



# OST NEWS

Summer 2009 Volume 12 - No. 3



OBLATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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Cover Photo: Oblate scholastics Emmanuel Mulenga, Kennedy Katongo, and Webert Merilan celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Oblates in Zambia on April 28.

# OST NEWS

Summer 2009

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Oblate School of Theology, founded and sponsored by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, is a Catholic graduate and professional school which provides education for the church's mission and ministry in the world.

The institution prepares persons for pastoral ministry through academic study and supervised practice. Through degree and certificate programs the School strives to educate and form candidates for priestly ministry as well as lay ministries. The School offers opportunities for professional continuing education and personal spiritual renewal to those serving in church and society.

Oblate School of Theology models and fosters collaboration in ministry. It accomplishes its mission in cooperation with formation communities and other ecclesial and societal institutions.

The pastoral orientation of the School requires practical and reflective engagement with the multi-cultural, global reality of church and society. Drawing upon Oblate School of Theology's location and historical dedication to the Mexican-American presence in the Southwest, the learning, teaching, and research of the School pay particular attention to the diverse and rich Hispanic reality of the Americas.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Oblate School of Theology Clears a Critical High-jump Bar

The past months have been a very critical time for Oblate School of Theology. As you know, the school is accredited both by the *Southern Association of Schools (SACS)* and the *Association of Theological Schools (ATS)*. Every ten years we need to renew that accreditation, and the process is not an automatic one. The school is rigorously scrutinized in every aspect of its operations, academic and administrative. We were up for re-accreditation this year.

Two years ago, under the leadership of our academic vice-president, Sr. Elaine Brothers, OSF, and our designated liaison for this process, Dr. Scott Woodward, we began preparing for the visit of a re-accreditation team from both of our accrediting agencies. It was a mammoth task, involving hundreds of pages of documents showing that we were in compliance with their standards and the development of a *Quality Enhancement Plan* meant to demonstrate how we are proactively planning to improve our academic programs.

All of this culminated in an onsite visit in March by a large team representing both the *Southern Association of Schools* and the *Association of Theological Schools*. We were understandably tense and anxious. It is not an overstatement to say that our very future depended upon the result of that visit. Our viability as a school demanded a positive result.

As we had expected, the visitation was very challenging and the team did scrutinize every aspect of our academic programs and our administrative structures. But they were also wonderfully collegial, positive in their intent, and very helpful in their recommendations. The atmosphere could not have been better – and neither could have been the result. *They recommended that we be re-accredited for the next ten years.* Beyond that critical re-affirmation, they gave us very positive feedback on their impressions of Oblate School of Theology. We celebrated that with a school gathering at which champagne was served!

The process, of course, is not finished. Whenever visitation teams recommend re-accreditation, they always do so along with a series of recommendations regarding issues that they want to see addressed. That list is often quite long, and we were pleased that we received only four such recommendations, all of which we feel we can adequately address within the next year. We could not have hoped for a more positive result. The school now can move ahead with renewed confidence to continue the major new initiatives we have started.

What are those initiatives?

- To continue developing programs in spirituality at every level, including eventually offering a Ph.D. degree in Spirituality.

- To continue our outreach in Continuing Education, both as a way of offering our resources to the community and as a major means of recruiting students to our degree programs.
- To continue with our \$30 million capital and endowment campaign.
- To develop a *Quality Enhancement Plan* that will work very deliberately at trying to achieve a higher level of integration within our students who are in our Masters of Divinity Program.

