Christmas 2020

Dear Friends,

Well, here we are – Christmas in the year of COVID-19. Can we travel? Will we be able to gather with our family? How can I shop for gifts that I cannot see or touch? Will the post office deliver my packages on time? Will we even be able to worship in Church if there are too many people? … Really?

This seems to be the theme of many conversations at this time. Certainly it is important to celebrate as a community, but aren’t we missing something more important?

Jesus is coming regardless of what the government restrictions will be on December 24. As a matter of fact, I think the situation in Bethlehem was quite similar to our situation today. For whatever reason, Mary and Joseph were denied the comfort of being with their relatives. They were forced to “stay at home” with animals.

As much as I love adorable little donkeys and cows with big, liquid eyes, I think the stable was probably not the sweet smelling, clean home that we find in our Christmas crèches of today. Fortunately, the shepherds dared to break the quarantine and came to worship the Christ Child, but that would have been minutes or possibly a few hour’s respite from the seclusion. The whole world should have come to worship their God!

Maybe that is a hint for this Advent/Christmas season, namely, not to leave Jesus alone but to find extra time to spend in Advent longing, keeping Mary company as she both “nests” in preparation for the coming of the baby and adores the God under her heart, or to “waste” time sitting by the crib during the Christmas season.

The quiet and aloneness urge us to pay attention to the God who is always knocking at the door of our hearts. Even we, though consecrated, can be distracted and filled with noise inside and out. God speaks the language of silence and he wants us to hear how much he is longing to spend Christmas with us, every day.

Come, Lord Jesus, my heart is open and awake. I don’t want to miss you.

Merry Christmas and blessings for the coming New Year.

Marcia Vinje
For this issue’s Featured Secular Institute Founder, Claudette Cyr was asked to share a few thoughts about her founder. She became a member of the institute four years after its foundation, personally invited by the founder at a very young age to become a member and provided an education. “Otherwise I probably would have finished high school, be married, and worked in the factory. I’m so grateful and privileged to have known him personally and worked in the same complex of his office. I also translated his biographies which spans from birth to priesthood (1st book). The second book is about his missionary work in West Canada up until the foundation of the Oblates. These two books are presently awaiting editing.”

Reverend Father Louis-Marie Parent, OMI
Founder of the Secular Institute
Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and
Secular Institute Voluntas Dei

Father Parent was born in Bellechasse, Province of Quebec, Canada, and at the age of three he lost his father suddenly, leaving his mother to care for three children, the only survivors of a family of nine. The babies were what they used to call blue babies. The surviving children struggled with this condition and nearly died several times. Father Parent was no exception. An aunt performed CPR on Father as he was near death. She said, “Little Louis, if you survive you will become a priest.” His mother, a former teacher who had to struggle to care for her children, instilled in them the sense of responsibility and charity towards others. At a very young age, he felt called to become a priest. He was an avid sportsman and that meant everything to him. He loved to play various sports. School was a side thing for him. In order to become a priest he had to receive extensive education. Attending Mass every day made him particularly apt to feel the vocation call.

As a young man he finally decided to attempt application at a few religious seminaries to be accepted. But the sports kept calling and he would go back home. Finally he made an attempt with the Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate. It was noon time that day when Father Victor LeLievre sent him to the chapel to pray, telling him that he would come back to see him. Father Parent was there all afternoon and was getting a little restless. Finally Father LeLievre showed up and knelt beside him. He opened the Bible asking him to read the selected verses. Then they both went to the front of the church and continued to pray. In the end, Father LeLievre stated that he indeed had a vocation.

He entered the seminary. He had a very hard time to keep his attention on his studies as well as on his health, which was precarious. He was often sick and hospitalized. Finally, a proud mother witnessed her son’s ordination to the priesthood in 1937.

Father Parent asked to be sent as a missionary to West Canada. The doctors and his superiors said he was too sick to go there: “If you travel there you will die on the way.
Take time to rest and we will see.” When Bishop Ubald Langlois, OMI of Grouard, Alberta, was in the East and would be traveling by car to the West, he offered to bring Father in his car and promised to take care of him. The bishop intended to have Father Parent work as his secretary in his vicariate and in this way allow him to take it easy.

