

# JPIC Report



Enjoying the 1st harvest: (From left to right) Fr. Rey Amancio, OMI, Fr. Eduardo C. Vasquez, OMI & Rev. Joseph Nadua, OMI

## Project G.R.A.C.E. Feeds Community

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### POPE FRANCIS

“The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all.”

2015 Encyclical, Laudato Si'

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

Fr. Séamus Finn, OMI



In mid-July, 2021 the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic looks and feels different for each of us across the world. Here in the United States where there seems to be no shortage of different vaccinations available, the challenge is clearly to convince those who are skeptical about how it affects us to actually take the vaccine. It is amazing, amusing and distressing to take note of the different ways in which individuals and families are making this very important decision and at the same time to watch the different schemes and incentives that leaders and administrators are using to try to change peoples' minds.



Fr. Séamus harvests potatoes for day's supper

The stories that we hear from our colleagues across the world, the headlines in the news channels, and the reports on social media paint an entirely different picture of circumstances people are confronting. It is indeed a tale of two cities that world leaders face in the struggle to choose the best paths and the best plans for their respective populations. Some of these choices are strongly influenced by the kinds and amounts of resources available to address those already affected by the pandemic and to provide a safe environment for those who want to get back to work, school, or the practice of their professions. More than 18 months after the emergence of the virus we are reminded daily of our dependence on one another and the interdependence that we share with our common home and with a multitude of other species.

Provisionally, as we strive to find the path and the inspiration to sustain us through this journey, and just six years after the publication of the eco-encyclical *Laudato Sí*, Pope Francis urged all of us, especially all Catholic institutions and organizations, to develop appropriate action plans that would be implemented over the next seven years in order to apply the teachings of the encyclical in their communities. In a video message to launch the seven-year *Laudato Si* Action Platform, Pope Francis said, “Everything is interconnected and interdependent and our health is not separated from the health of the environment in which we live.”

“We need a new ecological approach,” he said, calling for an integral human ecology “that involves not only environmental questions but also mankind in his entirety” which is “capable of listening to the cry of the poor and of being leaven for a new society.” In our JPIC ministry and with the support and guidance of our JPIC committee and others, we have been searching for resources and stories to share with those who read our reports and/or visit our online platforms.

We have scanned the initiatives that our colleagues and collaborators in the field have been undertaking in recent months and years to embrace the call of Laudato Sí and in this report we want to share some of their creative and inspiring work. We trust that you will find these stories inspiring and will share them along with the stories of the policy and advocacy work that we undertake with corporations and governments. In return, we hope you will share with us any of the initiatives that have been taken in your communities. Reach out to us at this email address: [jplic@omiusa.org](mailto:jplic@omiusa.org).

Here in Washington, we have begun to enjoy the harvest from the Three Part Harmony (3PHF) garden at the back of our house: zucchinis, potatoes, greens, lettuce, kale, radishes and scallions abound. To crown such an early harvest, we have been visited in recent days by a little group of very well-nourished deer!!

Many dioceses and parish communities have established committees to coordinate responses to the encyclical at a local level. Numerous retreats, conferences and study groups have also been established to help deepen our understanding of the challenges we face and to support strategies and projects that have been created to help us all to care more responsibly for our common home. As we celebrate the 6th anniversary



of the encyclical Laudato Si in 2021, the OMI JPIC office will continue to share resources to deepen our understanding of Laudato Sí and to identify specific activities and actions that we can embrace and thereby live more sustainably.

Family of deer silently looks on

# NEWS & HAPPENINGS

## OST & OMI JPIC Co-sponsor 2021 Summer Institute: Racism as Soul Sickness

In collaboration with OMI JPIC, Oblate School of Theology (OST) presented the Summer Institute topic: *Racism as Soul Sickness*. As President Scott Woodward opened up the Summer Institute he shared why this discussion must be had. *“Our topic for the Summer Institute is an old wound, healed and reopened. It’s found in society, in the church, in all walks of life. Racism as soul sickness identifies racism for what it is.”* Event speakers were Rev. Dr. Bryan Massingale, Dr. Teresa Maya, CCVI, and Dr. KimOanh Nguyen-Lam.

