Rising rebels. The church transitioned from military use to becoming an Inchicore community hub, following the decommissioning of the barracks between 1923 and 1926.

At its dedication, the first Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Edward Joseph Byrne on the 26th April 1926. We marked this important milestone with a special anniversary Mass, with chief celebrant Bishop Donal Roche, and participation from many parishioners, church volunteers, and local people. On the day, the church was buzzing with activity, and there was a great sense of community and kinship!

Bishop Roche sent a lovely letter to Fr. Liam Griffin OMI, – moderator of Inchicore pastoral area – thanking us for having made him so welcome. He thanked everyone



who made this mass so special; the Organising team, the Priests, the Sacristans, the Choirs, the Readers, the Eucharistic ministers, those who did the flowers, those who cleaned and decorated the church and the church grounds, those who provided refreshments, and those who worked on preparing the prayers and shaping the liturgy.

It was a great team effort, and a wonderful demonstration of a caring community working together to bring joy to all. As well as the celebratory mass, other commemorative events this year included a Summer Social Gathering with Food and Music, and a fund-raising concert in St. Michael's featuring the famous St. James's Brass & Reed Band, and the St. Michael's Reunion Choir.

*Please remember and pray for all the departed souls of people who visited or worshiped in this holy place of St. Michael's Church, whatever their religious denomination or beliefs.*

– Laetitia West  
Member of St Michael's parish community



# Our Time in Lourdes

– Hail Full of Grace



The Oblate Pilgrimage to Lourdes this September has been a time full of grace, prayer and family. People from across England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Jersey gathered for our annual pilgrimage, to be renewed in faith, strengthened in hope, and deepened in charity.



The theme of this year's pilgrimage was "Hail Full of Grace." We asked Fr Liam Griffin OMI to delve deeper into this year's theme. He said; "The angel's message is the salutation of 'Hail, full of Grace' - a respectful greeting. A greeting which shows that the angel is bringing a message and accepting her (Mary) as a person who is graced with the ability to respond to God's call." Liam adds, "When we come to Lourdes, we come in a state of expectation. We don't know what's going to happen. In the same way as Mary didn't know what her "yes" meant... When we come to Lourdes, Our Lady greets us with that message, 'hail, welcome'."

Lourdes affects everyone differently, depending on their own unique circumstances which brought them there. Some find hope, others healing, and some find new friendships. But overall, we all walk away with that feeling of peace. We asked some of our pilgrims what they took away from this year's pilgrimage:

"Having had no expectations or ideas, and struggling with the recent sudden loss of my best friend, I came away from the grotto with such a feeling of peace, calm, contentment and serenity. I felt as if I was glowing inside. Also the words of, Bishop Eamon at our Mass on Monday morning, "God doesn't always come through the front door", turned everything around for me. I was taught in school in the seventies and eighties that God would open the door if I knocked and I was the one walking through but never did I think that He would come through the door to get me just when I needed it most. It was also a very special chance to spend so much time with my own mum. I also have to commend the fabulous Kairos team. Mum needed a wheelchair from the hotel and this is the second year running that she had the inspiring Alastair. Also I simply loved the gentle, compassionate and down to earth approach of all the Oblates I met - not to mention their sense of humour and fun too!"

– Elaine Horan



"My experience of Lourdes was fantastic. I will never forget it. During the week I built unbelievable relationships with the guests. It is a privilege to work with and care for these wonderful people. I learnt so much from them. The smiles on their faces everyday was infectious. I can honestly say it is one of the best experiences I have had in my life. Attending the Religious services allows you to stop, think and reflect. We also got to live out our faith in the service of others. A bonus is that as part of the OYS you also make incredible relationships and new friends with all involved. I hope to return next year."

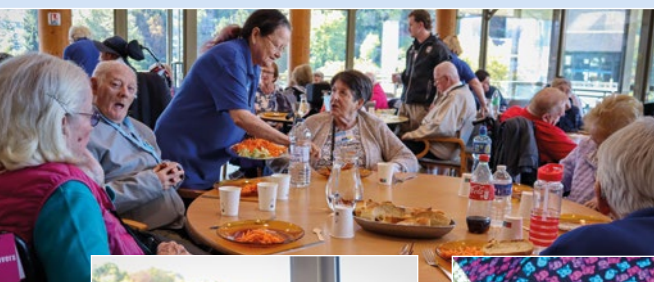
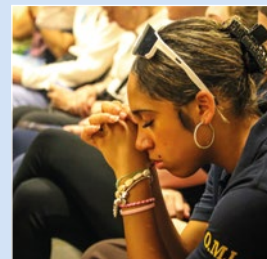
- Jack Lynch

"I wanted to take my sick mum to a place of healing, to see what it's all about. I found my own miracle by letting go of anger and finding more inner peace. The Holy Spirit gave me a lot of guidance on this pilgrimage. I was blessed to meet so many kind people from the Oblate Family. The whole experience has been wonderful!"