In my welcome address to the accrediting team, I freely admitted our struggle areas:

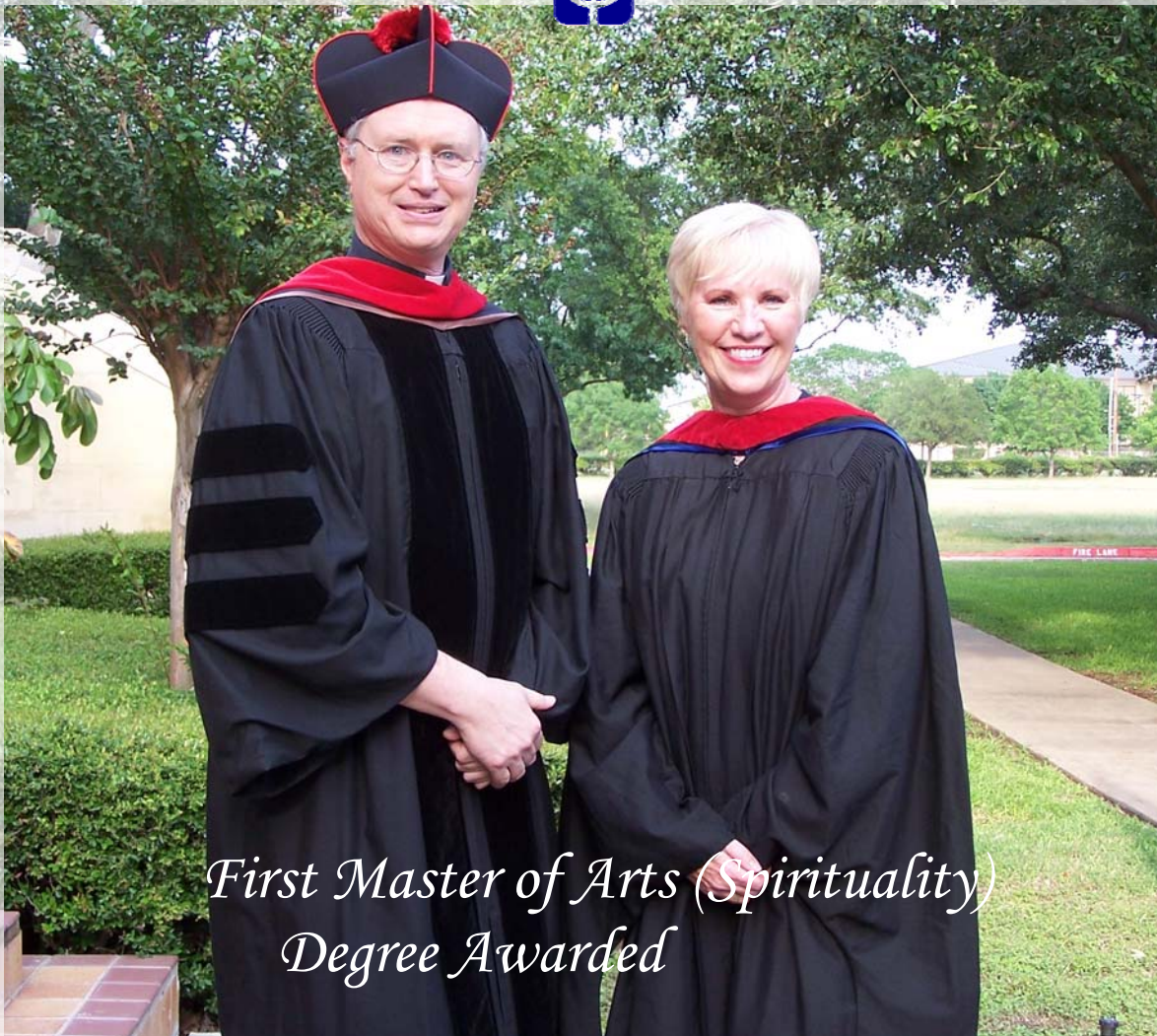
*In the area of finance:* The struggle to retain and grow our present programs, levels of service, and faculty and staff salaries in light of the present economic recession.

*In the area of academics:* The struggle to move our ethos from that of being mostly a teaching institution to being one that also does research and publishing, especially in the light of our intent to develop a Ph.D. program.