Dr. Woodward encouraged participants telling them *“Sickness is disease and just bringing up the topic of racism frequently causes disease. It leads to an uncomfortableness. And it’s quite possible things over these next couple of days will have some feeling uneasy. Stay with it because we know as people of faith that the healing leads to new life.”*

### After the event participants shared their experience:

*“Each presenter gave critical information, informative ppt slides, personal history, soulful sharing, important challenges, critical steps of faith and actions to move forward in addressing Racism as Soul Sickness.”*

*“One of the most challenging themes I have ever attended and very appropriate for the present time. I am very grateful to have had this opportunity to hear such excellent speakers.”*

## OMI JPIC Joins Faith-based Coalition Urging Support of the Farm System Reform Act

In a July 2021 letter, faith-based denominations and organizations from a broad range of religious traditions expressed their support for the **Farm System Reform Act** and joint desire to “care righteously and justly for all of God’s creation.” **The Farm System Reform Act**, introduced in 2020 by Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Rep. Ro Khanna (CA-17), aims to remedy injustices throughout the U.S. Food System. Visit [https://omiusajpic.org/2021-farm-system-reform-act/\(opens in a new tab\)](https://omiusajpic.org/2021-farm-system-reform-act/(opens in a new tab)) to view the letter, a summary of the bill and list of signatories.

## OMI JPIC Meets Virtually with Oblate General Administration Officials

This past June, OMI JPIC staff met with Fr. Peter Stoll, OMI, General Councilor of Asia-Oceania and Fr. Jean-Hérick Jasmin, OMI, Director of the General Service for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (Rome). In both listening sessions participants discussed an overall view of the work and ways to collaborate in the future.

## OMI JPIC joins Fast for Life Vigil at Lutheran Church in Washington, DC





Fr. Eduardo Vasquez, Jr., OMI poses for a souvenir photo of the first harvest

# Filipino Oblates Launch 'Project Grace'

By **Fr. Eduardo C. Vasquez, Jr, OMI**

The acronym G.R.A.C.E stands for Garden Ready Always for Consumption of Everyone.

This is the name of the project initiated by the Oblates at the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace Parish in Caloocan City, in the Philippines, in response to food scarcity brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting lockdown.

It was on March 12, 2020, when the Philippine government announced to the public that the whole National Capital

Region would be placed on lockdown for at least 30 days to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. But this 30-day lockdown was extended for many months. This has led to the closure of many business establishments and loss of jobs for many Filipinos. As of July 2020, according to the news report of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 46% or 27.3 million Filipinos found themselves without a job during the pandemic. It was this context that gave birth to Project G.R.A.C.E.

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# Project G.R.A.C.E....contd.

Food availability in every home through container gardening is the main goal of the project.

In an urban setting the big challenge is the limited space and lack of availability of garden soil. Almost everything in Caloocan City is cemented.

To address this challenge, I made an appeal to people to start planting vegetables in their homes using recycled containers. I also called for donations of scrap containers that I could use for planting.

Many people from all walks of life immediately responded to my appeal. They brought many kinds of containers to the parish such as empty soft drinks bottle, egg trays, coffee containers, ice cream containers, old vehicle tires and everything that can be used for planting. One parishioner immediately donated packs of vegetable seeds to be distributed to people who were interested in gardening.

Some people also started to donate funds for the installation of a rainwater reservoir, solar equipment and the construction of a greenhouse in the church compound. Politicians, private citizens and other civic organizations also donated cash and aquaponic facilities. The support was indeed overwhelming!

Many people in their houses and in their villages also began to plant vegetables, and this snatched the attention of those in the media. Project G.R.A.C.E. became popular because of the media coverage made by both local and international media outfits.

