

# JPIC REPORT



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

“Let us pray for a generous welcome of the victims of human trafficking, of enforced prostitution, and of violence.”

*Pope Francis  
February 2019 Prayer  
Intention*

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## From the Office

As we move through the first quarter of 2019 the people and events of 2018 are still very much a part of our reflection, prayers, and advocacy. The many victims of natural disasters and the thousands displaced by war and poverty are still searching for a safe haven, an opportunity to rebuild their lives and find even a small degree of comfort and stability for their families. The painful stories of the thousands of men, women and children that are trapped by the broken immigration and refugee system in the U.S. are a stark reminder to all of us about the great disparity that exists between the current operating system and the call of the Gospel that we welcome the stranger and comfort the afflicted.

We started the new year celebrating the *Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God* and marking the *World Day of Peace*. As Catholics, the 2019 message for the World Day of Peace invites us to journey towards the future with the Blessed Mother. That message also calls for every citizen to be politically responsible, especially those with a mandate to protect and govern and declares that the path to peace “consists in safeguarding the law and encouraging dialogue between the actors of society, between generations and between cultures... there is no peace without mutual trust.

Climate change stands at the top of the agenda for many in the faith community. Under the leadership of Pope Francis, institutions, communities, and individuals are entering a process of education, formation, and strategic planning to respond to this critical issue in numerous venues. A report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), released in the last quarter of 2018 did not offer good evaluations about what has been achieved thus far. This signals that we need to redouble our efforts. The impact of climate change on poor and vulnerable people around the world remains a top priority for faith communities. We will continue to

prioritize this in our education and advocacy especially with corporations. We are also delighted to have joined other Catholic institutions in signing the U.S. Catholic Climate Change Declaration, which reaffirms institutional commitment to climate change common goals outlined in the Paris Climate Agreement.

In responding to the growing opioid crisis in the United States, we are partnering with other faith leaders to join their efforts to address the pharmaceutical sector that has behaved irresponsibly in the spread of this addiction, while also calling on political leaders to provide the necessary resources for those who are addicted or in various stages of recovery. This pandemic is affecting people from all backgrounds and impacting numerous communities. We have joined a coalition of institutional investors in asking companies with retail pharmacies to effectively monitor the reputational and financial risks related to the opioid crisis.

In this issue, we share with you amazing stories of living out *Laudato Si* in today's world. There are updates from the Oblate Ecological Initiative in Godfrey, IL and an exciting article from Three Part Harmony, a farm in the city, whose largest site is based at the US Provincial residence, on how they are managing to harvest enough vegetables every week for over 170 shareholders. We also share with you on the OMI presence at the United Nations (Fr. LeBlanc, OMI); insights on why creation deserves better (Fr. Raymond Kirtz, OMI), and an update from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Fr. Tonio Lensa Lyane, OMI).

As we enter this year, we are also inviting you to join us to expand the circle of outreach, by making greater use of social media to shine the light and spirit of the Gospel on the challenging issues that we wrestle with in society. We pray that the journey for peace and justice in 2019 is one in which each one of us acts justly, loves tenderly and walks humbly with God.

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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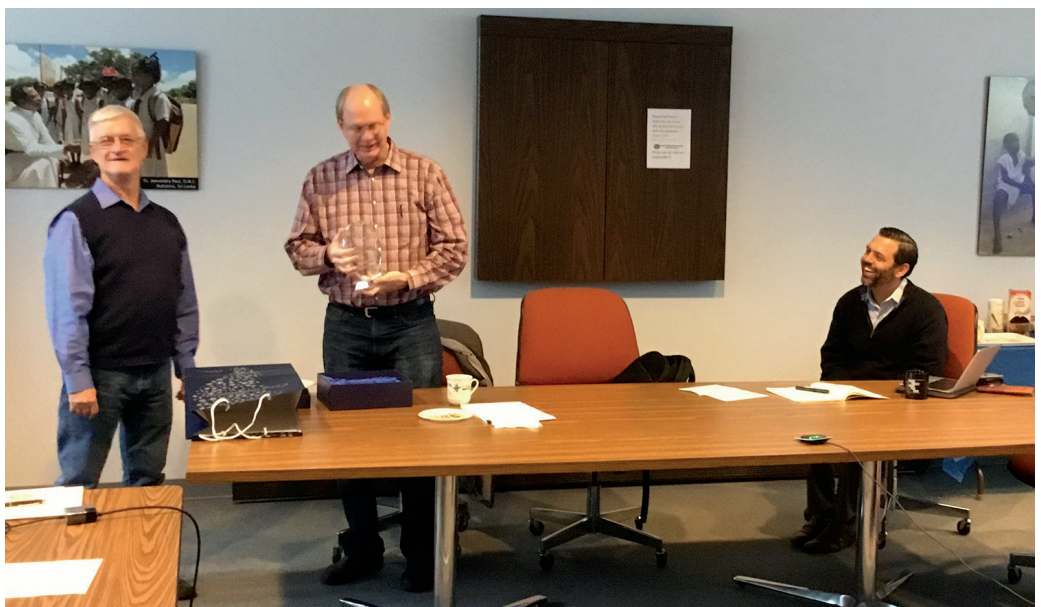
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## News & Happenings...

### JPIC Advisory Committee Honors Outgoing Chair



Last November staff and members of OMI JPIC's Advisory Committee gathered in Washington, DC for their annual fall meeting. The Committee meets twice a year to discuss recent work and progress on core issues. The group welcomed the new chair, Dr. Victor Carmona, Assistant Professor of theology and religious studies at the University of San Diego. On behalf of the Committee, Fr. Daniel LeBlanc, OMI, also presented a plaque to former chair of the committee Mr. Gary Huelsmann, Chief Executive Officer of Caritas Family Solutions, in appreciation of his many years of service.

