

*“Action on behalf of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation
is an integral part of evangelization.”*

Oblate Constitution and Rules, Rule 9A

LAND ETHIC

MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE U.S. PROVINCE

WHEREAS:

Jesus urged his disciples to look at the birds of the air and the lilies of the field so as to learn God’s providence and free themselves from worry about material things.[1]

We Oblates of Mary Immaculate believe that creation is a primary source of God’s revelation. “Creation is holy; it is the first manifestation of God’s mystery; it is God’s first word.”[2]

As retreatants and owners of renewal centers, we U.S. Oblates have witnessed the spiritual and therapeutic value of nature. We have experienced nature’s many qualities—aesthetic, emotional, and historical—qualities that are difficult to quantify economically.

Our dominant western culture has tended, nevertheless, to view land as a commodity and made decisions about land for purely economic considerations. U.S. Oblates have at times shared that attitude and made decisions about land out of economic expediency.

This attitude toward land has led to tremendous ecological loss and exploitation. Our nation has built up and paved over huge swaths of land. Wilderness is out of reach for many people. Meanwhile, loss of habitat through human development has become a leading cause of species extinction. Overdevelopment of land aggravates other problems, such as water scarcity and pollution, illness, poverty, and global warming.

Pope John Paul II declared: “Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the Earth as we have in the past . . . The ecological crisis is a moral issue.”[3]

According to Pope Benedict XVI, “[W]e must respect the inner laws of creation, of this earth, we must learn these laws and obey these laws . . . [O]ur earth speaks to us, and we must listen if we want to survive.”[4]

Our Oblate constitution calls action on behalf of the integrity of creation “an integral part of evangelization.”[5] As a congregation, we have recognized that “the conservation of nature and natural resources contributes to justice and the maintenance of peace.”[6]

The ecological crisis makes a claim upon the Oblate charism in two ways. First, the human poor are disproportionately harmed by environmental degradation. Second, the embattled earth and its creatures have become another face of impoverishment, worthy of our concern and action.

Though our province has sold lands in recent years, we U.S. Oblates still owns a number of tracts throughout this country, some of which are the only remaining undeveloped or semi-developed parcels in a large area.

In 1965, for a nominal amount, the Oblate Southern Province in Texas granted Hidalgo County a ninety-nine-year lease on about 100 acres of land along the Rio Grande River. Anzalduas Park has since become a primary site for recreation and ecological activities.

In 2000, the Central United States province contracted with the Great Rivers Land Trust to preserve several acres in Godfrey, Illinois. In return for giving up certain development rights on its own behalf and that of future landowners, the U.S. Province received a substantial monetary payment.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

When making decisions about property, we U.S. Oblates will be mindful of its multiple values, including the ecological, aesthetic, spiritual, and historical. In addition to financial concerns, we will take into account the impact our decisions will have on the poor, future generations, other species, and the eco-system.

[1] Matthew 6: 25-34.

[2] Vade Mecum on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation, 1997.

[3] “The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility,” Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, January 1, 1990.

[4] Meeting of the Holy Father Benedict XVI with the Clergy of the Dioceses of Belluno-Feltre and Treviso, Church of St. Justin Martyr, Auronzo di Cadore, July 24, 2007.

[5] Oblate Constitution and Rules, 2000, Rule 9A

[6] Vade Mecum on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation, 1997.