Within six months, the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace became an urban organic farm model in Caloocan City. On August 5, 2020, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed by Caloocan Bishop Pablo Virgilio David & a representative of the National Secretary of the Department of Agriculture making the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace an official urban organic farm training center. The vegetables that can be found in the church compound are spinach, eggplants, okra, moringa, lettuce and other herbal plants. These vegetables are used to feed the hungry on the streets and offered to volunteers who help in the parish feeding program.



Fr. Rey Amancio, OMI prepares empty alcohol containers for vertical gardening

Farm animals such as goats, sheep, pigs, ducks, chickens and rabbits are now also being raised in the church compound to make people aware of the interconnectedness of God's creation. The whole compound of the church is now designed in a way that demonstrates a food ecosystem. The manure of the animals is used as organic fertilizers to vegetables and these vegetables are also used to feed humans and animals, too.

# Project G.R.A.C.E...contd.

These farm animals are raised in a 9X5-meter cage called Noah's Ark. Inside this cage, one can see the mural of the Biblical figure Noah and some animals. Outside the Ark, there is also a mural of mountains, trees, fields, rivers and rainbow. This mural is the work of a Filipina artist who lost her job in Vietnam because of the pandemic.

This combination of art and agriculture aims to give hope and attract more people to engage in urban farming. Every Sunday, the parish sells lettuce juice to parishioners as part of its income-generating project. This gives additional income to poor individuals who manage this project. In the near future, rabbit meat will also be available in the Shrine for sale and for the parish-feeding program. Watch project video: <https://bit.ly/2Wx5Wrl>.

With the untiring support of the people, Project G.R.A.C.E. will continue to grow and inspire people to produce their own food and to care for our common home. *This is Laudato Sí!*

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"WITH THE UNTIRING SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE, PROJECT G.R.A.C.E. WILL CONTINUE TO GROW AND INSPIRE PEOPLE TO PRODUCE THEIR OWN FOOD AND TO CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME. "

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## Private Sector Advocacy Engagement by George Kombe Ngolwe – Assoc. Dir/ JPIC Office

Today corporations are pledging transparency and taking action to combat climate change and other environmental, social, and governance issues. Missionary Oblates through the OIP Investment Trust and USP funds, as concerned shareholders, are seeking more concrete actions from companies. Missionary Oblates JPIC has prioritized the shareholder efforts to combat COVID-19 pandemic, advance racial equity and fight climate change. In the 2021 proxy season, Missionary Oblates JPIC support of OIP Investment Trust programs has been active with filing shareholder resolutions and proxy voting in advance of corporate annual meetings. In a show of commitment to integrity of creation and the global pandemic, our work has prioritized issues about access to COVID-19 vaccines and climate change within Oblate portfolios. In the 2021 proxy season our advocacy and proxy voting engaged many companies including Walmart, Amazon, Alphabet(Google), Abbot Laboratories and Eli Lilly.

### The issues addressed with companies included:

- Report on Lobbying Disclosures ( Climate Change):
  - Reduce Plastics Use
  - Create a COVID-19 Pandemic Workforce Advisory Council
  - Access to COVID-19 Products
  - Independent Board Chair
  - Lobbying Expenditures Disclosure
- Hourly Associate on Board of Directors
- Evaluate Company Whistleblower Policies and Practices
- Executive Pay–Incorporate Diversity and Sustainability Metrics
- Give Each Share an Equal Vote
- Report on Government-Mandated Content Removal Requests

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# Responsible Mining: A Call to Action

By Fr. Roberto Carrasco Rojas, OMI

Thanks to Laudato Si' we have begun not only to dream but to give concrete answers. Thanks to Laudato Si' we have started to articulate better our call to action as Church. Thanks to Laudato Si' we have begun to rescue the practice of synodality in the Church. As a Samaritan Church, we have a mission to complete. As missionary congregations, we have a responsibility to assume.

