

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

# Oblate Spirit

April 2017



*Basic  
Needs*

# Providing basic needs



In Canada, and particularly on the Prairies, this is a time of hope and optimism as the sun warms the land and the trees start to bud.

The same can't be said for many countries around the world, and the situation seems to be one of growing despair in so many more places. One would think war would become an obsolete word as we move well into the 21st century, yet it continues to be a tool of perceived domination by some nations and violent groups.

A country like Ukraine was considered to be a peaceful nation, yet today experiences the devastation caused by warring factions. And the victims always seem to be those most helpless in these situations ... the children and the homeless who are desperate for basic necessities. So we have now added the Oblates in Ukraine to the list of countries the Oblates in Canada have chosen to support.

On the other side of the coin is Haiti, one of the poorest countries in the world that sits in the path of vicious storms. It is still trying to recover from Hurricane Matthew that cut a path of destruction in October. We continue to support the poorest of the poor, and hope our MAMI family will join us in this cause.

The mission in Kenya continues to face daily obstacles, many serious but some humourous, as so well documented in Fr. Gerry Conlan's ongoing Kenya diary.

Humour can break the monotony of a dreary day. Prayers and support for the Oblates can provide a spiritual lift and a ray of hope. We can help the Oblates sow the seeds of hope and make a difference in our world. After all, it is a hopeful time of year.

*John and Emily Cherneski, Communications Coordinators*

# Making a difference

BY KEN FORSTER, OMI

The year 2016 was special for the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. It was the 200th anniversary of our foundation as a congregation that is now serving the poor in some 65 different countries.

We are all aware of the disparity of wealth in the world and it is such a joy to work with the poor to give them hope. This hope certainly touches their lives with a promise of living in communion with God and all his saints forever, but we also have the hope of helping them with the necessary material things they need to offer life to their children. This includes the gift of education and schools, employment and bread, water and gardens, milk and honey, dispensaries and hospitals, and community halls and churches within which to worship.

Ken Thorson, our vicar provincial, and I recently returned from a three-week visit to our mission in Kenya. We visited every Oblate and almost every community they serve,

Ken Forster, OMI, revisits the water project he started 16 years ago





Brother Vincent renews his vows with Fr. Ken Forster

including the universities where they accompany students as chaplains, the HIV children's orphanage and the women's prison where I celebrated mass with Fr. Fidele and enjoyed their welcome in song and dance.

We visited Kionyo, the parish where Bill Stang, OMI, Harold Kaufmann, OMI, and I served the community for several years. We experienced the growth of the community and the parish and were happy to once again visit the Mt. Kenya forest and the intake on the Iraru River that feeds the Mt. Kenya East Water Project we, as missionaries, assisted the people to construct. They are improving and increasing the flow with additional pipes that travel 10 kilometers down the mountain, bringing water to 2,500 families who live on their small tea farms across the whole face of the mountain.

This project was accomplished with the manual labor of the people digging ditches more than 200 kilometers in length like the arteries and veins of our bodies that bring life. I was pleased to see that the project some 15 year later is not only maintained, but is expanding. This year they finally com-



pleted the shell of the Mt. Kenya East Water Administration Office building. Until this time, they worked out of the parish compound and had their office and storage of pipes and supplies there.

The new parish of Kisaju has been blessed with excellent Oblate leadership and continues to find a good foundation. We hope that this year the issue of land title for the plot of land for the parish will be resolved and the construction of their parish church and rectory can begin. When that happens we look to you to assist them financially to match their generosity. It is difficult for them to succeed materially as Maasai are herders of cattle and goats, searching a great distance for some grass for their animals in a year of drought. Their annual parish gift from their Sadaka (Sunday collection) was approximately \$5,750 last year to support the work of the mission team.

We have also accepted to take responsibility for another parish in the Meru Diocese later this year. It too will bring many blessings but also some unforeseen challenges.