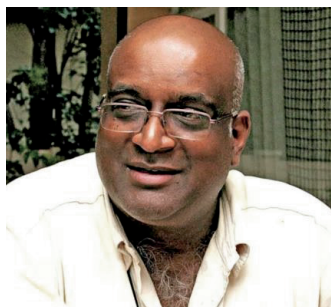


Fr. Daniel LeBlanc, OMI (left) makes a presentation to Gary Huelsmann (center) while Victor Carmona (right) looks on.



## News & Happenings...

### Oblate School of Theology (OST) Appoints New President



Fr. Sylvester David, OMI

Beginning August 2019 the Oblate School of Theology (OST) in San Antonio, TX will have a new president. After two years of dialogue between U.S. and South African Oblates, Fr. Sylvester David, OMI, current Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Durban, South Africa was appointed president. Fr. Sylvester will replace world-renowned and well-loved Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, who has led OST for the past thirteen years. Fr. Sylvester is from South Africa. He is also a former President of St. Joseph's Theological Institute in Cedara, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

He was born in Durban, South Africa in 1953. He studied psychology at University of South Africa (UNISA) and did a postgraduate specialization in Community Psychology at Creighton University in Nebraska, U.S.A. His initial priestly studies were at St. Joseph Theological Institute (SJTI). Later he studied scripture in Rome and holds a doctorate in Biblical Theology where he completed his thesis on the prologue in the Gospel of John.

Meanwhile, Fr. Rolheiser will remain at OST for now and continue to teach, write, and be available to Fr. Sylvester as a mentor.

### Mary O'Herron Becomes Honorary Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate (HOMI)



Mrs. Mary O'Herron poses with (L-R) Fr. Louis Studer, OMI, Fr. Bill O'Donnell, OMI, Fr. Antonio Ponce, OMI, Ms. O'Herron, Fr. Séamus Finn, OMI

Mrs. Mary O'Herron worked with Oblates for 33 years before retiring in 2016. On December 14, 2018 she became an Honorary Oblate of Mary Immaculate (HOMI) in an induction Mass presided over by Fr. Antonio Ponce, OMI. Fr. Séamus Finn, OMI, delivered the homily and her JPIC colleagues read the scripture. Attending were Oblate fathers, provincial administration staff and Mary's family and friends. The event took place in the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate chapel at the National Basilica, Washington, D.C. Lunch for all followed at the Oblate Residence.

Congratulations to Mary! Her work and commitment to Oblates will always be valued and remembered. And her dedication to the U.S. Province JPIC ministry is worthy of admiration.

### New Center and New Leadership for OMI Lacombe - Canada



(From L to R) Fr. Ken Forster, OMI; Bro. Leonardo Rego, OMI; Ms. Suzanne Doerge; Mr. Joe Gunn

2019 brought several new developments to OMI Lacombe, Canada. The JPIC (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation) office was replaced with "Centre Oblat - A Voice For Justice," a joint project of the three Canadian Oblate Provinces and St. Paul University. Tapped to serve as the new director is Mr. Joe Gunn, former Executive Director at Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ). Mr. Gunn takes over from Bro. Leonardo Rego, OMI, who will remain involved in an advisory capacity.

Earlier Fr. Kenneth Thorson, OMI, was appointed Provincial of the OMI Lacombe Province for a term of three years.

## Praying for Peace in Jolo, Philippines

**O**n January 27th Oblates and people around the world were divested to learn about bombings at the time of Sunday morning mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, in southern Philippines. Twenty-seven people were killed and 77 injured. Since the incident five suspects have been arrested.

In a statement on the incident, Fr. Charlie M. Inzon, Provincial Superior, OMI Province of the Philippines, explained: “the Mindanao region has been plagued with violence between Muslims and Christians for decades. Over the past decades, our people – Christians, Muslims, and Lumads – have been striving to work together to bring forth harmony, peace, and progress to this land. It is our hope that this tragic incident may not be a source of division therefore, but rather a strong reason to build up a community that is centered on the values of peace, dialogue, friendship, love, and solidarity that transcends religion, culture, or belief.”

Newly-installed Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Cotabato Fr. Angelito Rendon Lampon, OMI, who served the cathedral for 21 years prior to becoming archbishop was visibly grieved during an interview after his installation on January 30. “It’s a big emotional upheaval inside and yet my faith tells me to continue extending a hand of friendship, in inter-religious dialogue,” he said. “The Oblates and the Catholic Church would not be cowed by the violence,” he said.

OMI JPIC Director Fr. Séamus Finn, OMI, offered this reflection: “We know that the suffering of Catholics, people of goodwill, and our Oblate brothers in Jolo has been going on for far too long and they are in much in need of our solidarity and support. We are reminded, at these times in particular, how difficult and challenging the work of peacebuilding continues to be in local communities like Jolo.”

Oblates arrived in the Philippines in 1939 with a missionary presence on Jolo as one of their responsibilities. Today, the Jolo cathedral is still part of the Oblate presence. Oblates also run the Notre Dame universities in Mindanao where many Muslim and Christian Mindanaoans go for higher education. The Oblates have made great contributions not only in education, but also in Muslim-Christian interfaith peacebuilding dialogue. In keeping with the Oblate charism to work with the poor, many Oblates are in parishes administering the sacraments and accompanying the people in Basic Ecclesial Communities. Others are in the hills living with Manobos and Tirurays in Cotabato. There is a special emphasis to promote justice, peace and integrity of creation.

*Please join us in praying for peace for the people of Jolo and the larger region!*

### PRAYER FOR PEACE IN JOLO

Let there be PEACE in Jolo;  
 Let there be Peace  
 between Muslims and Christians;  
 Let there be Peace  
 between our two Communities;  
 God protects All believers from evildoers;  
 God leads all believers  
 to the path of righteousness;  
 God gives life not death to All believers;  
 God has willed our differences and diverse paths  
 so that we may love and serve him  
 and our neighbors;  
 And Most Compassionate and the All Merciful  
 teach us to love you and our neighbors.  
 Amen.