The obvious and most important question we should ask ourselves is: what threatens our common home, but given the context where we live, we should also ask what threatens the Pan-Amazonian region? These threats end up degrading not only the environment, but also the people and the entire social environment. Irresponsible mining represents one of the greatest threats in the entire Pan-Amazon region. When dealing with it, no government feels or pretends to be independent from it. Unfortunately, we have economies in the region that are based on the degradation of the territories and lives of the indigenous and coastal populations. The situation for these vulnerable populations is deteriorating with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recently a virtual event brought together laity and religious to dialogue and the theme chosen was "the Churches and the alternatives to economies of inequality." This activity was organized by the Churches and Mining Network together with the Latin American Confederation of Religious Men and Women (CLAR). The topics discussed continue to challenge us as believers of the Gospel, which places the poor at the center of Evangelization. We realize that inequities and injustices are increasing. The impoverishment of almost the totality of the continent's inhabitants and; the contamination of the waters (rivers, lakes, and streams) is appalling on a



continent blessed with so many natural resources and raw materials that end up in the hands of a few families.

*"In Guatemala, Marlin Mine uses 250,000 liters of water in one hour. This amount of water is equivalent to the amount of water that a peasant family in the area uses for 22 years. In Argentina, mothers lack access to clean water and bathe their children in water that is known to be poisoned with cyanide spilled during mining extraction by Barrick Gold mining. Their bodies have been poisoned, and extensions of their bodies amputated, wounded, or massacred. Incidents like these are experienced permanently in many territories of Latin America, where transnational companies put their interests and money above people, families, Mother Earth, and life. We concluded that mining is intimately linked to climate injustice and the deepening of an economy of inequalities."* These words were the witness of Daniela Andrade, a laywoman who is part of the mining divestment campaign.

Latin America is a region where its local leaders and environmental defenders continue to be murdered. Such was the case of a young Asháninka indigenous leader, Mario Marcos López Huanca. He was an ecological defender of

## Responsible Mining...contd.

the El Sira Communal Reserve and was shot in the head on Monday, May 28th, 2021 in Puerto Bermudez, Pasco region, Peru. He is the seventh environmental defender leader murdered since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Peru.

Activists believe that the extractivist economic model is threatening the life and integrity of people in the region. Latin America is a continent of inequality and the discarded (not to say marginalized). Unfortunately, Latin America is a continent where North American and European companies continue to accumulate large amounts of profits and many privileges.

*"They took the gold from our lands, now our water springs are polluted, our houses are cracked, and we have skin diseases. After all they did, the company is leaving and has no accountability. They have made good profits with what they took from San Miguel, Guatemala and returned to Canada. And we are left with the damage that has been done".* These

words were the witness of Crisanta López, leader of the Marlin Mine resistance in Guatemala, who shared at the event her deep pain and a summary of what mining has meant for her community in Guatemala.

What are those who have these kinds of investment thinking? Let us remember the commitment made at the Synod for the Pan-Amazon Region of 2019: "We assume and support the campaigns of disinvestment of extractive companies related to the socio-ecological damage of the Amazon" (*Synod of Bishops. Special Assembly for the Pan-Amazonian Region, Final Document, 70*). How, where, and by whom are decisions made concerning the exploitation and future of these territories?

Therefore we must ask, where are we as the Samaritan Church and as a missionary congregation, and how are we directing our analysis and advocacy? *"The campaign seeks a coherent and ethical action for the management of its investments,"* Daniela Andrade reminds us.

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## The Bowl at La Vista: Creating a Pollinator Habitat

By Sr. Maxine Pohlman, SSND



This black and white photo of the garden in the "bowl" at Immaculate Heart of Mary Novitiate in Godfrey, IL, was taken in the 1950s, before the biodiversity and climate crises became critical. Designed to please the human eye, it was a formal garden watered by an underground irrigation system. Many novices sweat their way through the summer tending this beauty until there were too few to support this effort. In the past seventy years as the climate warmed and insect habitats were lost, there has been a gradual shift in gardening's

purpose, toward choosing native plants in order to create habitats for pollinators like butterflies, bees, birds, beetles, bats, and moths. In 2014, La Vista Ecological Learning Center gave flesh to this shift, transforming land that had been mowed for many years into a pollinator garden, providing nectar and habitat for a wide variety of creatures throughout the growing season. Since we chose native plants, ones that evolved naturally in this area, no watering is necessary. And because they are natives, the flowers serve insects that also evolved here, like the