On the trip, Father Parent was not well but managed to tug along. On the way the two would often be engaged in prayer. Deep in prayer, Father Parent asked the Blessed Mother to heal him and give him the health to work as a missionary. From that day on, he gained strength and felt much better.

After some time, he was allowed to work as a missionary colonizer of West Canada. Traveling from the West to the East by train he was able to recruit families to settle in the West. At the same time he would preach retreats, meeting various women interested in religious life.

As he ministered from one mission to another he would purposely travel on foot for miles in harsh conditions, even through a blizzard, with a Blessed Mother statue in one hand and his Oblate Cross in the other, praying all the way to save souls. On one trip during a blizzard he was walking with his knapsack on his back. He could no longer see the road ahead so he decided to stop and get in his knapsack on top of a haystack. All night he could hear the sounds of pigs. In the morning to his surprise, the pigs were inside the haystack and nearby was a homestead where he could have asked to spend the night.

While in the West, he founded a cloistered community “The Missionary Recluses of Jesus and Mary,” in 1943. While providing a lot of his time to their formation and drawing up the rule and Constitutions, he continued his work in the parish and traveling from one mission to another.

At the right is pictured the first house where the Recluses lived, called the “Shack.” Extremely primitive in its construction, there was no running water or bathrooms. Father Parent was known to sacrifice whatever he could. The sisters also were living with bare necessity. The goal of Father Parent was to have the sisters pray 24 hours a day in front of the Blessed Sacrament for the priest missionaries in the West. He felt the priests needed this in order to better serve the population.

Father Parent was very passionate to bring Christ to those harsh woodmen who left the Church a long time ago. At times he was faced with a shotgun or thrown out on the street. He would get up boldly and return to the home via a window, determined to get this man to convert. In the end these harsh men called for him when they were on their death bed, and he heard their confessions before they died.

In 1944 his superior Father Henri Routhier told him that he saw for the vicariate, a group of young women dedicated to working for the Church among the people. These young women would remain in the world, pronounce vows, and be recognized by the Church. For Father Parent it was very important to be obedient to his superiors as he respected their wishes. With this information he prayed about it and kept it in his heart for an inspiration on how this could be realized.

In 1947 came the encyclical *Provida Mater Ecclesia*. Father Parent recognized Father Henri Routhier’s words about this type of life three years before. Father Parent started to study this encyclical from Pope Pius XII in depth, trying to understand all the elements of the document. He spent a lot of time discussing it with his confreres and other bishops.

Meanwhile, he continued to give retreats and tried to speak with many young women interested in religious life. He gave numerous vocation discernment programs. If the young women wanted religious life he would guide them to various communities but if the young women were hesitant to religious life he would keep their names and addresses in a book as possibilities for a type of secular vocation.
One of the retreats he preached was given to nurses at the school in Edmundston, New Brunswick, Canada. By now he had a few women in mind for the foundation. While at one of these retreats, he received a phone call from the Most Reverend Mgr. Romero Gagnon, Bishop of Edmundston. He wanted to speak with him. The bishop revealed to him that the hospital in Grand Falls, N.B., was falling in disrepair and was closing. He asked Father Parent if he could help. Father Parent saw this as an invitation to start a group to work at this hospital so that the people in the area would not have to travel so far for proper health care.

Bishop Romero Gagnon was very happy to give this a try and he drew up the necessary legal papers to accept the group. This was the very beginnings of the OMMI Institute. July 2nd of 1952 was the date set for the foundation.

Preparation began immediately for the opening of the hospital. The Oblates lived in the small house next to the hospital which was previously a chicken coop. They removed the cages and painted it over for their quarters. The project was not without roadblocks. For instance, the laundry machine broke. These machines come from the United States. It would take time to order and receive them. Father Parent contacted the Sisters Hospitalieres de Saint Joseph for their help. They offered their laundry room to wash the hospital linen and clothing while waiting for the machines to arrive. The sisters were of great help in areas such as financial consulting and organizing financial books. The sisters also offered a house for the Oblates to attend their college for various courses of study.