By FR. JUAN MERCADO, OMI

## Creation Deserves Better

*By: Fr. Raymond Kirtz, OMI*

**W**e have lived too long overly mindful of collecting a superabundance of physical benefits provided from the material bounty of the earth, but unmindful that the Creator has designed the earth to enrich human life in ways much more profound than all that. When we tend to a simple house plant or an outdoor garden, we usually experience ourselves doing something within prime nature, which is fine; but were we mindful of it our souls could be stimulated even more deeply than nature alone can do. We are involved in more than earthly agronomy, as full of little biological miracles as that is. We are involved in the wonder of ongoing Divine creation. That makes us enormously more productive than we usually think.

Along that line, let me explain some basic scientific data. The mineral ingredients of dirt or soil at one time existed in different forms far out in cosmic space gradually gathering together to form stars, galaxies, and eventually planets, including our earth.



**Fr. Raymond Kirtz, OMI**

Any kind of garden, house plant, or farm field growing from the soil of the earth literally forms these elements of the physical universe into a new life form on the face of the earth. Anything growing in this earthly soil gathers these elements together again in a new form and contributes to the colossal mass of the universe---no small thing! Am I looking for something of significance in order to experience a sense of fulfillment? There it is! Cosmic, creation fulfillment! Only something of such magnitude can fully satisfy the human longing for fulfilling productive work---partaking in the Creator's own creative work. But unfortunately to our detriment, it all goes on without any awareness on our part. Our loss.

Knowing all this may not make that garden or houseplant grow any better, but it could help us see into the awesome interconnections of which we are a part. We are designed to mesh in mind and body with this physical universe. We do not make those connections happen no matter our intellectual or educational attainments. This is reality beyond the scope of any science. This is all Creator originality. The human soul naturally craves these realities of creation.

Humankind is integral to these creation processes and is equipped to give expression to cosmic creativity in multitudes of settings, times, and situations. Unfortunately, once the many beneficial scientific enterprises began accumulating, we became distracted from reverencing the Creator who gifted

humankind with so many superlative gifts. Humankind became unmindful of the Divine instruction to tend the earth as a garden. Nonetheless, it will not serve the mission of faith to belittle or put down science. The advantages of science-enhanced enterprises and products are too many and are too indispensable to be denied.

Most folks quite likely recognize the promptings of an inner voice called conscience, but beyond that conscious conscience, a deeper creation-formed conscience is active in the human person even before we begin to form a personal conscience. That deep-down voice of conscience is the original God-given tendency toward the common good of all creation and especially the good of humankind.

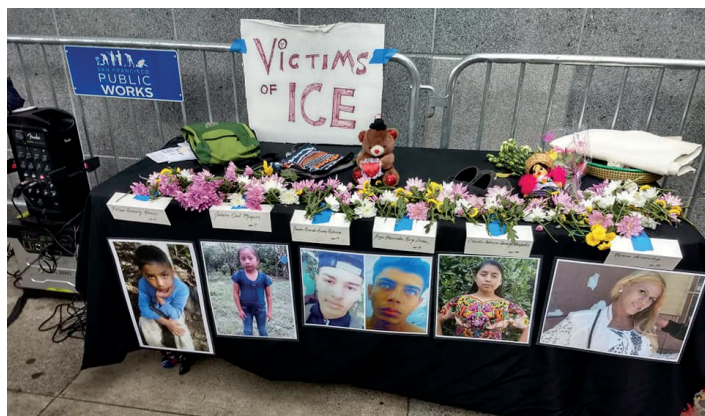
The Biblical Genesis story of creation described how the Creator inspired a conscience in humankind to care for the earth garden. The story includes how Adam and Eve (humankind) succumbed to a temptation to disregard the good of the garden for the sake of exclusive personal gratification and ruined (lost) the garden in the process. It is not difficult to recognize this ongoing sin and the harmful effects accumulating to the detriment of human life and to the earth garden itself.

*(Continued on p. 7)*



## A Culture of Welcome for Migrants & Refugees *Compiled by: George Kombe Ngolwe*

As Catholics and people of faith, we are encouraged to both pray and act in support of immigrants and refugees. Our faith calls us to protect and uphold the dignity of each human person and advocate for refugees and migrants. With immigration high on the nation's agenda in recent months, Oblates have actively extended support and expressed solidarity with immigrants in their local communities.



Fr. Scott Hill, OMI, recently joined an interfaith community who gathered for a vigil outside the San Francisco Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) Processing Center. The group gathered to remember children, teens, and transgenders who have either died in the custody of the U.S. Government or those who have undertaken the dangerous and arduous journey in the hope of having their asylum plea heard.



The Baja Mission of the U.S. Province of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, set up a camp for several hundred Central Americans in the migrant caravan, feeding and celebrating mass for them.

Below are educational resources and other links to help on your own journey to 'welcome the stranger.'

*"And who is my neighbor? He answered, 'The one who treated him with mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'" Luke 10: 29; 36-37*

### Supporting Migrants and Refugees

- Donate <https://support.crs.org/donate/central-american-families> or 1-877-HELP-CRS. Advocate with your lawmakers on behalf of migrants - <https://support.crs.org/act/share-journey-11>. Text "MIGRATION" to 30644. Join the *Share the Journey* global migration campaign <https://www.sharejourney.org/>

Source: Catholic Relief Services

### Helping Our Neighbor

- The Archdiocese's Office of Immigration Affairs invites you to please join its efforts to keep immigrant families together, by contributing at the new donation page accessible via <https://thenextamerica.org/>. With your generous support, 56 immigrant and refugee families who have been separated in the past will be able to stay together and receive the needed assistance through Catholic Charities' Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project in Los Angeles. Together we can make a difference in the lives of these families and show our support for our immigrant brothers and sisters.

Source: St. Ferdinand Catholic Church weekly bulletin.

### Respect the Life

- Catholic Charities has been helping migrants and refugees for more than 100 years. In addition to supporting compassionate immigration policies, Catholic Charities offers social and legal services include programs to help newly arrived with housing and financial assistance, employment options and training, language classes, counseling, and other local community support services.