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# Peace Garden Dedicated at Sacred Heart Parish

By the [GreenTeam@SacredHeart](#)

The day was January 6th, the Feast of the Epiphany, when many of us were waiting for the kings/magi to bring us gifts and to unveil what is to be. It was also the day of the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol building. Also, on this date a large box arrived at our door containing a small tree with green leaves that came from the seed of a survivor tree “Habakujumoku” from the City of Hiroshima, Japan.

For the past two years in early August, Sacred Heart Church has celebrated a Mass of Hope and Reconciliation in conjunction with Pax Christi North California to memorialize the dropping of atomic bombs on the peoples of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

We were asked if we would like a “Peace Tree,” so we considered where would it grow, how could it be present to the community, and how would it reflect Sacred Heart.



Survivor tree

Our parish is located on the corner of two busy streets in the city of Oakland California. We had already begun turning a dry bit of land that was littered with “needles” and trash into a “Laudato Si Garden” filled with roses, lavender, and dry-stone rivers and lakes. We also have electric outlets along the church wall where many unhoused folks charge their phones. The key was allowing them to continue to use the outlets in the garden, so we could spend time with them and let them know they are welcome and safe. Consequently, they would protect and keep the garden clean.

That left a triangular yard to the side of the church building which would allow for an intimate garden to develop. First, we put up a sign saying: “Coming Soon – Peace Garden@ Sacred Heart – With Hiroshima Peace Tree.” Here in Oakland/Berkeley getting wider community support is key! We could see this as stage one of evangelization or basic neighborliness since both are

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## Advocacy Engagement...contd.

- Report on Alignment of Racial Justice Goals and Starting Wages
- Gender and Racial Pay Equity
- Civil Rights, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Audit
- Diverse Candidate Search Policy
- Disclosure on Plans and Policies Aligned with Achieving Racial Equality
- Assess Company Diversity and Inclusion Efforts
- Hate Speech Products

- Facial Recognition Technology
- Human/Civil Rights Expert on Board

Other engagements focused on sending letters to corporations with specific asks to act on, participating in company annual general meetings and supporting initiatives within shareholder coalitions.

More information at <https://omiusajpic.org/issues/investing/>

## Bowl at La Vista...contd.

endangered monarch butterfly which travels through our area each year. The severity of our double crises, climate and biodiversity, compels us to change our idea of what is beautiful as well as our purpose for gardening. Perfectly manicured and watered lawns as well as formal gardens with a majority of exotic plant species are extravagances we can no longer afford. We are now urgently called to tend the well-being of all species. Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, would concur: *Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change... A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us ...* (202) *How are you able to join in the challenge to change course?*



## Peace Garden...contd.

related. The land was dry as concrete, and so it took picks and shovels to prepare the soil. Parishioners would give some money here and there, and “Peace Roses and Lilies” were purchased and planted. Then a mound, in the shape of Japan formed where the peace tree would be planted. Wooden poles were set into concrete and Tibetan Prayer Flags were installed along with ropes on which prayers could be attached, so that all the community could share in this prayer.

The “Peace Garden” was dedicated during Earth Month (April) and drew an animated crowd of parishioners as well as folks from the surrounding neighborhood. Takashi Tanemori, a friend, Baptist minister, and a survivor of the

bombing of Hiroshima, shared his experience of finding hope in a single blade of grass. A peace pole will soon be added to the garden accompanied by a plaque with the message, “May Peace Prevail on Earth” in English along with plaques in different languages, donated by different linguistic communities of the parish and wider community.