To you, donors, who support our Oblate Formation Program (30 young men at various stages of formation preparing to minister as Oblate brothers or priests), we are grateful. Last Advent St. Augustine's Parish School in Vancouver

**Farm Manager Euticus and Oblates Ken Forster and Iyo Daquin**





Ken Forster, OMI,  
returns to visit Kenya

raised more than \$4,100 at their concert to absorb the cost of one of these 30 young men beginning his formation.

I would like to offer thanks to all who support the Oblates in their service to and with the poor. We are grateful to MAMI members who have held us in prayer and in your generous hearts, for many years of faithful giving. I would like to thank new donors. I know there are myriads of organizations doing good work and seeking your commitment. Yet you have committed yourself to us as Oblates because you know us and love us.

You can trust your dollars will be used wisely and well. I pledge us to do that.

*(Fr. Ken is Provincial Superior of OMI Lacombe Canada)*

## DONATING SECURITIES

*to Oblate  
missionary  
works*



Do you have publicly traded securities that you would like to donate to the benefit of the Oblate missions? You can directly donate your publicly traded securities (shares) to **AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI** and receive an official income tax receipt while avoiding the payment of capital gains tax.

To take advantage of this tax-saving offer, please call Diane Lepage (1-866-432-6264) at our office for further information. A minimum market value of \$5,000 is suggested. We would be happy to facilitate this exchange that benefits you and the poor of the Oblate missions.

# St. Dismas House: Building a ray of hope



BY SYLVAIN LAVOIE, OMI

EDMONTON – Once a month I am privileged to celebrate the Eucharist at the remand centre here in Edmonton. When I asked one inmate who had returned shortly after being released why he was back so soon, he replied that he was dropped off at night where he got into trouble in the first place, and there was nowhere for him to go.

This unfortunate recipe for recidivism is all too familiar to Justin Robert, a former inmate who is also a recovering alcoholic. He is especially concerned for those who are on their way to treatment and felt inspired to create a safe place for them upon their release. This Dismas House proposal, now in development, is his brainchild. (St. Dismas is known as the Good Thief crucified with Christ on Calvary.)

After undergoing a major conversion experience while incarcerated, Justin Robert not only has celebrated three years of sobriety, but is also very involved in 12 Step work, sponsors numerous others, is quite active in the Knights of Columbus, is becoming an Oblate Associate, and also feels a call to the priesthood and Oblate life.



Justin Robert

We first met at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples where I was celebrating the Eucharist that Sunday, and he shared his vision with me. Since then, an effective board has been formed, a logo developed by

Louis Andreas, OMI, a brochure produced, a pre- and post-program developed, a bank account opened, a website developed (<http://www.stdismashouse.ca>), the process of applying for charitable status begun, a budget put in place, negotiations on a facility begun, and funding is starting to come in.

While there is great interest and excitement about this project, we need the support of the community and government agencies to make this project available for people who are struggling with addiction and have nowhere left to turn.

If you can donate time or finances please contact the executive director Justin through email at [Justin@stdismashouse.ca](mailto:Justin@stdismashouse.ca)

*Help us give hope to men who are so desperate.*

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# Healing Prayers book

We invite you to receive a copy of our Healing Prayers book that can be used daily to pray for healing in your life, in the world, local community, family or for special intentions of healing the body, mind and spirit.



Please indicate on the enclosed gift form if you wish to receive the Healing Prayers book.

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# Reigniting the spark within