*In the area of administration:* The struggle to be more vigilant and systematic in the area of assessment. Up to now, our ethos has been very much that of a small school; as problems arose, people would simply walk into the appropriate office and make their complaints, and the school would adjust accordingly. We are now at the stage where we need to develop professional structures to replace the ad hoc modality that has worked well up to now.

However, those growing edges notwithstanding, there was adequate reason for the champagne celebration. The school was judged to be healthy: Our academic programs are solid, our graduates are healthy and do us proud, full-time equivalent enrollment in our degree programs is within the top 10 for such schools in the USA, our Continuing Education programs are doubling in numbers each year, we have no debt load financially, we have received two major academic grants within the past year, and our relationship to the local community and its churches, both Roman Catholic and other, is very good. We are thankful for God's continued blessings and for your continued support.

Ronald Rolheiser OMI



## *First Master of Arts (Spirituality) Degree Awarded*

Father Joe LaBelle,  
OMI and Mary Wilder

Mary Wilder became the first recipient of Oblate School of Theology's new Master of Arts in Spirituality at the School's May 15 commencement ceremony, marking another milestone in the School's history of developing new academic offerings.

Father Joseph LaBelle, OMI, director of the M.A. (Spirituality) program, said this first conferral of the new degree here is a milestone for the whole Christian communities, not just for the School.

"There's a great interest in Christian spirituality in our society today, as well as considerable room for misunderstanding. Our program considers the entire range of the Christian spiritual tradition. What we offer is not a mystical escape from our many contemporary pressures, but rather a deeper appreciation of how God calls each of us to a fuller human existence through following Jesus' footsteps in our own time and circumstances.

"This degree program seeks to provide a more substantial and critical foundation to appreciate how God brings about our growth in holiness – the vocation of every Christian disciple – through study and reflection on our vast Christian spiritual and mystical heritage," Father LaBelle said.


A wife and mother who's also a spiritual director at

Holy Trinity Parish in San Antonio, Wilder said she's glad other lay women and men are in the program, inaugurated in the fall of 2007, and hopes many others will follow in the future.

"Oblate was a really good place to deepen and broaden my knowledge of Scripture, church traditions and the traditions of spirituality, from St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila, to contemporary spiritual thinkers," Wilder commented.

Father LaBelle added that Wilder's professional nursing background frequently prompted her to confront the issue of God and suffering. This encouraged her to explore how different images of God can affect our relationships with God, ourselves and others during times of suffering.

Her thesis, titled *The Ineffable God: Images Born From Suffering*, focuses upon three images of God. She developed an understanding of each model as derived from Scriptures, theology and writings from the Christian spiritual tradition and considered each in light of human suffering.

Wilder hopes to do retreat work and help build bridges between spirituality and health, following a contemporary trend in the field of spirituality. 



## *Congratulations, Graduates*

In all, OST awarded 22 graduate degrees and 42 certificates for lay pastoral ministry in the culmination of the School's 106th year of service to the Catholic Church in the Southwest.

Father Robert Barron was commencement speaker. Barron is a professor at the University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Ill. He is a theologian, popular author, writer and Chairman of the Department of Systematic Theology.

Recipients of the Doctor of Ministry degree were Father Jean-Rene Talabo, OMI, Father Norman Ermis, Army Chaplain (Major) Eric Meyners and T.D. "Skip" Hodges.

Sister Elise García, OP, Kennedy Katongo, OMI, Father Orlando Cardozo Macea, OP, and Adelin Rival received the Master of Arts (Theology).

Mary Wilder received the Master of Arts (Spirituality) degree.

The Master of Divinity was awarded to Father Jonathan Felux, Father Valentine Gallegos, Deacon Manuel Cardoza, Jorge García, Walter Dominic Colangelo, OP, Father Luis Guido De La Cruz Jr. and Deacon John Pacheco.

