

Mission Appeal for the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales

I would like to begin by thanking your parish for accepting the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales to make an appeal to support our work for the poor around the world as well as give you a brief history of the Oblates.

The Oblates of St. Francis De Sales were founded in Troyes, France in 1876. Shortly after, Fr. Louis Brisson, OSFS, the founder of the De Sales Oblates, met with Pope Leo XIII in Rome. At that meeting, the Holy Father asked that the Oblates take charge of a remote mission territory in South Africa that bordered on the Kalahari and Namib Deserts.

During the next century, hundreds of De Sales Oblate priests, brothers and sisters established twenty five mission stations in this vast desert area which is the size of Texas. In 1951 the Holy See established the Diocese of Keimoes-Upington in this area. Today there are twenty one parishes, nine elementary schools, one high school and two medical clinics in Keimoes-Upington Diocese.

Eventually the missionaries of the Oblates of St. Francis De Sales in South Africa extended their ministry to the neighboring Republic of Namibia and the Holy See established the Diocese of Keetmanshoop there in 1994. Today, the diocese staffs eighteen parishes, fifty five mission stations, one hospital, two medical clinics and eight primary schools. As in the case of South Africa, the leadership of the Diocese of Keetmanshoop has been turned over to native Namibians.

The underlying issues that faced the De Sales Oblate Missionaries during the last one hundred years of ministering to the people in Africa were poverty, colonialism and racism. Therefore, the hallmark of the De Sales Oblate apostolate in both nations was centered around assisting the people in dealing with these terrible problems in both spiritual and temporal ways. This remains the legacy of the De Sales Oblate Missions in Africa to this day.

Over the years, the Oblates have founded missions in many other countries including India, Ivory Coast, Haiti, Mexico, and Uruguay. Their efforts in these places center on helping the poor by providing food, education, medical assistance as well as spreading the good news of the Catholic faith.

Please be assured that any donation you are able to make today will help God's children in countries that have a great need.

Thank you again for your support for our mission work.