Source: Catholic Charities <https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/find-help/>

### Support for Migrant families facing Separation

- Learn more about Family Separation at the border by visiting the Justice for Immigrants (JFI) Family Separation for backgrounders and educational materials. Learn more here: <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/what-we-are-working-on/immigrant-detention/family-separation/>

Source: USCCB Justice for Migrants

*(Continued on p. 7)*

## Culture of Welcome for Migrants and Refugees

(Continued from p. 6)

### Share the Journey

- Share the Journey is a worldwide campaign to raise awareness about the plight of immigrants and refugees. The campaign urges for openness to experiencing a culture of encounter to strengthen the relationships between migrants, refugees, and host communities. Catholic communities and organizations are encouraged to organize events, develop action guides, advocate, and pray in support of migrants and refugees.

**Source:** *Share the Journey:* <https://www.sharejourney.org/>

### Music and Refugees

- The Refugee Orchestra Project highlights the roles and gifts refugee and immigrant populations bring to host nations. Learn more here: <http://www.refugeeorchestraproject.org/> **Source:** *Refugee Orchestra Project.*

## Creation Deserves Better (Continued from p. 5)

In Old Testament times there was a song writer named King David who wrote a number of songs we today call Psalms, found in the Old Testament Book of Psalms. Those psalms were the singing rage of his time, maybe 400 or 500 years before the time of Jesus of Nazareth, kind of like Michael Jackson or the Beatles are today. Among them is Psalm number 104 that goes in part: “*You fixed the earth upon its foundations....with the oceans as with a garment you covered it...as the mountains rose the waters went down the valleys to the place you had fixed for them....*” That Psalm goes on for many lines and verses adeptly singing the praises of the earth. That Psalm and many more in that same vein undoubtedly raised the consciousness of the Hebrew people to revere the earth and its Creator. They are still sung and prayed today, but unfortunately too few people are aware of them.

We need to change our ways of living upon the earth, otherwise no amount of efforts or prayers are going to have much effect. God truly cannot help those who refuse to help themselves because the Creator leaves us free to either choose life and healing from sickness, or choose a path toward greater sickness or even premature death.

It's our choice, not the will of the Creator that we have so much to suffer. We need to pray for the wisdom to do the right thing.





## Faith Consistent Investing and Banks

By: Fr. Séamus Finn, OMI

Faith-based investors including the Missionary Oblates have engaged major U.S. banks for decades about their policies and practices and more importantly about their impact on local communities where they operate, as well as communities where the reach of their lending and investments are felt. These engagements have continued over the last ten years as investors sought to address the responsibility of the major banks for the near meltdown of the financial system in 2008 and their accountability for the devastation and suffering that millions have experienced in the aftermath.

One of the requests made to these institutions asked for reports on why existing business standards failed to protect them from embracing practices and behaviors that led to the meltdown; what changes were put in place as remedies for these failures and to prevent them from happening again; and finally how they planned to retrain employees and call them to higher standards of ethical behavior. In December 2018, Wells Fargo published their report that is now available online and described in the below press release issued on January 30th by Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR). Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America completed similar reports in 2011, 2014, and 2015 respectively.

Banks continue to play a critical role in enabling financial and commercial transactions, both small and very large, and they are at the heart of the stability and reliability of the global financial system. Investors and regulators must continue to supervise and monitor their compliance with the highest ethical standards to hold them accountable and to assure that they are fulfilling their social purpose.

*(Continued on p. 9)*

### Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) Press Release

*Investors Say, if Fully Operationalized, Wells Fargo's Business Standards Report Can Serve as a Road Map for Its Long Road Towards Redemption*

After nearly two years of intensive engagement with Wells Fargo during the development of its Business Standards Report, published in late January, shareholders are commending management for what they view as an important first step to bring much-needed clarity around past lapses and how they will be prevented going forward. The shareholders also caution that, while the report is a good beginning, the company still has much work to do to redeem its credibility and restore customer trust.

The Business Standards Report responded to a 2017 shareholder proposal filed by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia along with fellow members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility and other investors, requesting that the Board commission a comprehensive report available to shareholders on the root causes of the fraudulent activity and steps taken to improve risk management and control processes.

Investors say they believe the report is responsive to the resolution's requests, and that Wells Fargo's frequent consultation with investors and other stakeholders throughout its development and incorporation of investor's feedback is commendable, particularly in light of the company's admitted insularity in the past.

"This report has tremendous possibilities because it is a public acknowledgement by a major U.S. bank of its abuses of customers, team members, and investors," said Sr. Nora Nash who led the investor team helping to guide the development of the report. "As a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia and a member of ICCR, I see the nearly 2-year engagement to produce this report as a much-needed period of reckoning and introspection in order for ethical clarity."



Fr. Séamus Finn, OMI, (far right) and investor colleagues.

*(Continued on p. 10)*



## Faith Consistent investing and Banks

(Continued from p. 8)

*What is critical to move this document from aspiration to execution will be its implementation across the entire business, the retraining of WF team members, and accountability measures that are regularly tracking performance and are made public."*

The report invokes the company's well-publicized scandals and billion dollar fines, including the opening of millions of fraudulent accounts as a result of an aggressive sales culture. The investors say they hope the deep dive into the root causes of these scandals will fundamentally change the way the company views its responsibility to all its stakeholders including its employees, customers, and investors.

"Thousands of employees lost their jobs as a result of Wells Fargo's improper sales practices," said Brandon Rees of the AFL-CIO. "The business standards review shows Wells Fargo is willing to engage with stakeholders in dialogue toward positive change. We encourage the company to engage with its employees as stakeholders collectively and ensure that the company abides by its non-retaliation policies."

Investors stressed the importance of publicly disclosing the metrics Wells Fargo has developed to track progress in continuing to remediate harms beyond the publication of the report. One of the requests in the resolution was a report on assessment plans to evaluate the adequacy of changes instituted over time. The investors say these metrics will be important for stakeholders to monitor Wells Fargo's performance and assess whether the changes the company is making are truly having an impact.