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

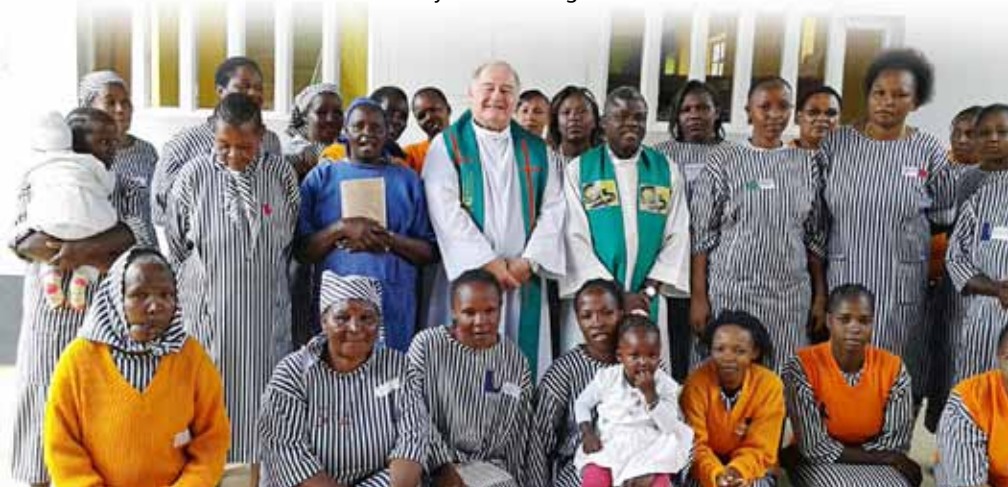
KENYA – The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate are involved in prison ministry in Kenya through the active ministry of Fr. Fidele Munkiele, OMI, at Langatta Women's Prison in Nairobi (maximum security and the remand prison).

This is usually done each Sunday. It is a faith-filled response to one of our signature Oblate expressions: *evangelizare pauperibus misit me*, which is Latin for **he sent me to evangelize the poor (the most abandoned)**. But the understanding follows that *we evangelize the poor, and the poor evangelize us*.

But what does it mean for the poor to evangelize us, especially as Ministers of God sharing the Good News? I'm sure there are more gifted people who could write about this, but one way that I experience it is to be re-energized.

Life as a Missionary, and for all Christians, involves suffering. It doesn't matter how strong our faith, it is normal – as our moments of suffering continue or are repeated too often – to get bored, judgmental, jaded, tired, hurt, frustrated, angry, or lose heart!

Oblates Ken Forster and Fidele Munkiele  
celebrate Sunday mass at Langatta Women's Prison





Fidele Munkiele, OMI, with Mrs. Florence and her children

I guess that's why all religious and priests are required to have frequent confession, daily Mass, annual retreats, and occasional sabbaticals. We need to reflect, to share, to be healed and be re-energized.

Recently, Fr. Fidele, who is our Kenya mission formation director and prison chaplain, made a pastoral visit to Mrs. Florence. She is a single mother of four children who was jailed for five years. She is very poor and struggling with her life. After her release from prison in 2016, she was reunited with her children who are unable to attend school due to lack of fees, and even getting food is a real problem. A donation from a caring soul really assisted her with basic necessities and restored dignity to Florence and the family.

As I viewed the photos of Fr. Fidele bringing pastoral care and emotional support to our friend Mrs. Florence, it is clear that Fr. Fidele is being **re-energized**. Even as Fr. Fidele is evangelizing her, she is evangelizing him. These moments of contact, though short, provide encouragement for people like Florence to keep persevering in her duties as a mother and citizen.

I pray all of us who read these words will be encouraged to see that our short visits to people in need will provide re-energizing moments when God touches our lives, even as God touches the lives of the other through us. This is definitely the way to avoid burnout in our faith ... to show practical care and giving our presence, especially to those in need.

*This brief description began as a personal thank you to our friend Mr. Andy from Western Australia. He heard about Fr. Fidele's work in the prison in Nairobi and immediately asked me to take a donation to assist the women in need. He has since sent another donation and instead of a simple thank-you letter, I felt moved to write a short reflection.*



# Kenya

## NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

### JAN. 15

MERU/KIONYO, Kenya – Today is a historic day in the Kenya Mission. We have mass at Kionyo where the first Oblate lay associates will profess their commitment to the Oblate values and supporting our Oblate community. Our Provincial, Ken Forster, OMI, is here, and will receive their profession.

These are people who will help us to be faithful to our calling as Oblates, support us with prayer and material resources.

