Growing the Zambia Mission

The Missionary Oblates have created a large-scale agricultural operation at their House of Studies in Makeni, Zambia.

The centerpiece of this operation is a giant garden that includes 21,000 tomato plants and 10,000 heads of cabbage, along with smaller amounts of green peppers, potatoes, eggplant and onion. The Oblates also raise chickens, pigs and have plans to build a few fish ponds in the near future.

The farm provides food for the Oblates, their seminarians and for people in the community at reduced prices. The Oblates are making about $100 a day selling vegetables and about $50 a day selling eggs. This money is then reinvested into buying seeds, plants and animals for the farm.

The garden at Makeni is already being used as a model for other garden projects at Oblate missions in Zambia. A similar large-scale agricultural operation is being developed in Livingstone. In smaller missions, community gardens are being expanded to provide food for the Oblates and their neighbors.

To learn more about the Oblates’ farms in Zambia visit oblatesusa.org/farm.

Missionary Oblates Fulfilling Pope Francis’ Environmental Encyclical

The Missionary Oblates welcome and join with other Catholics and all people of goodwill in celebrating Pope Francis’ encyclical “Laudato Si – Praise be: On the care of the common home.” Pope Francis’ encyclical is an invitation to reflect on how to live simply and in solidarity with the earth, especially among its poorest and most vulnerable inhabitants.

Among virtually all faith groups is a universal call to be in the right relationship with the earth, to act as responsible stewards of the planet and to preserve its health and resources for future generations. The Missionary Oblates recognize that environmental change can exacerbate the suffering caused by extreme poverty and inequality which are at the root of so many existing social justice issues.

The environmental crisis facing our planet transcends politics, economics and science; it is a moral and ethical crisis. In issuing Laudato Si, the Holy Father is reminding us of our duty to restore our right relationship with the earth, which is one of harmony and respect for God’s creation.

Join Through the Web

To be even more environmentally friendly, the Missionary Oblates have set up the Our Common Home club in an electronic format. You can sign up for automatic donations and receive all subsequent correspondence through e-mail. Simply visit oblatesusa.org/ourcommonhome or check the box on the enclosed response form.

When you donate $10 to the Our Common Home club:

• You receive the Our Common Home Tote Bag.

• You receive the quarterly Our Common Home News, with stories about the work of Oblate missionaries around the world who are preserving the integrity of creation.

• You receive Oblate World, our award-winning magazine published three times a year that highlights Oblate ministries on six continents.

• You are remembered every day in a Mass at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows and the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome.

• Oblate priests and brothers in more than 60 countries will remember your special intentions in prayer every day.
Evolutionary Christianity

Father Norman Comtois, O.M.I. describes his ministry as “Evolutionary Christianity.” He leads discussions and retreats about eco-spirituality, integrating the natural world with the wisdom of religious traditions.

“We are experiencing a paradigm shift and moving into an age where we look at religion from different perspectives,” said Fr. Norman. “Part of this shift is awakening to the importance of the Integrity of Creation.”

As a leader in the eco-spirituality movement, Fr. Norman has been a valuable team member of the Oblates’ La Vista Ecological Learning Center in Godfrey, Illinois. La Vista offers programs and resources for living consciously within the Integrity of Creation. Part of the La Vista ministry is a community-supported organic garden located at the Oblate Novitiate.

“The Oblates have made it a priority to have a ministry based on the Integrity of Creation,” said Delegation Superior Fr. Derrick Warnakulasuriya, O.M.I. “It will greatly meet our domestic needs and help us to depend less on the utility company. In this endeavor, we are thankful to donors who have helped this project come true.”

To learn more about the Oblates’ La Vista Ecological Learning Center.

Pakistan Oblates Go Green

Three buildings used by the Oblates in Pakistan are being powered by the sun. Solar energy systems have been installed at the Oblate residence in Lahore, the Oblate Philosophate in Lahore, and the Oblate Juniorate in Multan.

Besides reducing electricity bills, the panels provide a steady supply of energy. Most parts of Pakistan suffer through energy shortages, and the Oblates were going without electricity from 8 to 14 hours a day. Now the Oblates and their students are able to carry out their ministries without interruption day and night.

The installation of solar panels is also in line with the desire of the Oblates in Pakistan to respect the environment.

“It is clean, green and environmentally friendly,” said Delegation Superior Fr. Derrick Warnakulasuriya, O.M.I. “It will greatly meet our domestic needs and help us to depend less on the utility company. In this endeavor, we are thankful to donors who have helped this project come true.”

To learn more about Oblate solar initiatives, visit oblatesusa.org/solar.

Greens of Guadalupe

An environmental awareness program that was started at an Oblate parish in Laredo, Texas is spreading across the state.

The Greens of Guadalupe program was created nearly ten years ago at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Laredo with a mission to protect, conserve and foster respect for the earth’s natural resources. The parish prides itself as a leader in promoting a healthy community environment.

“We work to educate and guide others, hoping to create and preserve a healthy environment for future generations,” said Berta “Bertie” Torres, chairperson of the Greens of Guadalupe.

An interactive presentation about protecting the environment was created by the Greens and has been presented to schools, parishes and community groups throughout the Diocese of Laredo. One of the key components of the program is to promote recycling.

In addition to the presentations, the Greens also take part in regular cleanup activities in the neighborhood. They were also leaders in efforts to get the local city council to ban plastic bags, which had been polluting the environment, particularly local waterways.

In 2013 the group was presented the Green Community Award by Keep Laredo Beautiful. The Greens were recognized for their work in recycling, community beautification and litter prevention.

To learn more about the Greens of Guadalupe, visit oblatesusa.org/greens.

Digging Wells in Bangladesh

The Missionary Oblates minister to people in some of the remote villages of Bangladesh. Fresh drinking water is uncommon in most of these locations. So the Oblates have dug several deep-tube wells for the people living in these missions.

“The wells are serving a great need. Now there is no longer a water crisis in these locations. It has given us a permanent solution,” said Fr. Subash Gomes, Bursar for the Bangladesh Delegation.

Residents in the area had been using pond water for everything. That water was usually contaminated with arsenic and iron, and needed to be boiled for at least 30 minutes to be safe for consumption.

At their Alk odom mission, the Oblates were unable to dig a well because of the rocky ground. So they built a self-contained pond to collect fresh rainwater. The clean water is now being used for drinking and cooking by about 500 people, including 200 children who reside at Oblate-run youth hostels.

To learn more about the Bangladesh mission, visit oblatesusa.org/wells.