Another request in the resolution was evidence that incentive systems are aligned with customers' best interests. To satisfy this request investors say they would like more information about how the bank intends to integrate employee conduct risk metrics into executive compensation and incentive plans.

"As an international investor, we value engagement collaboration with our U.S. colleagues to address environmental, social, and governance risks within our holdings," said Michelle de Cordova of NEI Investments. "The change we have seen thus far at Wells Fargo demonstrates the value of a shareholder proposal process supported by investors willing to commit to intensive dialogue. Now that the bank is moving into the next stage of the journey, we look forward to further disclosure tracking its progress in addressing the issues exposed by the review. Finding the right metrics is challenging, but important for rebuilding confidence."

The investors noted that there is still a need for justice and truth with regard to the company's handling of numerous homeowner loan modifications, inaccuracies in car insurance, and lines of credit to the gun industry. To align with the bank's stated goals of transparency and remediation, the investors also strongly recommended that Wells Fargo end its practice of forcing customers and employees into arbitration.

"Shareholders asked for a systemic review by a cross-functional team to assess the root causes and existing gaps that enabled concerning ethical lapses, and we recognize that Wells Fargo carried out a thorough process to develop the report," said Mary Beth Gallagher of the Tri-State Coalition for Responsible Investment. "Investors have grounded our conversations in the company's responsibility to respect human rights because we know people have been seriously harmed and are entitled to an effective remedy to make things right. It is now time for the company to undertake meaningful transformation of its culture, management systems, and governance to truly regain trust and fulfill its responsibilities to society. We believe this report is an important first step, and we will continue to encourage consultation with stakeholders and disclosure on the progress that is taking place."

Stakeholders who may have been harmed by Wells Fargo's business practices or who wish to provide feedback on this report are encouraged to reach out to and use the newly established Customer Remediation Center of Excellence, and for all employees to use the enhanced EthicsLine (<https://teamworks.wellsfargo.com/common/ReportEthicsConcerns.html>) on the company's website as necessary to seek remedy and help to make things right.

Wells Fargo's announcement of the Business Standards Report can be found on their website at this link: <https://newsroom.wf.com/>

Among the investor participants in the Wells Fargo engagement on Business Standards Report were: *Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, American Baptist Home Mission Society, Tri-State Coalition for Responsible Investment, Mercy Investment Services, Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, & Maryknoll Sisters.*

## Faith-based Investors Join Fight Against Opioids

*Compiled by: JPIC Staff*

**O**n average 142 people die each day from opioid-related causes. So severe is the epidemic in some places local governments have declared public health emergencies, launched prevention and treatment programs and sought partnerships with various groups including faith-based organizations.

Faith-based groups have historically forged partnerships with secular groups around shared causes, and with the rise in deaths from overdose, faith groups are partnering with secular groups to push for higher ethical standards and increased corporate responsibility. In 2017 the Investors for Opioid Accountability was formed to collectively tackle the crisis and today 47 faith-based (many members of the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility) and secular organizations make up this coalition. The coalition is led by Donna Meyer of Mercy Investment Services and Meredith Miller of United Auto Workers Retiree Medical Benefits Trust.

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate by way of its OIP Investment Trust is partnering with the opioid coalition in calling for pharmaceutical and related companies to take action to stem this national crisis. Backed up by more than \$2.2 trillion in total assets, the 47+ members of Investors for Opioid Accountability include faith-based organizations, state, city and labor funds, and asset managers.

In an October 2018 National Catholic Reporter (NCR) article on the coalition's activities, Fr. Séamus Finn, OMI, agrees that faith-based coalitions can play a positive advocacy role. He notes, "Corporations pay attention to faith-based groups simply because we have been around so long," noting that "since the 1960s when Vatican II produced the document *Gaudium et Spes*, the Catholic Church has been called to look outward, toward the world."

## Hope for Peace in the Congo (DRC)

*By: Fr. Tonio Lensa Lyane, OMI*

**T**he political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) leading up to the December 2018 general elections was very tense. This political situation made life gloomy and generated a lot of uncertainty among the people. In the end, opposition leader Felix Tshisekedi was sworn in as President in January 2019, making it the country's first peaceful transfer of power since independence in 1960. Taking over from his father Laurent Kabila, former President Joseph Kabila ruled the country for 26 years.



Congo has suffered in recent decades from war and violent conflicts, leaving millions of people dead or displaced. Missionary Oblates have been serving in the Congo for the past 75 years in parish ministry, youth education, care for the sick, prison ministry, and community development projects. As the country rebuilds itself from decades of conflict, Oblates in the Congo are working through youth education and community projects to create opportunities for a better life for war victims and displaced people. There is a new impetus in Oblate apostolate. The Oblate Congo province aims to expand missionary work in the country, improve living conditions, and adequately train its staff in many areas to face the current realities of our country including assisting war victims and displaced people.

Visit this website to read more about Oblates in the Congo: <http://www.oblatcongo.org/2/>





## The UN CORNER: *With Fr. Daniel LeBlanc, OMI*

**Y**ou may already know that Oblates work at the United Nations. Because we work with the poor in so many countries of the world and also because our constitutions and rules ask us to be where decisions that affect the lives of the poor are made, we have for many years been present in New York City where the UN is headquartered. To do this work we partner with many other Catholic religious men and women and with representatives of different faith-based organizations.

What can we do in an institution as big as the United Nations? I have represented the Oblates at the UN for a while now and the good news is I have seen countries make very good decisions. Many countries, for example, now allow indigenous peoples to exercise their God-given rights. Mining companies are also being held accountable for how they treat people in communities where they operate and how they impact the environment. The UN Mining Working Group, which I am a part of, along with many other groups negotiated long and hard for countries to agree on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that the global community aims to meet by the year 2030.