During the week I was in town for a meeting at the Lands Department to determine some minor unknowns on our Karen property title – ‘special conditions’ and an ‘easement’. Thankfully I met a lovely Catholic woman who has worked there for 40 years. She made a sacrifice for me and went immediately to the archives and looked up our old title and said: “It’s a typo... there are no special conditions on a freehold land title, and the easement is for Kenya Power – electricity – so you can basically build anywhere on your property.” I gave her a candy and wished her a Happy New Year, so she left with a smile.



Gerry Conlan, OMI

### JAN. 21

The week started with the great celebration and welcome to our first 16 Oblate lay associates. These are different than Missionary Association (MAMI) members. Oblate lay



Ken Forster, OMI, celebrates mass in Kenya

associates share more fully in our Oblate way of life and participate in Oblate celebrations and promote the charism (life) of the Oblates where they live.

To all the Oblate Associates reading this in Canada... please come and visit them!

The Mass was led by Fr. Ken Forster, our provincial from Canada and the original Kenya mission superior (he lived in Kenya for nine years). I was in some amazement as he proceeded to celebrate mass in the local language of Kimeru – obviously reading from the mass book – but it’s a difficult language to pronounce. He left Kenya more than 10 years ago.

After a nice feast we headed to Nairobi. As I left Njogune, a woman waved me down. Her daughter Doreen, 28, needed a ride. When I dropped Doreen near her home, I saw some young children (maybe 10 years old) standing around, and when I said how sad it is, she said: “Father, this is an area for

Ken Thorson, OMI, receives Martha as a lay associate



prostitutes, even the children.” I was really disturbed.

During the week we welcomed Bright Makunka, OMI, a priest from Zambia as a new permanent member in our mission.

Part of our mission is to bring greater unity to our community. And it starts in our families. Last week I was really touched by the actions of one of our Kionyo youth in Nairobi.

I asked this person to help a young man, a 23-year-old orphan, who is trying to finish school. The school director spoke badly to him last week and now he refuses to go back to school. I pleaded with him on the phone but he was too hurt. So I asked Leonard, who had moved back to Kionyo for a few weeks, to visit and encourage him to overcome his wounded pride and finish school.

Leonard went a step further and gave him hope and courage. He walked the young man to school some two kilometres away and spoke to the director. The young man is now back at school and Leonard is his guardian.

Furthermore, Leonard shared this with his mother, and she has offered the young man a place in her home until he finishes school. I was very touched and, because no one could see me, I shed a tear of happiness as I lay in bed that night.

Somewhere in the Bible, Jesus told us to have a special care for the widow, the orphan and the stranger. I hope we might become apostles of hope more often, by reaching out to those in our community like that.



Musa (Bright)  
Makunka, OMI





Gerry Conlan, OMI, and friends in hot air balloon

## JAN. 29

Not too much to share this week.

My friends Steve and Susanne with their son Kieran and daughter Nicola have been helping me take a break, although it has taken a week to slow down and start resting.

We spent three magic days at Maasai Mara, where we saw

# WANTED YOUR STORIES!

*There are many charities and good causes that solicit your support. Yet for some reason you have chosen to offer the Oblates your prayers, friendship and assistance.*

### **We are curious:**

Why did you choose us?

How did you hear about the Oblate missionary work?

How have the Oblates supported, inspired and encouraged you?

What are some of your best memories of Oblates and their missionary work?

**Send your stories (and photos) to: [lacombemissions@yahoo.ca](mailto:lacombemissions@yahoo.ca)**



many animals and had an amazing experience in a hot air balloon, dropping down to cruise past the animals at head height.

Back in Nairobi we went to Kisaju Parish and spent a few hours at St. Ann's primary school with the children where my friends amazed the children. Unfortunately the small lunch they insisted we eat made us all sick by the time we got home.

On Saturday we headed to Sweetwaters camp, tents among the lions, zebra, gazelle, water buffalo and rhino. My friends were so impressed with Sweetwaters that we had to rearrange our last few days to allow for a three-day stay instead of two. It's just so peaceful, and the ability to self-drive around on good gravel roads at slow speed is amazing.