Linda Baranoski, Dr. Ramon Figueroa, Mary Campa, Paul Fortney, Audra Cardona and Dorothy Runge were awarded the Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry.

Graduating from Oblate's Lay Ministry Institute May 16 were C. Denise Beitel, Jochelle Louise Demmer, Gloria P. Garcia, Ramon Gonzalez, Debra A. Gray, Gloria J. Matthias, Robert J. Martinez, Juanita (Janie) Melchor, Samuel Melchor, Dorene Oesterreicher, Judy Davila Ortiz, Thomas P. Pardue Jr., Julia Murphy Seguin and Charles J. Zinnel.

Graduates of the Instituto Formación Pastoral May 16 included Carmen Apolinar, Raquel Benavides, Patti Bliss, Ginger Bolton. Concepcion Casiano, Dorothy Domer, Cynthia Martha Edwards, Candelario Garcia, Diana Castillo Garza, Alicia Guzman, Vicki Hernandez, Anita Hoyt, Leroy Kessler, Juan Moreno, Mike Nellis, Mary Ann Pittman, Aida Ramirez, Betty Jean Riojas, Hector Rodriguez, Rita Rodriguez, Mary Jane Saenz, Maria Del Rosario Salinas, Hector Sandoval, Christiane Scheel, John Godfrey Scheel, Virginia Torres and Andrea Castillo Walker. 🇺🇸



# *Inaugurating OST's First Endowed Chair*

Oblate School of Theology formally inaugurated its new Father Frank Montalbano Chair in Scripture March 25 with the first lecture on Scripture in a series to be conducted annually.

Father Montalbano, 86, gave the inaugural lecture to an audience of more than 100 at the Oblate Renewal Center. The text on which he spoke was II Tim. 1:12 – “I know him in whom I have believed.”

OST's president, Father Ron Rolheiser, OMI, noted that when an institution of higher education creates an endowed professorship, it normally looks beyond its own faculty roster to find “a big name.”

“We deliberately didn't,” he said, “because our ‘big name’ was already inside the School. He referred to Sister Sarah Ann Sharkey, OP, who has taught sacred Scripture at OST since 1995 and who has drawn capacity crowds in evening lecture series she has presented at the renewal center as part of the School's continuing education program.

“Those of you who are familiar with Oblate School of Theology know what a wonderful gift Sarah is. She draws students from far and wide,” Father Rolheiser said.

Sister Sarah expressed gratitude for Father Montalbano's in-depth reading of Paul's final reflection on his life in Christ and for his rich insights from some 60 years of studying, teaching and living the Scripture.

“I think it's obvious,” she said, “that you can call Paul's words your own: ‘I know him in whom I have believed.’”



She thanked OST for the opportunity to occupy the endowed chair named in his honor, noting that it celebrates Father Montalbano's rich legacy and the genuine nature of God's word.

"Father Frank, I am honored to walk in your footsteps, to invite others as you've done and continue to do, to ponder prayerfully the word of God as well as engage in diligent and disciplined study in order that this effort may serve God's unfolding plan for the church and the world in this momentous time of peril and promise," Sister Sarah noted.

The Father Frank Montalbano Chair in Sacred Scripture is the first endowed academic chair in OST's 106-year history. Father Rolheiser said that it was appropriate for the first \$1 million from the School's \$30 million Building on Faith Capital Campaign be spent "not on bricks and mortar but to launch this lecture series named after a wonderful Oblate who taught Scripture here for a long time. He has honored the school, and we want to honor him."

The \$1 million was the first installment of Tom and Gayle Benson's \$15 million challenge grant, presented in April 2008 during the launching of the campaign. The Benson gift is believed to be the largest single gift of its kind to any Catholic theology school in the United States.

Tom Benson is an Honorary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, a distinction given to only 21 men and women in the United States. Both he and Gayle Benson are longtime friends of Father Montalbano.