- Anna Ossowski

"A highlight for me was accompanying a guest to the baths and experiencing the full immersion alongside them, which has now returned for the first time since before COVID-19. We also had a third more guests with us this year, which brought a great atmosphere and meant everyone had to get stuck in. It was lovely to see the 20 returning volunteers working alongside the first-years, who quickly got to know the guests and brought great energy to the days and the games in the evenings. Overall, it was another really memorable week, and I'm very grateful to the whole Oblate and OYS leadership team for all the work and organisation that went into making it such an enjoyable experience."

- Mary Lawlor

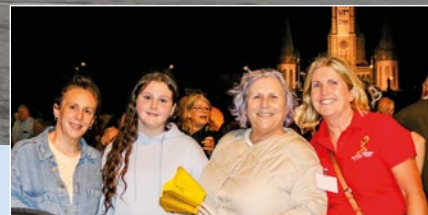


"From the moment I arrived, I felt a sense of peace and calm that is difficult to describe. One of the highlights was spending time with others and sharing our experiences together. The guests are what make the whole experience so special. Lourdes gave me an opportunity to reflect, appreciate what I have, and strengthen my faith. I returned home with many new friends, endless memories and a greater sense of gratitude. It is an experience I will always hold very close to my heart. I look forward to returning in the future."

- Cameron Dolan OYS

Reflecting on this year's pilgrimage we come back to the words of Fr Lorcan O'Reilly OMI during his homily at the Grotto. "Mary is full of grace, and with her, God is able to begin the new story of salvation. Mary responds with the simple words, 'Let it be done to me according to your word'. Hers is no passive or resigned acceptance, but a lively desire to respond and obey God. And having given her yes, she sets out on a long journey to the hill country to visit Elizabeth, who is with child. And she goes with haste. In the same way, she comes with haste to help each one of us and to take care of us. This shrine is a witness to her maternal care and especially her care for those who are sick and vulnerable. As we honour Our Lady this morning, let us join with Pope Leo when he invites us to raise our prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, health of the sick, asking her to assist all who suffer and are in need of compassion, consolation, and a listening ear."

Provisional dates for next year's pilgrimage,  
12th–17th September 2027



Congratulations to Mary O'Brien on receiving the Fr Willie McGonagle Medal in recognition of 50 years of service in the Accueil.



## A Moment to Pause

A Daily Gospel Reflection Podcast with the Oblate Family

Every morning at 8:30am, join us for a **short reflective podcast** rooted in Sacred Scripture.



Scan here  
to listen



A photograph showing two hands, one in a grey sweater and one in a maroon sweater, turning golden water taps on a bright blue wall. Water is dripping from the taps. The image is the background for the top half of the page.

# Living Water

**A**s our parishes reflect on the Season of Creation in September 2026, the theme of Living Water invited us to recognise water as one of God's most precious gifts. Water sustains life, nourishes creation and reminds us of God's generosity. Yet it also calls us to responsibility: to protect this gift, share it justly and ensure that future generations can enjoy its blessings.

## Water: Essential for Life and Health

Water is fundamental to human life. We depend on it for drinking, cooking, sanitation, hygiene, agriculture and countless daily activities. Every person, animal and plant needs water to survive and flourish.

The World Health Organisation highlights the importance of safe drinking water for public health. Contaminated water can spread serious diseases, including cholera, diarrhoea, dysentery, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Without reliable access to clean water, families and communities face increased health risks and difficulties maintaining proper hygiene.

The scale of the global challenge is immense. According to the WHO, approximately 2.2 billion people lacked safely managed drinking-water services in 2022. Behind this figure are families collecting water from distant sources, children growing up without dependable access to safe drinking water, and communities affected by drought, pollution and inadequate infrastructure.

These realities remind us that water is much more than a natural resource. Access to safe water is closely connected with human dignity, health, development and justice.

## A River That Brings Life

The prophet Ezekiel offers a beautiful vision of water flowing from the Temple of God. As the river moves outward, it becomes deeper and brings life wherever it goes. Barren places are transformed, trees grow along its banks, and their fruits and leaves provide nourishment and healing. This vision reveals God's creative and restorative love. It also invites us to reflect on the importance of water within the natural world.