Thank God for good friends who come to spoil me. But they did say it's better than a Bali holiday (in Indonesia). I hope you have a beautiful week to come and see all the wonders God has created around us.

## **FEB. 4**

I continued having a few days off this last week, starting to realise how tired I was. Since returning to Kenya in May 2016, I managed only a handful of days off. I'll have to be more disciplined this year. Now my friends have gone back to Australia. I was still tired physically, but my mind is more relaxed. Two nights of eight hours sleep and I'm now feeling dangerous again.

We made an application to Australian High Commission here in Kenya for a small grant to help with a proposed water supply project at Kisaju. Let's hope we are successful. I asked

Farm Manager Euticus  
and a healthy sunflower



for US\$10,000 out of a total cost of US\$31,000. We have another agency (hopefully) giving US\$8,000 and the local community giving US\$6,000.

On Saturday the first vows of Phelix and Moses was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. Fr. Mario attended and all went well ... we are all very happy. At the same time I took the pre-novices and Fr. Ignatius to a special "Consecrated Life" mass at Nairobi with Cardinal John Njue. He appreciated very much the legacy of the early missionaries.

On the way home we had a terrible traffic jam caused by everyone slowing down to look at a burning bus on the opposite side of the divided road. We found out later the driver had hit and killed a young person on a push-bike. The passengers then proceeded to get off and burn the bus in protest.

After two weeks of relaxing I needed to start jogging again. The pre-novices were happy to see me back and thought I looked a little fatter – which means I'm back to normal!

## FEB. 11

I spent the week clearing my desk of many small jobs – no Kisaju, no Kiirua Farm (except by phone). It was nice to reduce the job list and see more of my desk and room!

During the week I rode to the motorcycle shop in town for repairs. Just after arriving, a little street-boy walked up to me. He was about 10 but looked as skinny and small as a six-year-old. He had a coat zipped up to his nose and the hood over his head.

I shook his hand and said, "Hi, what's your name."



Moses Odhiambo  
makes his first vows



Oblates Mario Azrak and Ignatius Nambondi inspect the farm with Euticus

“Johnny,” he said. As we talked I could see a small plastic drink bottle fixed to his lips as he sniffed glue (hidden in his jacket).

I said, “If I give you money, you will probably buy glue. You know it’s not good for you, eh?” A man nearby started laughing, and I gave him a dirty look and said, “It’s not funny, man.” He suddenly looked contrite and explained to the kid what I’d said.

Then I saw a café across the road. “Mum’s Café” Quite appropriate. I walked him over and got him a seat and asked the lady if he could get something for 50 shillings. She said, egg and bread and tea. I asked her, “If I give you 200, will you let him come for four days to have a feed.” She agreed and I asked her to explain to the boy. He smiled and I told him I’d be thinking of him. It was really sad... what else can we do at the moment?

I asked the pre-novices at home how we should respond to this situation. They said “we need to reflect.”

I said, “That’s true and good, but we also need to do something little while we reflect. Too many times the church is so busy reflecting that nothing ever happens.” That was my little rant for the day.

During the week we welcomed home our newest Oblate, Moses Odhiambo Owino, OMI, who is preparing to go to Rome for scholastic studies.

## **FEB. 18**

I can't finish this week without expressing my happiness and amazement at a generous friend in Canada who gave \$13,000 towards the Kisaju community water bore, pump and storage. Put a nice smile on my face! Thanks a lot, you know who you are.

## **FEB. 25**

Tuesday was interesting. We visited a site as a possible safe home for future retirement and holidays, but discovered the land is on a 99-year lease. Anything built on the land would transfer to the company ... so we decided that was not such a good idea.

Next we visited Nyahururu (Thompson Falls) after hearing that land there was relatively cheap. We are looking for some land for a future retreat centre, for which we have funding. The lower land prices are about 15 kilometres out of town. But what interested me was how much income people could produce from growing wheat. We will need to investigate more as a means of becoming self-sufficient. It would also assist Kenya by producing a product that is in short supply.