Father Louis Lougen, OMI, provincial for the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate United States Province and chairman of the School's board of trustees, noted that the Oblates' charism says, "He has sent me to proclaim the good news to the poor," and added that "our beloved brother [Father Montalbano] has helped us to carry out our charism in a deep and wonderful way for the Gospel."

Father Warren Brown, OMI, executive vice president of the school, was one of the honoree's former students. He noted that Father Montalbano launched his stellar teaching in 1950, at one of the most exciting and groundbreaking times in biblical scholarship.

"It was the time of the emergence and development of the historical-critical method in Scripture study; it was the time of the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and of the proclamation of that landmark encyclical of Pope Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, which led to the Second Vatican Council's landmark Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*."

In his inaugural lecture, Father Montalbano reflected on Paul's final reflection on life in Christ while a prisoner in a Roman dungeon.

He said the words, "I know him in whom I have believed," which are engraved above the altar in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome, might be better translated "I know the one in whom I have placed my trust."

Although much of the pastoral teaching in that letter doesn't correspond to the realities of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Father Montalbano said all Christians are challenged to find meaning in them, for they go beyond the original content and is applicable to the church today.

"The object of Paul's belief is not a creed but a person. It's also a vision and an allegiance. Paul was well aware that the Hebrew word for faith was derived from the verb that means 'to be firm, to be sure.'

"Faith is solid. It's capable of standing pressure, and Paul experienced pressure from within and without his own community throughout his missionary life. Faith is something on which one can lean, against which one can stand like a solid wall – a stone wall – as contrasted with a flimsy stage prop, which may look strong but is most unstable," Father Montalbano said.


Paul was convinced, the Father continued, of the reliability of Jesus Christ as he had found Jesus "the only reality that was perfectly trustworthy."

He said God revealed to Paul that he had to suffer, and Paul realized that while detailing his many sufferings throughout his missionary life, it was his weakness and failures that enabled God to work through him.

"Paul's weakness and failure emptied him of any illusion of his own success. He realized that divine strength can work in human weakness when surrender to God's will comes.

More than any other New Testament writer, Father Montalbano said, Paul draws out the implications for our lives if we follow Jesus. There is never a life that doesn't have the cross.

"And Paul knew that his martyrdom would be his final proclamation and realization of the words, 'I know him in whom I have believed.'"

The Father said that Paul's message has been echoed in different words by the last three popes: John Paul I told Cardinal Bernardin Gantin on the last day of his life, "It is Jesus we must present to the world. Outside of this, we have no reason to exist." Pope John Paul II, at his inaugural Mass less than a month later, told listeners in St. Peter's Square, "Open wide the doors to Christ, and you'll find true life." Pope Benedict XVI, at his inaugural Mass in 2005, said that "If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing – absolutely nothing – of what makes life free, beautiful and great." 

*"I am honored  
to walk in  
your  
footsteps..."*



# Oblate at a Glance

## Christian Unity



More than 100 people attended a Prayer Service for Christian Unity Jan. 22 that brought clergy representatives from a variety of denominations to OST Immaculate Conception Chapel. The event was in conjunction with the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the Holy See's Secretariat For Promoting Christian Unity. Father Harry Winter (second from left) was keynote speaker.

## Masculine Spirituality

Father Ron Rolheiser, OMI, gave a retreat on masculine spirituality titled, *Masculine Energy and its Habitual Struggle with Relationships, Feelings and Religion* Feb. 6-8 at the Oblate Renewal Center for both men and women.

## Paula D'Arcy Retreat



Popular author and speaker Paula D'Arcy gave a retreat titled *Becoming a Person of Peace* Feb. 21-22 at the Oblate Renewal Center.

## IPI Follow-Up



Fifteen priests who had attended the Fall 2008 class of the International Priest Internship program at OST returned for a week of follow-up and received their diplomas Feb. 1-7. The program assists missionary priests from abroad in understanding the U.S. church and society. It provides practical courses and a social network.

