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**United States Province**

# Oblate Parish in Brownsville Offering ID Cards

Brownsville, TX

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The Oblate Parish of St. Eugene de Mazenod in Brownsville, Texas, as a member of Valley Interfaith is sponsoring a series of Parish ID Festivals. These events provide immigrant members of the parish who may not yet have government- issued identification with ID cards that welcomes and acknowledges them as parishioners and members of the parish community.

A Parish ID Card can be helpful if they are stopped by the police for a minor incident; it can tell the officer the cardholder is an active member of the church. While there is no guarantee the officer will accept the Parish ID Card as proof of who they are, it can be helpful in many situations. Several municipalities in the Brownsville area have already agreed that they will consider accepting the Parish ID Cards as valid forms of identification, at least in some situations. The Bishop's Immigration Task force is working with local parishes and police departments in the Rio Grande Valley area to ensure more patrol officers are aware of and understand what the Parish ID Cards represent.

The issuance of the cards is a collaborative effort between St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish, the Bishop's Immigration Task Force of the Diocese of Brownsville, who is also providing the equipment for making the IDs, and the Valley Interfaith Initiative, which is a community Organizing group formed to give a voice to the people who are usually excluded from the major decisions that affect their lives and offers people the opportunity to develop the leadership skills necessary to be full participants in society. The parish regularly works with this organization reaching out to meet community needs.

After the first ID Festival, Fr. Kevin Collins, OMI, pastor of St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish said, *"I am so blessed to have parishioners dedicated to works of mercy and justice. We had a Parish ID festival on Saturday and now some of our folks will have a way to live with a little more dignity."*

On January 18, and 25, the parish was open to issue special ID cards to parishioners. In order to obtain an ID card the individual had to be a registered member of the parish for at least 3 months. In addition, the applicants needed to bring: Identification of their country, an invoice with their current name and address, certificate of birth, license or passport, and a recommendation letter, or bring someone as a reference to sign a notice. Once the preliminaries were met, the applicants completed their request and had a picture taken.

Fr. Collins found many enthusiastic parish volunteers ready and willing to work at the festivals, some of whom are pictured below.

Fr. Collins (on right) with members of the Bishop's Immigration Task Force and some of his parish workers



Parish volunteers ready to work!



Fr. Kevin (back row, center) and many of the volunteers.