Goal 6 calls for “the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.” I’m sure you know potable water is an absolute necessity, especially for those who live under the most extreme conditions of poverty. Countries finally agreed on the last day of negotiations to include the right to potable water and sanitation as part of the sustainable development goals, so we hope that people who suffer from the lack of water, mostly because of climate change and extreme poverty, will have water at their disposal.

Of course many other good decisions are made by the countries at the United Nations, oftentimes because civil society pushes and prods them. There’s still a problem. We need all of you to get involved to know what decisions your country has made at the United Nations and how you can participate in energizing your government to do in your country what they committed to doing at the United Nations. If we want to make a better world we’re all going to have to do our part!

To watch a video of Fr. Daniel LeBlanc, OMI, speaking about his vocation, visit OMIUSAJPIC’s website: [www.omiusajpic.org](http://www.omiusajpic.org).

To learn more about Fr. Daniel’s partners on UN work, visit Vivat International’s website: [www.vivatinternational.org](http://www.vivatinternational.org).

## Fr. Daniel LeBlanc Visits Oblate Novices

**I**n February Fr. Daniel LeBlanc, OMI, visited current Oblate novices in Guatemala. The current novices are nationals from Guatemala, Colombia and Mexico. During his visit he discussed Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation; Oblate commitments in this regard; the revised and newly-published “OMI Companion in Mission;” partnership with VIVAT International; the social teaching of the Church; and his current United Nations work, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 70th Anniversary of Human Rights.

“The vocation to Oblate way of life is a gift from God. But it is through our prayers, the joy and generosity of our lives and our communities that we can hear this call and decide to respond.”

**OMI Vocation**



## La Vista Ecological Learning Center Outreach to Youth

By: Sr. Maxine Pohlman, SSND

Opportunities to connect with young adults in recent months have been rich experiences at La Vista and in St. Louis.

Early in October Sr. Maxine met with Seniors at Nerinx High School in St. Louis, MO for their environmental theology class. During the mutual sharing students learned how Oblates live implications of the encyclical *Laudato Si* at La Vista, and Sr. Maxine discovered how the students are aware and engaged in ecological actions and behaviors out of a faith perspective.

When asked, “What is your vision for our planet?” student answers were thoughtful and wide-ranging including: grocery stores with little or no processed food, restaurants that offer biodegradable dishes, and the hope that other schools would also offer environmental theology courses to connect care for our common home with faith. This class and their teacher have been invited to be presenters at the conference Our Sacred Earth: A Call to Action to be held in May 2019. This is the third conference on *Laudato Si* co-sponsored by the Ecological Consortium of which La Vista is a member.

Later in October students from an anthropology class at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, IL visited La Vista for a tour. As we made our way to La Vista Farm, the Nature Preserve, and the Pollinator Garden, I was impressed by the conversation which showed a love of Earth, the desire to be positive change agents, and an awareness of the needs of people and planet. Their teacher, a member of La Vista’s discussion course “A World of Health: Connecting People Place and Planet”, provided dinner which was an excellent example of a menu for a plant-based diet. Everyone enjoyed the delicious beans, rice, and potatoes and stimulating conversation.



Oblate novices, L to R: Mark Hernandez, Democracy Mudenda, and David Chisha

This year’s Oblate Novices are forging a strong connection with the Learning Center as we take a series of bioregional field trips to learn ecological principles as they intersect with Oblate actions promoting the integrity of Creation. In September we explored the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, creating the opportunity for them to become intimate with the region that holds them in their locality during their year at La Vista. We also stopped at the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center where we explored a “living roof”, a new concept for them and an exciting option for the built environment.

In October we visited Cahokia Mounds, the largest prehistoric Indian site north of Mexico. Atop the ceremonial mound we created a ritual, praying for all indigenous persons, and we learned how Oblates have served this population around the world for so many years.



Sister Maxine showing students a native bee nesting box

As we continue our field trips, we’ll be addressing the challenge put forth in the newly released OMI JPIC Companion in Mission text which states, “Living in right relationship among ourselves with all people, and with the whole of creation in a sustainable and reverent manner, is one of the biggest challenges we face today.” Grateful for the direction offered by this tool, our year together in formation provides a special educational and spiritual opportunity.

Read more about La Vista Ecological Center’s work at this website: <https://www.lavistaelc.org/>



## Three Part Harmony Farm (3PH) Ends 2018 on a High Note

By: Gail Taylor

All of the farmers in the mid-Atlantic (not to mention all farmers everywhere!) went through some serious trials and tribulations this year, and Three Part Harmony Farm was no exception. The overwhelming theme was extreme weather, which actually has become our new “normal.” Each year, the impact on the humans who have already irreversibly changed the climate is increasingly undeniable. As my 2 1/2 year old goddaughter would say, the earth has a boo-boo. I cannot bring myself to tell her that the Elsa band-aid is not going to work, and that she is going to inherit a big mess someday. To this date, not a single month this season has brought us what would be considered normal weather. The two most dramatic events occurred as book ends: at the beginning of the year, a late snowstorm came on the first day of spring! And towards the end of the season, heavy rainfall resulted in a very old, majestic oak tree being uprooted and it fell on our deer fence.

During a hard year, it's important to keep things in perspective. As a member of my church congregation (the late, great Sally Hanlon) always used to say, “It's all Gift.” As Three Part Harmony Farm experienced the challenging weather in a small microcosm on our tiny 2-acre farm, many farmers around here weren't so lucky to be able to accomplish what we did, because of the gifts it received from all of the people supporting it. We actually ended the season stronger than ever because of the strength of the community that has grown exponentially since the farm's founding.

This season for the first time, both part-time crew members returned. Jon and Cristina take on major responsibilities that lighten my load and increase the farm's capacity ten-fold. Jon is in charge of the CSA pick up at the Montessori school across the street. All of the kids love “farmer Jon”; when he went out of town to visit family this fall, one pre-K child cried while hanging on to his mom's leg when he realized that farmer Jon wasn't going to give him his apple that day. Poor Cristina, who was standing in for Jon! She took it in stride. For her part, Cristina is developing a business plan to start a flower farm someday. She's part of the Beginning Farmer Training Program, of which 3PH is currently the only training site for the program located in DC. Her concentration is on the cut-flowers, which I've always found challenging to keep up when the vegetables take so much time and energy. Next season, the flower bed along the street should finally be in full production for the entire season under Cristina's watch.