In the weeks since the peace garden was dedicated people have been observed visiting the site, some sitting alone or talking with friends. Others have been seen sipping cups of warm beverages from the coffee house across the street. A good number simply pause for a brief respite in the midst of this busy urban thoroughfare at this intersection of beauty and peace.



Peace Garden flourishing on triangular plot next to the church



Parishioners gathered for dedication of Peace Garden

## Black Ankle Vineyards: Sustainable, Diverse & Inclusive

By **Mary O'Herron**, OMI JPIC Committee member & former JPIC staff

Recently I participated in a Zoom meeting with the JPIC Committee while I was visiting Black Ankle Vineyards, which is owned and operated by my daughter Sarah and her husband, Ed Boyce. The vineyard is near Mt. Airy, Maryland. Thinking that the other participants in the meeting might enjoy learning something about it, I took my phone outside to 'show-and-tell' about the place. Later, the JPIC Office staff suggested that the vineyard might be appropriate for this issue of the newsletter, which focuses on Pope Francis' Laudato Si.

Some background: Ed and Sarah's appreciation of wine evolved into wondering if they might be able to make fine wine in Maryland, where they live. About 20 years ago, their extensive research persuaded them that they could indeed produce fine wines locally, and so they undertook a search to find land that would suit their goals. In May of 2002, they found and purchased what they were looking for: a farm near Mount Airy with lovely rolling hills and soil that is not very fertile and rather rocky – ideal soil for growing wine grapes! They planted vines on 22 acres in 2003 and 2004, harvesting grapes and making wine for the first time in 2006. In the fall of 2008 they began sales in their newly-built tasting room. From the beginning, they were determined to:

- honor their land and take good care of it,
- honor and appreciate their employees and
- ensure that the needed structures would be ecologically exemplary, would function efficiently, and would be both attractive and enjoyable. It seems clear that they are succeeding!

### **Honor the land take very good care of it.**

Sarah and Ed believe that taking care of the soil and all of the life in it is key to developing healthy vines that will yield the best fruit possible. To that end, they have planted varieties of vines that are likely to thrive in our climate; they allow “volunteer” plants to grow between the rows of grapes; they fertilize only with natural compost made for them by a neighbor; they weed by hand, using no herbicides, and they prune the vines carefully, to ensure good balance of fruit and leaves, as well as sun and wind exposure. Their vineyard crew hand-tends the vines, visiting each one at least eight times per season.

### **Honor and appreciate their employees**

Vineyard Crew: Most of their vineyard crew comes from Acopinalco del Peñón, a town of about 3,000 people in the State of Tlaxcala, Mexico. One man and his family, now American citizens, live in a house at the vineyard; the others come for eight months a year, leaving families and friends back home. Many of those men have been coming for years. One crew member lost a hand in an accident in Mexico during an off-season; he was welcomed back to work at the vineyard despite his diminished capacity. Sarah and Ed realize that much of the success of their vineyard stems from the enthusiasm and efficiency that the crew bring to the work of making their award-winning wines; the crew members seem appreciative of their work environment.



Vine row at Black Ankle Vineyards, Mt. Airy, MD

## Black Ankle Vineyards...contd.

In a demonstration of mutual regard, the vineyard crew and the management team have launched an initiative they have named Rescate (Rescue) 2021 to construct a sports & recreational center in the crew's hometown. This recreational center is intended to create an opportunity for the community, especially at-risk youth, to enjoy sports in a safe and healthy way.

Sarah and Ed also try to support their vineyard crew as individuals and embrace their interests and priorities outside of work. Occasionally free English lessons have been offered. And Black Ankle has sponsored a soccer team made up primarily of vineyard employees, for whom soccer is a first love. Each year when they organize the new field crew they like to joke that the first qualification of any potential worker is the ability to play whatever position on the soccer team needs to be filled!

### **Tasting Room Crew, and Customers**

Recently, Sarah and Ed reviewed the composition of their sales employees and decided to try to broaden the range of helpers. To this end, they have hired more people of color as well as people with disabilities, believing both that everyone has something to offer, and that customers are likely to feel welcome when they see employees who look like them.