As the days went by, Father Parent spent a lot of time traveling to preach retreats. At that time many Oblate Fathers gave retreats to discern vocations. Consequently many vocations were directed toward the Oblates. Numbers of new recruits grew rapidly.

Pictured is the first group of Oblates making a retreat in July of 1952.

Meanwhile a spirituality of the Oblates was slowly coming to reality. While Father went around giving retreats to many religious, he noticed that so many religious were ill at a very young age. Also, that at times, he heard many complaints and much criticism while talking with them. He examined his own conscience and took a resolution to try to maintain a presence of God constantly, and to avoid criticism and complaints. If he did that he would become of service and be available to others in facto becoming an element of peace. For years he adopted this spirituality and thus it became a second nature to him.

When it was time to define the spirituality of the Oblates he used to speak of his resolution when he would give them a conference or in chatting with Oblates. He mentioned the five attitudes of life. After such a conference one Oblate asked him what is this, “the 5 attitudes?” Father Parent realized he had never introduced this to them. So it became the 5-5-5’s. Five spiritual exercises, five attitudes of life:

Presence of God every hour, absence of destructive criticism, absence of destructive complaint, to accept all tasks by the legitimate authority, and to be a peacemaker.

The third five is a practice of making at least five conscious acts of charity every day. All through his life he was very passionate in speaking about the second five: The Attitudes of Life.

This is essentially the very beginning of the Institute. Father Parent responded to the demand for personnel in
teaching, nursing, office work, and rectories, as missionaries were sent to wherever a request was made, mainly by Oblate Fathers. *Wherever Christ has His rights* was direction for the founder. *The Charity of Christ through Mary* was Father Parent’s motto. Now the Oblates try to live by this motto as well.

He visited the Oblates very often wherever they were planted. He even composed songs on his routes dedicating them to various Oblates of the time. Quickly the Oblates surrounded the piano and we sang our hearts out.

A name of the Virgin was agreed upon by the first 50 Oblates on the day of the first vows. At night we had the night prayer reciting this Marian litany, to which we responded, “I love you.” Conference and retreats were recorded when he gave them and the tapes circulated from one house to the other.

One last note: One day in the 60’s he traveled purposely by bus to California to meet with the Hippies of the time. On the way, as usual, he would chat with fellow passengers and sometimes converted some or he brought some lost souls back to the Church. He mingled with the hippies to study their way of life and to see what makes them who they are.

*As stated on the back cover of the second book by his secretary Fernande St Onge:*

“*Father Louis-Marie Parent is known for his audacious personality. His methods of evangelization, his daring, and even his ministry often crossed the framework established at that time. Do not look for him at the office or at the Rectory. The Rectory appears rather as an address of reference.*

*He is a man who wants to remain in the shadow of the will of God at all cost, like St. Paul, whether it is in fatigue, exhaustion, contradictions, travels... He does not necessarily wait for the faithful in the conventional places; he makes of himself an itinerant minister. You will see him at times on foot, at times on a horse, on a motorbike, hitchhiking, driving a car, or traveling by train. In his pastoral action, no milieu is excluded: on the street, in private homes, in a store, in the field, at the hospital, on the train...*

*The word of an authority is for him the expression of the will of God. Even if it gives him vertigo, making him dizzy at times, he would go straight ahead to accomplish what is asked.*”

Towards the future

Lord,
I say thank you
For the night and day
For the dryness and enlightenments
For the discomfort and health.

With your affection you mark my route,
I know where I am going, I feel you pulling me
And I allow myself loved by you.
You draw me towards the will of the Father,

By pouring in me your own abandonment.
I know that I will die.
Death, is a door that opens upon me.
Death, is your arms’ embrace that encompasses me in your forgiveness.
Death, is the soft voice of Mary that penetrates me from the bottom of my heart of love,
of your Divine Spirit.
Death, is your embrace,
Your look of kindness,
The softness of your heart,
The realization of your promises,

The joy of the beatitudes,
The end of a mission of enlightened misery,
Sustained, accomplished thanks to your love,
And to the gift of your life. Amen.