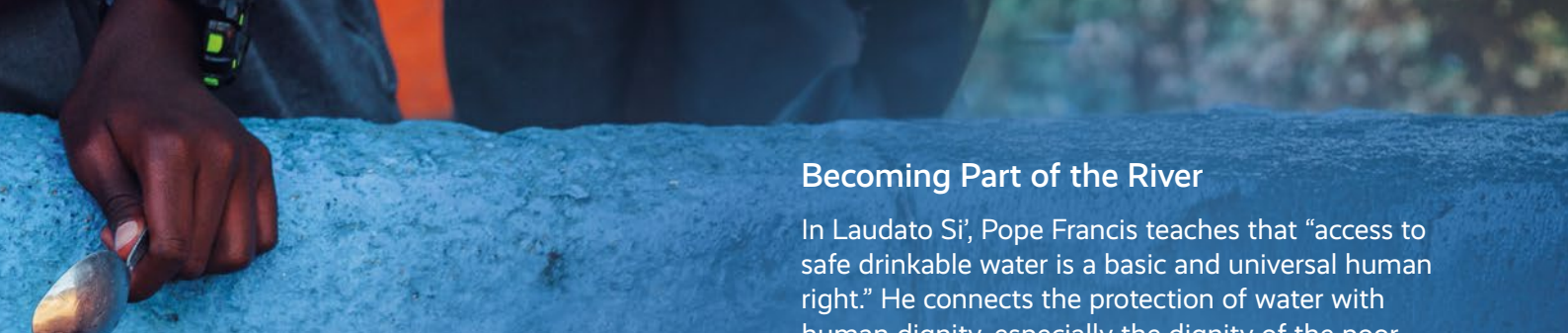
Rivers, streams, wetlands, forests, lakes and oceans are closely connected. Water sustains countless forms of life and supports the balance of ecosystems. When water systems are healthy, plants, animals and human communities flourish. When rivers are polluted, wetlands destroyed or water sources depleted, the consequences extend far beyond the water itself.

Habitats are damaged, biodiversity declines, livelihoods are threatened and food production can suffer. Human health may also be placed at risk. To care for water, therefore, is to care for the web of life entrusted to us by God.

## A World Thirsty for Water and Hope

Many communities today face growing pressure on water resources. Climate change, drought, pollution, population growth and urbanisation are affecting the availability and quality of water in different parts of the world.

For some, clean water is available simply by turning on a tap. For others, obtaining enough water for the family is a daily struggle. People may walk long distances, depend on unsafe sources or face the devastating effects of drought and environmental degradation.



## Becoming Part of the River

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis teaches that “access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right.” He connects the protection of water with human dignity, especially the dignity of the poor and vulnerable. This challenges us to view water not merely in terms of consumption, but also in terms of solidarity. Creation is God’s gift, intended to sustain the whole human family.

When some communities enjoy abundant access to clean water while others struggle to meet their most basic needs, Christians are called to respond with compassion and responsibility. Protecting water is therefore both an ecological duty and an expression of love for our neighbour.

## Let the Living Water Flow

Water refreshes, cleanses, nourishes and sustains. It connects people, communities and ecosystems, reminding us that we are part of something greater than ourselves.

As we reflect on this year’s theme, let us give thanks for every river and stream, every spring and rain shower, and every drop of clean water. Let us remember those who lack reliable access to safe water, and let us accept our responsibility to protect this precious gift for present and future generations.

Above all, let us remember that Christ is the source of the Living Water that truly satisfies the human heart. His grace renews us so that we may become channels of his love and healing for others and for the world entrusted to our care.

– by Fr Vimal Parunanthu OMI, JPIC Co-Ordinator



## CULTIVATING AN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY

– Led by SR Colette Kane OP  
6th–8th November (supper to lunch)

Sr Colette will help us to explore how to celebrate being Christian in an evolving universe. Awakening us to the divine presence in all of creation

**Donation:** Residential £215, Non residential £100

### For Information or Booking

Contact Rachel: +44 01270 568653 or

email: [rachel.challoner@oblateretreatcentre.org.uk](mailto:rachel.challoner@oblateretreatcentre.org.uk)

Wistaston Hall, 89 Broughton Lane, Crewe, CW2 8JS

**BOOK NOW!**

As Christians, we must ask ourselves: If water is God’s gift and essential to all life, how are we called to use it responsibly?