## Re-Accreditation



A 10-member team with the *Association of Theological Schools* and the *Southern Association of Colleges and Schools* visited OST March 10-12. The School's board, administration and faculty had spent more than two years completing a self-study in preparation for re-accreditation. Sr. Elaine Brothers, OSF, academic dean (left); Father Ron Rolheiser, OMI, president; and Scott Woodward, head of the School's re-accreditation committee, were recognized for their major contributions with the re-accreditation.



## International Women's Day Celebration



OST observed International Women's Day March 13 with an ice cream social in the Student Lounge. The annual event celebrates the social, political and economic achievements and contributions of women throughout the world. Sally Gomez-Jung (left) recognized Lillian Younker (right), former OST academic dean, and Fr. Pat Guidon, OMI (not shown) for their pioneering leadership of women scholars.

## Spring Gala 2009



At the Spring Gala April 15, President Ron Rolheiser, OMI, honored Loyd Whitley, HOMI and Father Louis Lougen, OMI, provincial of the United States Province of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

## Evening of World Faith



Imam Omar Shakir of Masjid Bilal, Cantor David Silverstein of Congregation Israel, OST Prof. Scott Woodward, and Harinder Sing of the Sikh Research Institute presented an inter-faith program March 25 titled *Jews, Christians, Muslims and Sikhs: Stewards of God's Creation*, focusing on what these four faiths teach about protecting the environment.

## Learning Humility

### Reflecting on the Humble Heart of Jesus

Renata Furst, formation advisor and director of studies at Assumption Seminary, conducted a day of reflection March 28 at the Oblate Renewal Center titled "Learning Humility: Reflecting on the Humble Heart of Jesus."

## Building Bridges

### A Catholic Conference on Peace in the Holy Land



OST, Catholic Relief Services Southwest, and the Pilgrim Center of Hope co-sponsored a day long conference on the deep divisions and ongoing violence in the Holy Land. Melkite Archbishop Elias Chacour spoke on the plight of Palestinians in Israel on May 1 in Immaculate Conception Chapel as part of a conference.

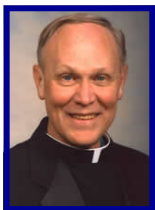


# Faculty Notes & Honors

**Sister Maria Cimperman, OSU**, associate professor of moral theology, published an essay titled, "Change is Possible': Churches Reading the Signs of the Times," in *Calling For Justice Throughout the World: Catholic Women Theologians on the HIV/AIDS Pandemic*. She also published two articles, "Inviting Thresholds: How Communities Might Respond to Shifting Times," in *Horizon* Winter 2009 and "Give Us a Reason to Live. Give Us a Reason to Hope': HIV and AIDS in Our Time," *New Theology Review*.



**Father Ken Hannon, OMI**, professor of liturgical and pastoral theology, met with the University of the Incarnate Word Board of Trustees March 5-6, discussing dimensions of the University's Catholic identity as part of its annual Board in-service. "We explored the implications of the University's mission in light of divided Christianity as well as its presence to adherents of other world Religions in this time of post-modern relativism."



**Father Hannon**, and **Sister Sarah Ann Sharkey, OP**, professor of sacred Scripture, co-taught a three-week Scripture study, *Receiving the Legacy of St. Paul Today: Images of Church and Ministry*, Feb. 17 and 24 and March 3 at the Oblate Renewal Center.

**Sister Linda Gibler, OP**, associate academic dean, was science editor and also authored a chapter in *The Evolutionary Epic*, a collection of essays on science's story and humanity's response, published by Collins Foundation Press. She gave a lecture titled "Dominican Spirituality: Give to Others the Fruit of your Contemplation" for the *Christian Mysticism: History, Wisdom, and Insights* series in San Antonio and another lecture, "Non-Violence Ideals in a Violent Cosmos," at St. Francis Church in Sacramento, CA.