Additionally, they wanted to make sure that a diverse mix of people feel welcome and relaxed at Black Ankle Vineyards. To that end, they have assigned an employee to try to develop ways to make that happen.

Their policy of using what the property has to offer led to their using straw from the farm for straw-bale construction of the tasting room and subsequent buildings. Such construction makes the walls very thick and reduces or eliminates the need

for heating or air conditioning. Like the straw, the wooden beams for their buildings come from the property, as does the special clay mixture used to cover the walls. The counter tops are made from grape stems, seeds and skins set in a clear resin creating an attractive, practical work area. Part of the roof of the building is planted with succulents and other parts hold solar panels, both contributing to energy efficiency.

In addition, the placement of the buildings helps save energy. The tasting room has a glass door made much like an overhead garage door that lets in sun in the winter and can open to fresh air as wanted. The door opens to an outside seating area. The door is positioned so as to let in maximum sun in winter, but less in summer. Part of the building is cut into the side of a hill, which also lets in the earth's naturally stable temperature, helping to moderate room temperature. In summer, the outdoor areas are covered by "sails" that protect customers from too much sun. Another fun and unusual thing about Black Ankle is the tasting room's furniture, especially the tables which are made by local craftsmen and the vineyard crew, often using wood from trees on the property. Each table top is unique and attractive because the wood has been worked so as to display the natural grains, holes, knots, and shapes, so there are very few square corners!

The farm has an 1800s era barn with hand-hewn beams, some of which are made of American chestnut. Sarah and Ed have restored the historic barn, and it is now used to store wine and equipment. But there is modernity at the vineyard as well. There are several parking spaces equipped to re-charge electric cars! The vineyard helps support local businesses by selling cheeses, bread and other items for customers to enjoy with their wines, most of which are produced by local businesses and farms.

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## UN Corner: Oblates @ the UN in Times of Pandemic by Fr. Daniel LeBlanc, OMI, Missionary Oblates & Vivat International NGO Representative at the United Nations



I was already in New York when the COVID-19 pandemic was declared. I am still in New York, but like most everyone else here and around the world, have not physically accessed the United Nations (UN) building since March 2020. Notwithstanding, the situations all of us at the UN are concerned about, from the Secretary General to all levels of staff, ambassadors, and their staffs, and all of us who interact with the UN, yes, even all elements of civil society and faith-based organizations, have continued from wherever we found ourselves at the time movement was restricted. Zoom, Microsoft Teams and other on-line tools have become the new way to interact. And we do. It is a different way which has had positives and negatives, and the media is full of commentaries on these.

The last in-person conference I was able to participate in was the annual Conference on Social Development in February, 2020, a historic conference for reasons beyond the upcoming pandemic. The central theme of the conference was “Affordable Housing and Social Protection Systems for All to Address Homelessness.” All can easily identify how important this theme is for a very large part of the world’s population. Affordable Housing for everyone who does not own a home remains a constant problem, and even when owned outright, a home continues to demand attention with many ongoing costs.. Social Protection Systems are so important that it is difficult to think of what all these words mean and include. Social protections are not afforded to people everywhere in the world, or even when available, varies greatly in different countries. In some places these protections do not extend to the most vulnerable who live in extreme poverty. Social protection consists of policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets, diminishing people's

exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to manage economic and social risks, such as unemployment, exclusion, sickness, disability, and old age. There are of course, many other elements to consider when wanting to reduce poverty and vulnerabilities.