-Prayer by Father Louis-Marie Parent, OMI
Our typical time for commitments in our Institute is May 1st, since this is the anniversary of our foundation. However, since we were unable to gather during that period because of COVID, we postponed our ceremony until November 13th this year. The ceremony was small and simple, beautiful and filled with hope. Not all our members could join us, and the guest list was short, but being together was still a great gift.

Along with the Institute of the Apostolic Oblates, our Founder, Bishop Giaquinta, established another secular institute and an ecclesial association: the Apostolic Sodales (diocesan priests) and the Social Animators (lay men), respectively. All three branches form together the Pro Sanctity Family, working to bring about a world of saints and of brothers and sisters. We make and renew our commitments together at our annual Mass.

This year as we gathered together for this renewal, we also welcomed a woman who began her journey to become a Cooperative, that is, an associate member in our Institute. Her name is Hope DeLuca, and she had been waiting patiently but with great anticipation since May to become an Aspirant Cooperative.

Our Cooperatives are married women who, after a period of formation, take promises of availability and apostolate. They are called to work alongside the Oblates to build a world of saints and of brothers and sisters. Within this mission they have a focus on family spirituality, being dedicated first of all to their own family’s holiness and from there being available to whatever else the Lord invites them to do for the holiness of others and of society.

During our commitment ceremonies we have the privilege of using various “signs” of our dedication. Being a secular institute, these do not mark us when we go into the world, but they help us enter more deeply into our consecration (or commitment, in the case of the Cooperatives). In the photos you can see the gown and veils of the Oblates, and the Holy Family medals of the Cooperatives.

A particular grace for me during this ceremony was that I was processing in wearing a long veil for the first time. For our ceremony last year, I entered with the short veil of a temporarily professed Oblate and then received my long veil during the Mass when I made my perpetual vows. Thus, I was rejoicing in a special way that I was an Oblate forever as I processed in!

Please join me in thanking the Lord for Hope’s “yes” to begin her journey of formation, and asking the Lord to help me and each of us live our vocation fully, for his glory and the sanctification of the world.
The Company of St. Ursula recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary in the USA. On November 25, 2000, Kathleen Hallinan and Mary-Cabrini Durkin initiated this new group of the original secular institute (St. Angela Merici, 1535). [https://companyofstursula.org/who-we-are](https://companyofstursula.org/who-we-are)

The COVID-era Zoom celebration included Réjeanne and Thérèse, the francophone leaders of the Company of St. Ursula of Canada, with which the American group is affiliated. As Marie Chantal Mukuluku says, “It was like Zoom didn’t make a fence between us.” Her French/English translation demolished any potential linguistic fence.

The founding pair joined the Company of Canada and, through it, the worldwide Federation of Companies on every continent. Mary-Cabrini now serves on the Federation’s Council. Kathleen died in 2008, after an avalanche of illnesses.

The Company’s “herstory,” so dubbed by Rachael, involved a PowerPoint photo tour that showed how “ancestry is still active in our lives,” says Marie Chantal.

It also included the women who have joined in these years and the current candidate. Each one told the story of her vocation. Rachael, the newest member, “found it remarkable and an inspiration to my faith to hear how God worked in their hearts and minds to bring each of them into the Company today. The fact that my life too has entered into this herstory is another testimony of God’s goodness, mercy, and care. He is indeed the Good Shepherd.”

Readers may recall Liliane Dozois, a member of the USA group, who served a term as treasurer of USCSI.

Let them have Jesus Christ for their only treasure, for there also will be love.

– Angela Merici
**News Briefs**

Do people read our website? How does the word get out about secular institute members? Here is an answer received on our website “contact us” form that we’d like to share with all our readers:

**Update from Sue Larkin, principal officer SIM:**

**Virtual Retreat:** The Secular Institute of Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ also held a virtual retreat June 10-14, 2020. It was our first venture into a retreat on Zoom and included a memorial service for our deceased Missionaries, step-ups for those in formation, and also the definitive profession of Kelly McEntee who lives in Melbourne, Australia. Our members were very happy to be able to pray and reflect together.

**Rosary during the Pandemic:** Beginning on March 18th, 2020, the Secular Institute of Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ prayed the rosary on Zoom every Wednesday and this still continues. The members are grateful to be able to be together electronically and pray for our many needs and the needs of the Church.