Pig and bull share truck bed





I spent Wednesday buying supplies and going to the farm so we can build a new toilet – the existing pit latrine is nearly full. It was more time consuming than I thought ferrying sand and ballast, cement and stones, steel and roofing.

Thursday I picked up a small bull from Kionyo, a donation to the mission which I placed at the Kiirua Farm. It was a bit of a circus taking the little bull, and Fr. Constant asked me to take a male pig back to Nkubu Hospital. Getting the pig tied on the truck was hard work. After two kilometres the pig was standing up with all ropes off his legs looking at me in the rear-vision mirror! So William and I stopped and tied him up again ... he just stood quietly, thank goodness.

Meanwhile, the little bull was trussed up lying on his side, which is not the best. But he survived until Kiirua. But the bull got at me ... as I was undoing all the ropes it splashed watery-poo over my face. I left it with Euticus and headed back to Meru for a shower before heading off to Marimba and spending a pleasant night in company with Mama Rita and her four Canadian guests. Marimba is good for my health – a little red wine and always eight hours of sleep.

Sadly, as I arrived, a little girl also arrived at the orphanage... only four years old, and rescued from her father sexually abusing her. He has run away. Mama Rita said 75 per cent of the girls (more than 200) have been sexually abused.



## Gift Payment Option



We have the ability to accept donations by way of credit card! Please complete the gift form enclosed, visit our website at [omilacombe.ca/mami/donate/](http://omilacombe.ca/mami/donate/) to give on-line, or call our office toll free: 1-866-432-6264 and we will be pleased to assist you in facilitating your donation to the Oblate missions.

# Help for Haiti

Take one of the poorest countries in the world (Haiti) and set it in the path of a deadly hurricane (Matthew) and you have a recipe for disaster.

Hurricane Matthew left a path of destruction in its wake when it hit Haiti in October 2016.

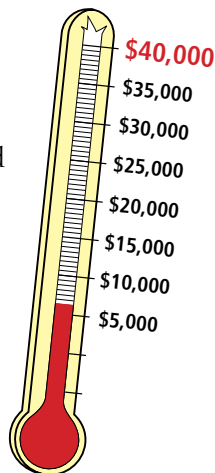
Left behind were more than 1.4 million people requiring humanitarian assistance and more than 1,000 dead.

Whole blocks in Les Cayes, Port Salut and Jérémie were turned to rubble; houses, trees and cell towers were destroyed; churches were left in ruins; people waited on the beaches for ships delivering aid; crops were devastated and water was left undrinkable.

Knowing of the danger the Haitians faced, OMI Lacombe responded to the call for help. In the last issue of *Oblate Spirit*, MAMI members were asked to assist the people of this destitute country in a time of such dire need, and many of you opened your hearts. As we went to press with this publication, \$6,615 has been offered by the MAMI family.

We want to raise \$40,000. Every little bit helps bring us closer to that goal.

They need our help. Please?





# Aid for Ukraine

Poverty and homelessness have no borders, and are exacerbated when a city or country face a prolonged crisis. That is the situation in Ukraine, which has been in a difficult situation since November of 2013, when then-president Viktor Yanukovich suspended an association agreement with the European Union.

Massive protests ensued and the country slipped into ongoing chaos bordering on civil war. As in many cases when this occurs, some of the victims are those on the fringes of society: the children, the poor and the homeless.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) in Ukraine are caring for the marginalized, and the Canadian Oblates have agreed to assist their Ukrainian brethren with two projects.

The Oblates in the city of Chernihiv are involved with a children's community centre that assists poor families.



A new dishwasher

“We would like to extend our help to these children by offering free English courses to them,” wrote Pavlo Vyshkovskiy, OMI.

They are also extending the invitation to children of refugee families from the war zone in East Ukraine. “This would be a good chance to attract those children, and their parents, to the Church, so they could experience God’s love and mercy,” he said.