The Gospel of John leads us beyond the physical meaning of water. When Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well, he tells her:

“Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give will never be thirsty.” John 4:14

Jesus speaks of a deeper thirst—the longing of the human heart for God, forgiveness, meaning, love and eternal life. Christ himself is the source of this living water. Our world is thirsty not only for clean water, but also for compassion, justice, peace and hope. In the pressures of modern life, our hearts can become spiritually dry. Yet Jesus continues to invite us to come to him and receive the grace that gives eternal life.

## Living Water and Our Christian Calling

The river in Ezekiel’s vision does not remain in one place. It flows outward, bringing life and healing wherever it goes. This image can inspire us to understand Christian faith in the same way. God’s grace is not meant to remain confined to our private lives. It should flow through our actions, relationships and care for creation.

Our response can begin with simple, practical choices: avoiding unnecessary waste, reducing pollution, limiting single-use plastics, protecting local rivers and streams, and supporting initiatives that provide safe water to communities in need. Small actions, when undertaken with commitment and solidarity, can become meaningful expressions of ecological responsibility.

## Water, Baptism and New Life in Christ

For Christians, water has a particularly profound meaning because it is central to Baptism. Through the waters of Baptism, we are washed, renewed and reborn in Christ. We become children of God and members of the Body of Christ. The water of Baptism points beyond itself to the grace that cleanses us and gives us new life.

The connection between Baptism and creation invites us to see water with renewed eyes. The water that sustains our bodies can remind us of the grace that sustains our souls. Every drop can speak of God’s generosity, while every act of responsible care can become an expression of gratitude.



# Jubilee Celebrations 2026

– From the homily by Fr Francis McGreal

Congratulations to our Jubilarians (left to right, above): Fr Seamus Finn, 50 years, Fr John Poole, 65 years, Br Francis Flanagan, 70 years Fr Francis McGreal, 65 years & Fr Allen Corteau 50 years (Denmark, not pictured)

**J**ubilee is a time of happiness and gladness because of the many years, more or less successful, that have gone into that time, but also a time of sadness as we look at the passage of time and as we think of our brothers in arms who are not with us anymore, so God grant them rest.

But for us who are still here:

Br Francis Flanagan, 70 years - a great teacher, loved by his pupils, very skilled with his hands. As you go in through the corridor of the House of Retreat, you will see the model of Saint Brendan's boat - thank you for that, Frank.

Fr John Poole - 65 years. A great pastor, very proficient in Zulu and spending many years in the confessional in Lourdes. May God bless you.

Myself - 65 years, various ministries in South Africa.

And then we come to the baby of the group, Fr Seamus Finn - a mere 50 years! That's all.

Seamus works in the area of Justice and Peace and in promoting ethical business practises and investments.

And then Fr Allen has ministered in Scandinavia for many years and is currently parish priest in Copenhagen.

And we might ask, what bring such a group of people like us together? The answer to that is Eugene de Mazenod, who founded the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. A strong man, sometimes a fierce man. Very committed, totally given to the work of the ministry. And he still is pushing us to do even more.

He began with 3 or 4 others, called the Missionaries of Provence, in the South of France. There were just a few, but they began to work and grow.

To gain some degree of stability and security, Saint Eugene petitioned the Pope and spent many months in Rome. And in the end, it took several months but finally we gained that stability, which came in 1826. It was unusual - we were a small group of 26 at the time, and it wasn't accustomed to give papal approval, but we got it, and at the last moment.

But at the very last moment, when he was handing in the final, typed edition of our rule, Eugene asked if the Holy Father could give us the title Oblates of Mary Immaculate. This was totally unexpected, which in a sense, it shouldn't be. It's not that Eugene did not have a loving devotion to Our Lady - she was an essential part of our structure right from the very beginning.

Now, after that session with the Synod, Pope Leo said, "I like these men." God knows why, but he said, I like these men - and, all right, maybe I'm stretching it a bit here, maybe I'm going over the top, but did Our Lady herself want to be associated with us? Was that Our Lady also saying, "I like these men, I can make use of them"?

The Pope added another word to our title: Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

*"We are only the earthenware jars that holds this treasure. To make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us."*

So even though we Oblates of Mary Immaculate are only earthenware jars, fragile. Not very strong. Nevertheless, we are carrying something that has great value. The glory on the face of Christ. And I pray that the Lord will keep us doing that; carrying this light into a world that needs it so much.



# THE DARNDALE FOODBANK

## - A Story of Dedication and Community

Maria, one of the volunteers, shares her experience of the success of the Darndale foodbank in North Dublin.

I would like to tell you all about the Darndale Foodbank – a shining example of what a group of dedicated volunteers can achieve when they put their hearts and minds together. What started as a daunting challenge has now grown into a well run, vital community resource that serves as a testament to teamwork, perseverance, and the power of local action.

