

## The Missionary Oblates at our Tijuana Mission



**Fr. Weibert Merilan**  
Parish Pastor



**Fr. Lucio Castillo**  
Special Needs School  
- Parish Associate



**Fr. Marek Stroba**  
Parish Associate



**Fr. Bill Antone**  
Formation House  
Director

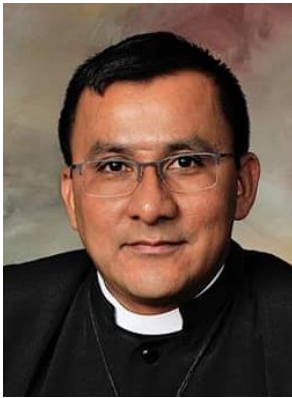


**Bro. Peter Vasquez**  
Formation House  
Associate



**Fr. Jesse Esqueda**  
Mission Superior

## Meet the new Oblate at our Mission



Father Eleazar Manuel Lopez was ordained on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020 in San Antonio, Texas. His first assignment was to our mission. We are very happy to welcome the newly ordained Oblate to this beautiful mission! Please keep him in your prayers!

Since the mission was established in 1996, the local population has greatly increased. It is estimated that there are about 200,000 people living within the previous parish boundaries. Consequently, in August 2019, the Oblates divided the existing parish in two. They turned over the more developed portion of the parish to the diocese, including 5 mission churches, their clinic, the building for the special needs school, their community center and their home. The Oblates kept nine mission churches in the less-developed areas where the new immigrants from the south of Mexico and central America continue to arrive. Many migrants build their houses along railroad tracks, squatting on federal land. Some of these neighborhoods lack basic infrastructure such as paved roads, portable water, sanitation and electricity.

The role of the missionary Oblates is to go into the poorest regions and develop strong faith communities, lay leaders, programs and projects that help the people in many ways. When a community grows and is well developed, the Oblates hand over the leadership of the parish, together with the programs and buildings to the diocese so that the blessings continue in those communities. They then move to a new area so that they may start this beautiful process again. The Oblates are deeply grateful that their community house in the new area is now finished. They are excited to continue their existing programs and developed new projects as the communities continue to grow and migrants continue to arrive. Thank you for helping to make these blessings possible.

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The Holy Week of coronavirus started with a talk by our Oblate priest, Fr. Jesse, about being saints.



He talked about being careful in this time of crisis, but to not be fearful. We also had a Holy Hour one night. On the Saturday before Easter it is our tradition to join with 7000 other youths in our diocese in a 3-mile walk which ends at a convention center where the bishop and others present talks. But it was an online event this year and the bishop delivered an inspiring message and music accompanied the event, just as it would have in the convention center. There was a contest to see which group could get the most likes for a group photo on Facebook. Our SEARCH group won, thanks to the help of many of our US friends.

We did visit a few families this week. Some said they get few visitors these days and were happy to see our faces (well really our masks). We made use of our homemade alcohol-based hand sanitizer to convey the message of everyone needs to be practicing caution. The people we visit are not necessarily Catholic and that sometimes leads to good discussions, which we try to steer to what we have in common. A group of five youths made the two-hour trek to a senior care facility that is very poor. They visited the clientele, cleaned bathrooms and watched The Passion of the Christ with them. They ended with a prayer on this Good Friday thanking all those who support our mission parish. That will probably be our last such visit until it is safe again.



Our first batch of 120 despensas (food bags) went quickly and we restocked. Fourteen youths and adults collectively did the tedious job of repackaging bulk items into family sized despensas. We made 240 despensas this time, doubling our effort. We know several factories have shut down in addition to non-essential business, so lots of people are out of work. The government has ordered businesses to pay employees for one more month, so that is helping. It is hard to get accurate numbers about the virus here, but we do know personally of cases now, so it is starting to hit home. Some say we will move to Stage 3 soon.

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