**Deceased Missionaries:**

On January 21, 2020, the Secular Institute of Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ were saddened to lose one of their members, Angela Egbikuadje, who died after a lengthy battle with cancer. Angela served faithfully on the Zonal Council as head of the vocation promotion initiative, producing videos and ads to be featured in diocesan newspapers around the country. On the Central Council Angela served on the Commission for Aspirants and Newly Professed of the Council, along with her work with missionaries in South America, Malawi, Congo, and other places.

On June 12, 2020 we lost another Missionary: Frances Weems. Fran served in the U.S. army as a photographer and then went on to work for a number of years in the U.S. Department of the Army. She was known for and dedicated to playing the guitar at each of the retreats she attended.

May they rest in peace.

Thanks again for all sharing in the *Mountaineer* and I hope to see you sooner rather than later. God bless, Sue

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Subject: Just to say "THANKS"  (dated Nov. 30, 2020, taken from USCSI Website)

Quite coincidentally I found your newsletter of Summer 2020 and read the words of nurse Doreen Rowtie. As a community nurse I realize what an extraordinary task she has/had on her shoulders and hereby wish to send encouragement and gratitude for her devotion. It is beyond human strength to work like this and I will pray for her physical and inner strength to maintain health and stay inspired. No need to add anything else but: Gosh, what a clear example of the Trinity's presence.... Grace grace grace...

With joyful greetings from the Netherlands,  
Elisabeth Versluis

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✉️ USCSI National Meeting is scheduled for September 24 - 26, 2021, at Marytown, Illinois. Mark your calendars now. We will keep you posted. We need you there!

✉️ Making donations to USCSI – if you can, please send your donations (make checks to “USCSI”) to Deacon Paul Lang, 26 Settler Court, Tinton Falls, NJ 07753 . We are grateful for your support!
“Nothing so strong as gentleness, Nothing so gentle as real strength.”
-St Francis de Sales

Updates from USCSI Vocation Work:
Kathy and others have been working persistently to put all the member institutes of our US Conference into the social media limelight. She needs our help so we don’t have to resort to stock photos. In the Advent/Christmas Spirit please consider doing one or more:

1 – Send a short “Selfie Video” about your vocation decision which can be shared on a visual platform and possible up-and-coming USCSI YouTube. Short and sweet example: “Hi, Jane/John Smith, Secular Institute of ---------, Nashville. God Bless you!” Then email it to desalessecular@gmail.com by December 31, 2020.

2 – Create a 3-minute “A day in the life of a secular institute member.” Share a typical day in your life so others can understand how this vocation is lived in action.
And email it to desalessecular@gmail.com by December 31, 2020.

3 – Offer to share your vocation story or an event you find grace-filled or compelling for those in discernment. Email Kathy and then we could schedule you between February 4-7, 2021, to present live via our digital platform. Check out Seek 2021 at seek.focus.org

USCSI Mission Statement:
- The USCSI shares in the mission of Jesus Christ in serving its member institutes by providing education, resources, and support for member institutes.
- The USCSI is an organization of member institutes committed to making known, understood, and appreciated the call to consecrated secularity in the Catholic Church.
- USCSI collaborates with other groups to present consecrated secularity as a viable option in today’s Church.

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Please share joys & blessings from your institute for our Spring Mountaineer.
Email jessica@schsrsmary.org by February 17, 2021.
Prayer to the MOTHER OF GOD

O most holy Virgin and Mother of God, Madonna della Strada!

You are the Mother of Christ and closest to His most Sacred Heart.

According to His will, we joyfully recommend

ourselves to your Immaculate Heart,

And confidently consecrate our Institute to you.

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O Maria, Madonna della Strada, guide our Institute,

Commend all our concerns to your Divine Son,

And strengthen us with your blessing. Amen.

-Founder Father Carl Dinkhauser, S.J.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year of 2021 to all of you and your loved ones!

We are grateful for our working together and place our plans and vocations for our Institutes into the safe keeping of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Marcia, Fr George, Jessica, Dcn Paul, and Claudette