Cristina Flores, 3PH Farm (Photo courtesy of Tyler Grigsby)

In 2018, we doubled our CSA. Harvesting twice a week for five different locations (for a total of 170 shares) is quite a logistical feat. We work with almost 12 other farms to buy items we don't grow, which makes our CSA membership quite valuable. Our small urban farm is best suited to focus on greens, roots, herbs and flowers. It's a joy and a blessing to be able to work with other farmers who bring us eggs, cheese, honey, rice, micro-greens, winter squash, sweet potatoes, melons, and medicinal herbs. I applied for a USDA Value-Added Producer Grant to help fund the marketing piece for the multi-farm CSA. Because of a technicality, our application was denied in the first round so I have appealed and we are waiting to hear what the rural development officer decides.

We were not able to qualify for the USDA program that would fund a high tunnel at the farm because of the limited tenure. Instead, a good friend arranged to have the old greenhouse from Martha's Table moved to our farm, temporarily, until she finds a permanent home for it. To date, we have received \$775 in donations as well, that will go towards buying materials and renting a truck to move it.

The best asset the farm has is the community that supports it. It's impossible to summarize all of the things that get done by the many, many supporters throughout the year. My reliance on a few key folks is especially striking in the sleep deprived late season days. Each evening I pause and just think, “We wouldn't have made it without this person.” That is especially true for the workshares who take on a role that is crucial to the operation, and they carry out their responsibilities with love, dedication, and reliability. I think about Kimmi, the workshare that arrives every Thursday and packs 31 bags for two porch deliveries.

*(Continued on p. 14)*

## Three Part Harmony Farm (3PH) Update

*(Continued from p. 13)*

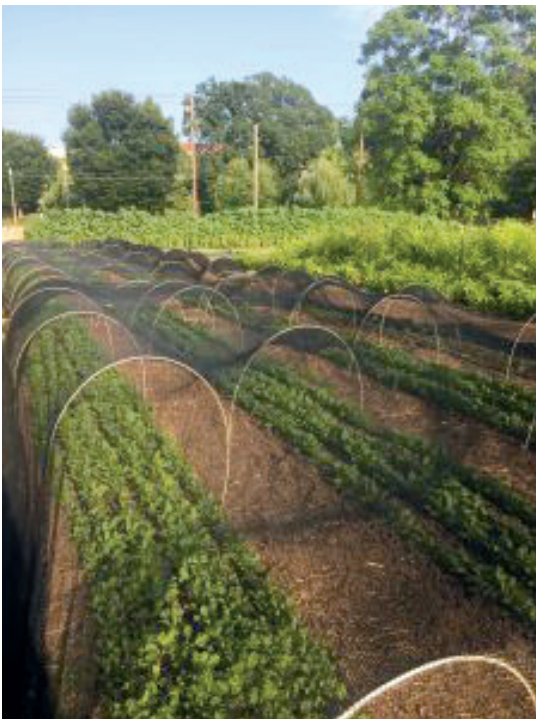
One time when Kimmi was sick, the van loading got totally mixed up and I lost half an hour counting and re-counting the bags when I made the deliveries. The next week I told everyone: “From now on, we do it Kimmi’s way every week no questions!” And I think about Erica, the workshare who pretty much single-handedly manages our biggest CSA pick up. She arrives half an hour early every week to set up, so she’s often following my written instructions so that everything is ready when I arrive. Sometimes she texts me in the car with questions, and it’s almost always because I forgot to write down complete instructions or, more likely, that my handwriting is so bad! And I’m grateful to the Catholic Workers, who pick up our donations every week. I am sad that I don’t get to see them as often as I would like, but what a blessing that they have made our walk-in cooler one of the stops on their busy Wednesdays, picking up food donations from various places that they distribute at their house each week and/or that Art uses to turn into the meal they serve every week near the White House.



I started a farm in DC because I wanted to have good food in my home, and to share that with my friends and neighbors. I also wanted to show that we can feed ourselves, and in a time when food security should be on everyone’s minds, it’s a great thing for people to see that there is a farm in the city that harvests every week for 170 shares. I wanted to be connected to the people who are nourished by the food I grow, and the community that comes to the farm every year to celebrate during the fall festival is representative of that. How wonderful to see kids brave enough to put leaves, flowers, even roots into their mouths straight from the plant!

More than any other year, the 2018 season - our seventh - is underscored by the cumulative effort of so many people who have toiled with me in the dirt until we can say that now, we are alive! and the soil is alive! As my dad always says, “now we’re off to the races!” I can’t wait to see what the next seven years will bring.

Keep up with Gail’s activities by visiting Three Part Harmony’s website: <http://threepartharmonyfarm.org/>





## Human Trafficking News Roundup

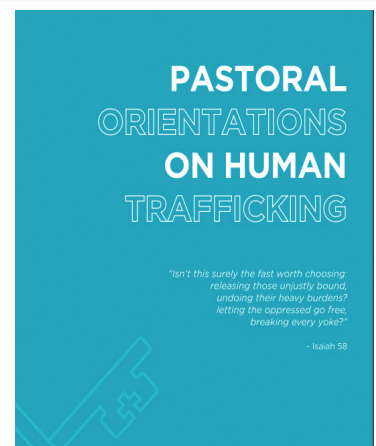
Compiled by: Rowena Gono

The new year began on an encouraging note with legislative wins for trafficking victims. Congress passed and the President signed important legislation bundled under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA). These 4 bills establish the federal framework for combatting human trafficking. They provide assistance and protections for victims and empower local law enforcement to combat the issue. TVPRA is reauthorized every 5 years. Here is a breakdown of the bills:

- The Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2018 (H.R. 2200) authorizes programs that educate children on the dangers of trafficking and funds anti-trafficking training for airport personnel.
- The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2017 (S. 1862) monitors how countries are working to eliminate human trafficking and authorizes the USAID to incorporate child and anti-trafficking protection into their development efforts.
- The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2017 (S.1312) addresses training on recognizing the signs of trafficking, victim services, and assessments of the prevalence of human trafficking in the United States. This bill also amends the Violence Against Women Act to increase accountability by the judicial system and includes a provision that discourages labor trafficking by stipulating that any contractor of goods or services must ensure that no worker pays fees to obtain a job.
- The Abolish Human Trafficking Act of 2017 (S.1311) sets forth a variety of measures to address the prevention of human trafficking and to assist trafficking victims.