**Father Joseph LaBelle, OMI**, associate professor of spirituality, has written a journal article titled "Teresa of Avila and Her Apostolic Zeal" scheduled to appear in the Summer 2009 issue of *Spiritual Life*.

**Rose Marden**, associate dean of continuing education, was a guest lecturer in the Adult Faith Formation Programs at Holy Trinity and St. Francis parishes.

**Father Leopoldo Perez, OMI**, associate professor of moral theology, is celebrating 25 years with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

**Ronald Quillo**, professor of systematic theology, recently reviewed David Blankenhorn's 2007 book, *The Future of Marriage*, for the Fall 2009 volume of *Horizons*, the journal of the College Theology Society. He also served as a spiritual director on a Holy Spirit Parish men's ACTS II retreat January 23-25 at Oblate Renewal Center.



**Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI**, was awarded an honorary doctorate of letters May 10 by the University of St. Thomas in Fredrickton, New Brunswick, Canada.

**Sister Sarah Ann Sharkey, OP**, professor of sacred Scripture, and **Sister Maria Cimperman, OSU**, associate professor of moral theology, co-designed a new elective course, *Earth, Our Home: Biblical and Theological Perspectives*. Nine OST faculty members are speaking during the semester on the topic of ecology from the vantage points of their theological disciplines. Sr. Sarah is also celebrating 50 years with the Adrian Dominican Sisters.



**Father Stephen Sherwood, CMF**, professor of sacred Scripture, appeared on the Catholic Television of San Antonio program *Day by Day* March 9, discussing the praying of the Psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours.

**Scott Woodward**, assistant professor in pastoral theology, was host and lecturer for the World Faith Evening program *Jews, Christians, Muslims and Sikhs: Stewards of God's Creation*.

**Father Robert Wright, OMI** was elected Vice-President of the Texas Catholic Historical Society for a two year term beginning in March 2008. He was also re-elected to the executive committee of CEHILA, an international association of scholars of the history of Christianity in Latin America, at their biannual meeting in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Father also presented a lecture entitled "From *migrante* to *inmigrante* to resident: *la Virgen de San Juan* in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas" at the annual meeting of CEHILA USA, at Florida International University, Miami.



# Remembering Oblate

## Wills and Bequests

Do you have a will? Have you remembered Oblate School of Theology in your will?

A judge at an estate hearing said, “It is hard to understand why someone would not have a will before he or she dies.”

If you do not have a will, please consider these questions and answers:

*If I die without a will, what happens to my estate?*

A person’s wishes are not considered and someone, usually a judge assigned by the state, determines how the person’s assets are distributed.

*What if I don’t have any real assets? Aren’t wills for rich people?*

This is a common mistake by people who choose not to have a will. You don’t have to be considered rich because if you have any property (house, car, clothing), any cash, stocks, bonds, retirement funds, all of these are considered assets and will be distributed by the state if you don’t have a will. As a result it’s possible none of your relatives or charities will receive anything from your estate.

*How do I go about making a will and what is the wording to be used?*

A simple will can be handled by an estate planning attorney and will not cost much money to prepare. There are also websites that can be accessed and a will-format downloaded for a fee. You can name a specific dollar amount or percentage of your gross estate for relatives and/or charity(s). You can name a charity as the recipient of your residual estate, which is the amount that is left after all debts and other distributions are made.

Possible wording to be used in your will: *“I declare that this is my last will. I revoke all prior wills and codicils. Bequest to Oblate School of Theology, I give and devise the following property to the Oblate School of Theology”*: (Here indicate your intentions for giving.)

Remembering Oblate School of Theology in your last will is a marvelous way to help Oblate School of Theology continue it’s mission for the church and its ministry in the world.



**BUILDING ON FAITH**  
OBLATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
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**Save the date!**

***Alum Gathering  
October 12, 2009  
Oblate Renewal Center  
Rev. David Power, OMI — Speaker***



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