Since February, 2020, we have continued with the major UN conferences, attending online. Some of these include the *Conference on the Status of Women*, the *Forum on Financing for Development*, the *Development Cooperation Forum*, the *Forum on Indigenous Issues*, and *Agenda 2030 with the High-Level Political Forum* where the movement towards achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals is evaluated and where more than 40 countries present their Voluntary National Review to the United Nations. This year’s High-Level Political Forum was held online from July 6th to 15th. As we Oblates (see <https://omiusajpic.org/ministries/united-nations/>), with Vivat International (see <https://vivatinternational.org>), and NGOs (composed of 12 religious congregations of women and men) continue our efforts in favour of our members and all of the people we work with around the world, both in New York and in Geneva, we do our best to respond to the many, many efforts already being made by sisters, brothers, religious priests and lay collaborators in the Church, along with other faith groups. We also collaborate with local, provincial or state, national and regional governments according to the reality the people they work with and accompany face. Some themes that have been central to our recent efforts include Social Development, Sustainable Development, Climate Change, Indigenous Peoples, the Amazon and Congo Basin regions, Migration, Human Rights (see <https://www.OHCHR.org>), Trafficking in Persons, Education, Health, the Homeless, and so much more.

## Black Ankle Vineyards... contd.

Where did the name Black Ankle come from? Well, for one thing, it's on Black Ankle Road. That name may be due to the fact that the road had remained a dirt and mud track long after nearby roads had been paved, causing those walking on it to get muddy feet. In addition, some lore has it that an old Native American pathway called the Black Ankle Trail passed through the area.

For Sarah and Ed, “the name Black Ankle Vineyards is a reminder of the generations of traditional winegrowers who have come before us, and it's our way of expressing our appreciation for all they have taught us about how wines should be made.”



Husband & wife team Sarah O'Herron & Ed Boyce



Black Ankle Vineyards crew

If you would like to learn more about this place, or better yet, taste some of what it has to offer, take a look at their website: [www.blackankle.com](http://www.blackankle.com) or for locals, head out for a visit! Personally, whenever I am at Black Ankle, I feel rejuvenated and grateful to be in such a wonderful atmosphere. Years ago, when Sarah and Ed were thinking about what they might do in life to earn a living and use their gifts, among other things, they thought seriously about starting an amusement park for whole families to enjoy – not just kids or kids-at-heart. They thought that they abandoned that idea, but perhaps not, because families are patrons at Black Ankle, and there are plenty of things for all to enjoy!

## Suggested Resources

### New Eco-living brochures (English/Spanish) from OMI JPIC

Small changes go a long way in the quest to live more sustainably. You can start with a handful of changes in your everyday life. To help you on this journey, we have created two resources with manageable tips to act on and guidance for adding eco-friendly products in your daily life.

Our new brochures are available in English and Spanish and can be downloaded from our website by visiting this link: <http://omiusajpic.org/2021-eco-living-tips/>

### Choosing Earth Project

Inspiring and informative, the Choosing Earth Project includes a range of helpful resources for groups and individuals that include a documentary, book to download, study guides, events, courses, and more. The project's goal is to deepen an understanding of the immense challenges facing humanity, along with creative opportunities for transformation. Explore their website <http://www.choosingearth.org> to access these excellent resources.



# Every Child Matters!

By Fr. Ali Nnaemeka OMI

Since every child matters  
Let's come together  
Saying never again  
Eradicating every prejudice  
Putting an end to all systemic racism  
For it's the indigenous people's time  
Let's as allies listen to these nations  
A tale of how we all let them down  
*(Extract from Fr. Ali's poem inspired by the  
discovery of remains of First Nations children  
buried near the Kamloops Residential School in  
Canada). Visit this link to read the complete  
poem: full: <https://bit.ly/3BLbbne>  
— #Alisonomi2021*



## UPCOMING

ICCR at 50 – Keeping the Faith – A celebration in honor of ICCR and the shareholder advocacy movement it inspired. More information at <https://www.iccr.org/>

Season of Creation – from 1 September through 4 October, unites thousands of Christians on six continents for a time of restoration and hope. More information at <https://seasonofcreation.org/>

World Day of Migrants and Refugees – September 26 – More information at <https://migrants-refugees.va/world-day-of-migrants-refugees/>

### WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!

Your generosity helps support this publication and other missionary initiatives, please consider donating.

**For more information:  
OMIUSAJPIC.ORG**

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