The Darndale Foodbank was originally run by Crosscare, a charitable organisation that operated it successfully from 2016. However, in April 2023, Crosscare made the difficult decision to withdraw from the foodbank to focus on their Hub services. This decision left a significant gap in our community. At the time, the foodbank was supporting between 90 to 100 families from six local SVP conferences every week. For a group of us who had witnessed firsthand the difference it made in people's lives, letting it go was simply not an option.

Determined to keep the service going, we came together and decided to manage the foodbank ourselves. For six weeks, we worked alongside Crosscare, learning the ropes and preparing to take the reins. Then, on April 14th, with a mix of hope and anxiety, we reopened the foodbank under our own management.

Those first few weeks were nothing short of overwhelming. Mistakes were made – as they are in any new venture – but we stuck together, supported one another, and slowly found our footing. Every Thursday, our deliveries arrive and we roll up our sleeves to sort, lug, lift, and pack. It's better than any workout, believe me! As a team largely made up of retirees, we're often exhausted by the end of the day – but still, we return early Friday morning, ready to open our doors from 8:30 to noon and serve our community.

With time, our confidence and experience grew. Today, the foodbank proudly supports around 150 local families every week. While we still face the occasional challenge, our spirit never falters. We lift each other up, share plenty of laughs, and tackle every obstacle as a united team.



The foodbank has become more than just a place to receive food – it's a place of friendship, fun, and support. For many in our community, it is a lifeline. We receive generous donations from ESF+ (European Social Fund Plus), FoodCloud, and Country Crest, with each food basket valued at around €100. We've also built strong relationships with local businesses who now contribute treats and extras that help brighten our clients' days.

Fundraising has also become an important part of what we do. Thanks to the creativity and determination of our volunteers, we've held successful fundraising events that allowed us to buy a small Christmas gift for every client – a gesture that brought joy to many during the festive season.

I can honestly say that I am so proud to be a part of the Darndale Foodbank. It's a place where hard work meets heart, where community spirit thrives, and where every volunteer plays a crucial role. Our team of around 20 volunteers is simply extraordinary. I thank them all – not only for their dedication and hard work, but also for the friendships, the laughter, and the unwavering support they bring every week.

Together, we've proven that when people come together for a common cause, there's nothing they can't achieve.

# Congress 2027

In June 2027, the Oblate priests and brothers, and lay people engaged with the Oblates in their various missions across Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland, and Denmark, will come together for a Congress that will gather under the theme: "Pathways to New Mission."

This gathering, at the Dromantine Retreat Centre outside the city of Newry, in Northern Ireland will be preceded by two strands of reflection and synodal-style conversation. In one stream, Oblate priests and brothers from across the Province will gather in their local areas to reflect on questions and share their thoughts through the Conversations in the Spirit method. During this same time, there will be an open invitation to lay people from across the countries of the Anglo-Irish Province to come together, again in their local areas, in two sessions of reflection on named themes and questions and sharing this through the same method. The outcomes of these sessions will then be synthesised and brought to Congress.

The Congress is hugely significant in the life and mission of the Oblates at this time. We live in changed, and changing times. The missionary needs of 50 years ago do not necessarily match the missionary needs of today or tomorrow. All of this is happening at a time of fewer Oblate priests and brothers, and significantly increased lay participation in, and collaboration with, the Oblates in their life and mission. What are those needs; how can they be met? Are they in new places? Is it working with new people? There are many questions for discernment next June.

Of course, everyone would wish to be present in Dromantine next June but that won't be physically possible. About thirty-five Oblate priests and brothers will be joined by about sixty-five lay people from all over the Province, representing the many faces and expression of the Oblate mission today, and drawn from every corner of the Province.

The task now? Decide now that you will engage in your place. Ask about the lay reflection sessions next February and April. Decide to be there. Ensure that your voice is heard!

– T. Gerard Bennett  
Coordinator of Lay Participation



WISTASTON HALL OBLATE RETREAT  
AND SPIRITUALITY CENTRE

## Advent Retreat

11th-13th December

**The Biblical Characters of Advent – Led by the Centre Team**

An Advent retreat helps us to look forward to Christmas and a new year, but it's also an opportunity to look back and ponder on how the past year has been for us.

This retreat is an invitation to spend time in the presence of a loving God who is waiting to welcome us and nurture us.

**Donation:**  
Residential £195,  
Non residential £100

Includes Breakfast, Lunch and  
Dinner plus retreat activities

### For Information or Booking

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