MAMI agreed to pay for a salary for a teacher for one year (\$1,145), municipal and utility fees for one year (\$2,456), snacks for the children (\$1,734), textbooks (\$1,300), and computer and audio equipment (\$3,323) for a total of \$10,258.

A second project funded by MAMI is in Kiev, where the Oblates in Ukraine care for homeless and low-income seniors. They needed 300 sets of reusable plastic dishes for hot and cold food as well as a dishwasher to sterilize the utensils. Costs included \$1,944 for spoons, forks, plates and cups, and \$6,603 for a dishwasher. The funding total came to \$8,547 for Kiev.



# Tears of Joy

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

CHINCHA ALTA, Peru – There is a street in an area called the ‘red zone’ where one very poor family lived between the two neighbouring walls. The father worked at odd jobs and the mother of five small children washed clothes for others.

One day the mother spoke to one of my workers about our ‘housing project’ and she wanted to take advantage of our generous offer. But, because the family had no money to pay for the labour, the woman went to a moneylender. She asked for 1,600 soles, about \$600.

She signed a contract – like signing one’s soul to the devil – and had up to 2.5 years to pay off the debt. In reality that could not be done because the father could barely support the family with food.

Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI,  
“building homes starts in the pit”





Regardless, the woman came to see Walter and gave him the money to pay for the labour. Walter was most surprised and asked how she got the money. She told him a money-lender gave her the funds and described how she was to pay it back. In turn, Walter explained to me how she got the money.

“Walter,” I said, “this is a very bad deal for the woman and her family because money lenders are not people of justice and show no mercy for the poor. Go back to this lady and tell her to return the money to the person who gave it to her.”

So Walter did just that. He and the woman went to the moneylender’s well-built house to return the loan. The man was not at all kind and said the woman must respect the contract that she willingly signed. But Walter insisted the man tear up the contract and he obliged.

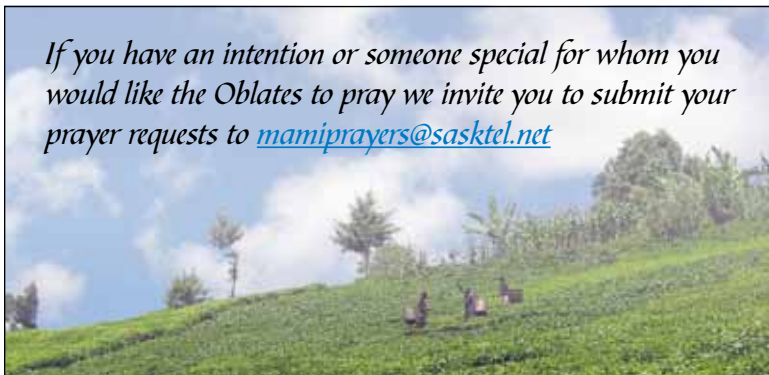
Now what?

“Wait a second Walter,” I said. “Here is what I want you to do.” I gave him the money needed for the labour to get the woman’s house built. Walter shook his head in bewilderment.

“Walter, go back to the woman’s shack and tell her that her house is to be built and tell her to pray for the great souls that send me donations to do what we do –helping God’s little ones, the poor!”

Walter gladly took the money and quickly went to see the family. Upon hearing the good news the woman cried. Keeping our word, her house was quickly built.

*If you have an intention or someone special for whom you would like the Oblates to pray we invite you to submit your prayer requests to [mamiprayers@sasktel.net](mailto:mamiprayers@sasktel.net)*



# An influential bishop

BY SANDY MASSINE

OTTAWA – My initial experience with the Oblates was in 1965 when I attended St. Patrick's College in Ottawa. My name was Sandy Tobin and I was raised in Renfrew, ON. I was teaching with the Ottawa Separate School Board in 1966.

It was during this time that a friend mentioned a party and was told "the more the merrier" so having nothing better to do I went along. I hadn't been told that the guest of honour was Bishop Fergus O'Grady, OMI, and he was recruiting for his mission work in northern British Columbia.