## Vatican Issues Pastoral Guidelines to Help Fight Human Trafficking

The Migration and Refugees Section of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development has released a set of guidelines to help the Catholic community worldwide eradicate human trafficking. The publication, *Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking*, offers Catholic dioceses, parishes, religious congregations, schools and universities an in-depth reading and understanding of modern day slavery and serves as much needed encouragement for anti-trafficking ministries. The publications' points can be leveraged in homilies, education, and media. The resource is available in several languages and can be downloaded at the Vatican's website, Migrants & Refugees section: <https://migrants-refugees.va/trafficking-slavery/>



## Diocese of Orlando Human Trafficking Task Force 2019 Recipient of the Polaris Star Award

Congratulations to the Diocese of Orlando Human Trafficking Task Force, a member of the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking (CCOAH)! They are a 2019 recipient of the Polaris Star Award! This exceptional prize was presented to each and every member of the Task Force for their accomplishments in building the community's capacity to identify and report trafficking. Their outreach efforts engaged parishes, schools, hospitals, youth organizations, and businesses.

Learn more about the Diocese's direct response to the eradication of modern day slavery by visiting their website:

<https://www.orlandodiocese.org/ministries>



Archdiocese of Orlando Task Force members receive Polaris Star Award

## Resources

### *OMI JPIC Companion in Mission*



The booklet *OMI JPIC Companion in Mission* is now out in three languages! This is a helpful resource for our Oblate Units to discern and act out the mandate of our Oblate Constitution and Rules to “bear witness to God’s holiness and justice” (C 9) and to work for justice, peace, and integrity of creation as an “integral part of evangelization” (R 9a).

This is a project of the General Service of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (GS-JPIC). Limited hard copies were sent out to the Superiors of Units. From OMI World’s website, the booklet can be downloaded and printed according to the need of the Unit.

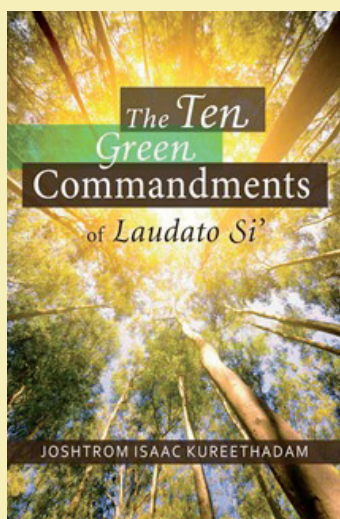
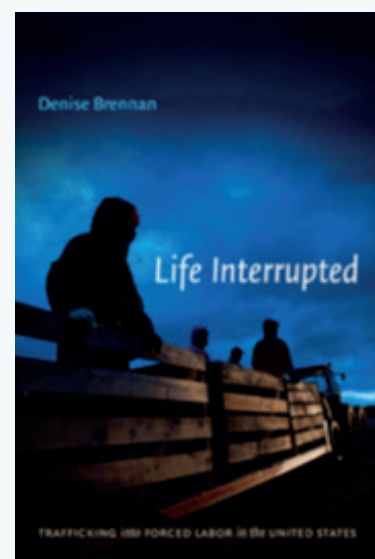
We welcome your feedback on how you have used this resource tool for animating the JPIC aspect of our Oblate mission in your Unit, as well as other suggestions to enhance the resource in the future. Please email us with feedback: [dlkomijpic@yahoo.com](mailto:dlkomijpic@yahoo.com)

Download the resource from OMI WORLD: <https://www.omiworld.org/resources/library/public-documents/>

### *Life Interrupted: Trafficking into Forced Labor in the United States* by Denise Brennan

*Life Interrupted* introduces us to survivors of human trafficking who are struggling to get by and make homes for themselves in the United States. Having spent nearly a decade following the lives of formerly trafficked men and women, Denise Brennan recounts in close detail their flight from their abusers and their courageous efforts to rebuild their lives. At once scholarly and accessible, her book links these firsthand accounts to global economic inequities and under-regulated and unprotected workplaces that routinely exploit migrant laborers in the United States. Brennan contends that today’s punitive immigration policies undermine efforts to fight trafficking. While many believe trafficking happens only in the sex trade, Brennan shows that across low-wage labor sectors—in fields, in factories, and on construction sites—widespread exploitation can lead to and conceal forced labor. *Life Interrupted* is a riveting account of life in and after trafficking and a forceful call for meaningful immigration and labor reform.

The book can be purchased from AMAZON: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).



### *The Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si'* by Joshtrom Kureethadam

The publication of *Laudato Si'*—a papal encyclical on a defining issue of our times—was a moment of great importance for Catholics and for the world. Now Fr. Joshtrom Kureethadam, one of the church’s top experts on the document, provides a thoughtful, passionate, and highly accessible commentary on its key ideas and themes. Faithfully attentive to the outline of the six chapters of the encyclical, Fr. Joshtrom has also insightfully arranged the book according to the see-judge-act methodology that is increasingly used in spirituality, moral theology, and the social sciences. Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam, a Catholic priest, serves on the staff of the Vatican’s recently created Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

The book can be purchased from Liturgical Press: [www.litpress.org](http://www.litpress.org)