He asked if I had a boyfriend, which I did not at the time. He said if I came to work he'd get me one. I told him I wasn't really interested but he continued to tell me about the work he was doing. The next morning he phoned me and asked if I was now going. Between his persuasion and the working of the Holy Spirit, I finally agreed and ended up with a Grade 4 teaching position in Dawson Creek.

Meanwhile, Clarence Massine from Chilliwack, BC, was working in Prince George, BC, in 1966. He attended a Legion of Mary meeting where Arleigh Fitzgerald was looking for people to join Bishop O'Grady's project to have a Catholic school in every community in his diocese, headed by a Catholic college in Prince George. He ultimately succeeded. In 1967, the Centennial year in Canada, he also had a secondary project to have married or engaged 100 couples, another goal he managed to fulfil. We were a part of this.

Clarence had already taught for a year in Smithers, BC. He then signed up for another year to teach in Dawson Creek.

I travelled by train to Prince George and was met at the

station by Clarence, who was asked to meet volunteers at the train station.

One evening in the community room I had cold hands, which he warmed for me. The rest was history. We were married on June 15, 1968, in Renfrew. Next year, God willing, we will celebrate our 50th anniversary.

Our son David and wife Kelly have given us a granddaughter and grandson. Along with our daughter Kathleen and husband Brent, they all live in Ottawa. Both were born in Chilliwack. In 1973 we moved to Vancouver, where our parish church was St. Peter's, an Oblate parish. In 1978 we moved east, where once again we were in an Oblate parish, St. Joseph's.

We have also attended a Frontier Apostolate reunion at Galilee House in Arnprior. We are thankful to the Oblates, especially Bishop O'Grady, for all the blessings we have received and continue to receive over the years. We also cherish the wonderful people we met and lived with from Ireland, England and of course Canada. It was an experience not to be forgotten.

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## Fond memories

**BY JAN HANCOCK**

**NORTHVANCOUVER** – From the time my husband Rick Hancock was a little boy, his uncle Fr. Ferdinand Thibault, who was an Oblate of the French-speaking area of Edmonton and who taught at St Joseph's College, was instrumental in his life.

Fr. Thibault was a loving, kind man who was very involved in all family occasions and married us in 1969, in a small village church in the parish of St Cyril's in Bellevue, AB.

Uncle Fernie was a smart man, a good listener and a role model for the children and adults who knew him, wise enough to advise teens and adults alike, on their faith and lifestyle concerns.



John Brioux, OMI

When we were married 13 years and living in Vancouver, we attended a worldwide marriage-encounter weekend. We met many committed, wonderful Oblate priests who journeyed with us for many years, giving weekends to couples, priests and sisters.

One of the Oblates was Fr. John Fitzgerald, who had wonderful humour and wisdom, and worked with marriage encounter and engaged encounter for more than 25 years. Others included Fr. Larry McLennan, Fr. Vincent LaPlante, a long serving parish priest at St. Paul's Church in North Vancouver, and our current Oblate priest, Fr. John Brioux, who is writing talks for marriage encounter weekends.

One of our fondest memories took place when our son Christopher was 11 years old. Bishop Lobsinger was having dinner with us. The B.C. Lions were playing football on our 16-inch television in the kitchen. We soon realized that the bishop was a gambling man, betting 25 cents on what play the quarterback would choose; a kick, a run, or a Hail Mary thrown to a receiver. We had a great time that day, laughing and seeing another side of that holy man.

There have also been dedicated diocesan priests who have contributed to our growth in faith throughout the 69 years we have been Roman Catholic, but I feel influenced and connected to our dedicated Oblates who have taken the vow of poverty and serving our Native Canadian peoples throughout the North and more remote areas of Canada.

So that is why we are sending a donation to the Oblates to help with the missions in Kenya, with the outreach there. Please receive with love.



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**Communications  
Coordinators:**

John and Emily Cherneski  
[lacombeissions@yahoo.ca](mailto:lacombeissions@yahoo.ca)

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