

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

Oblate Spirit



Christmas 2015



Joy

“If you think you’re too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room.”

- Anita Roddick



We were quite impressed by those few words as we began to prepare our annual Christmas issue of *Oblate Spirit*. Actually, they couldn’t be more fitting. How many times do we ask ourselves, “what can we do to help?” And how many times do we answer, “we can’t afford very much,” or “we don’t have the time.”

We are often struck with the thought that we can’t change the world, but often don’t realize what the gift of a smile can mean, or a simple thank-you, or a ‘can I help you’ to someone who appears lost.

So in the spirit of Christ and the Oblate family, we approach this festive season with a simple goal of making somebody’s day/life just a little bit better. In the following pages we offer a few simple ways to help many in need, to be missionaries to the poor. We can offer the warmth of a blanket, the comfort of a bed, the gift of education, the nutrition of milk for a malnourished child.

It may not seem like much. But we can make a difference. And it just might feel like we’ve succeeded in chasing that mosquito out of the room.

May this season bring peace to all!

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators

A photograph of a young child, likely a baby or toddler, with dark skin and short hair, smiling broadly. The child is wearing a light-colored shirt with thin horizontal stripes. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a wooden chair or structure.

Christmas Wish List

KENYA

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| School lunches | \$50 |
| Sports equipment | \$25 |
| School books | \$30 |
| School fees | \$250 |
| Méru women's prison supplies | \$50 |

BOLIVIA

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| Christmas packages..... | \$30 |
|-------------------------|------|

PERU

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| Milk for malnourished babies | \$30 |
| Bed | \$40 |
| Warm blankets | \$30 |

And a child shall lead them!

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

CHINCHA ALTA, Peru – I was recently visiting a family when I noticed many toys lying about the house. The young couple have two beautiful children, a six-year-old boy and recently-arrived girl. Before leaving the house I asked the boy if he could share some of his toys with other children his own age. The child looked at me and did not answer, but the expression on his young face was one of dismay!

A week later I was asked to return to this child's home because he decided to share some of his best toys. With me was my great friend Marcus, the grandfather of the boy who was waiting at the door with two large shopping bags filled with toys.

We drove six kilometres to visit a family with eight children. They were not living in a shack but rather under plastic sheets to shelter them from the cold. We stopped the car, the





The future is bleak for children in poverty

child got out with his bags of toys and walked to the entrance of the plastic-sheet dwelling and called to those inside.

Four youngsters appeared, all under the age of six and wearing summer clothing in our winter. The other four children were out with their parents collecting plastic bottles and cardboard.

The child entered with the two bags, and without saying a word began to hand out his toys to them. If only you could see the faces of these children ... so happy and full of smiles.

The boy returned to the car and was silent during the trip back to his home.

The next week we saw his mother Janet, a teacher, and she told us "my son was very sad to see how those children live and so little they have. He said 'Mom, I have a nice bedroom, a concrete floor, a clean bed, good food and good parents. It felt good to share my toys with the children and to help make them happy at least for the time being.'"

That six-year-old boy has taught us all a valuable life lesson.



Kenya wish list

FOOD FOR SCHOOL LUNCHES

Do you work well when you are hungry? Do you think school children can absorb their lessons if they are hungry?

Kenyan primary school children (aged 6 to 10) leave home without breakfast. When they get to school they sometimes sneak off at lunchtime to the fruit and vegetable market in the hope a stall keeper will give them something to eat.

The Oblates have started a project in the impoverished Kisaju area (the location of our new parish) in conjunction with the parents to provide food for the children. The Oblates will provide 70-kilogram sacks of beans and/or maize, as will the parents. Beans and maize are the main ingredients for a common dish called kithery. It is nutritious in protein and starch.

A 70-kilogram sack can be used to feed 700 children.

SPORTS EQUIPMENT

The Oblates encourage community-based youth activities for teenagers in Kionyo and Kisaju where the parishes are located. We would like to supply volleyball sets (nets and balls), soccer balls, sport shoes, shorts and t-shirts. We all know that teenagers who are occupied in healthy activities are less likely to get into trouble.

SCHOOL LUNCHES \$50

SPORTS EQUIPMENT \$25



SCHOOL BOOKS AND FEES

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

KENYA – As parish priests in Kenya we are often asked by low-income earning parents to help get some of our youth (15-18 years old) into secondary school. It is quite expensive for many families to go from the ‘free’ primary school system into the paid secondary system.

Even in primary, new books are like gold. Those hardest to help are the orphans or children from single parent families. They need to buy a Swahili dictionary, an English Dictionary and a Bible. It doesn’t seem like much, but because everybody needs one, they are difficult to buy second hand, unless an older sibling passes them down. The two dictionaries are more than \$20 each and the Bible is about \$10, all in Canadian dollars. Added together, it’s the same value as fees for one year of primary school.

As the birth of Jesus changed our world for the better, to a new way of seeing and thinking, these books will help open the minds of our youth to create a better world today.

SCHOOL BOOKS \$30

SCHOOL FEES \$250



MÉRU WOMEN'S PRISON

MÉRU, Kenya – The Oblates in Kenya provide support for those in need at the Méru women's prison, which is located in the middle of the city.

There is a need for toothpaste and toothbrushes, blankets, socks, shoes, hygienic pads, bras, pants, soap, children's clothing and toys, and school support for children of prisoners.

There are approximately 250 female prisoners. If women are pregnant or have a young baby, the child is kept with the mother until they are four years old. At that time the child is placed with a family member until the mother's release.

In the words of St. Eugene de Mazenod, "It is the task of justice, with both equity and severity, to establish guilt. Our duty is to ease their sufferings by every means in our power but above all with the consolations that religion brings."

SUPPLIES FOR WOMEN IN PRISON

\$50



Peru wish list

MILK FOR BABIES

The first substance we receive as we exit the womb and enter the world is milk. For many children in the world this basic need can only be met through supplements like powdered milk. Help provide this nourishment for malnourished babies at the Santa Clotilde hospital along the Napo River in the jungles of the Peruvian Amazon.



MILK FOR MALNOURISHED BABIES \$30





BEDS

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

PERU - Most of us spend at least seven hours per day in a bed, others even longer due to infirmity or old age. Beds, like just about everything else, wear out through use. They are needed just about everywhere, especially for the poor and the squatters, whether it is in cities or the countryside.

In our area we have many communities living in a state of squalor. In the last 30 months we have issued 730 beds, most of them for squatters, the elderly being cared for by nuns, elderly living in shacks, for the sick under the care of doctors, for sisters living among the poor where the centre of an earthquake hit our area in 2007, and yes, for two police stations!

Beds are given where beds for the poor are needed.

BLANKETS

During these last 30 months, 2,950 blankets were issued to those in need, again the poor people.

Every month there is a long sad line of elderly women and men that wait to get into the National Bank to collect their



cheque. Because there are so many of them the bank has four days set apart to deal with these souls. One poor man died while waiting for a cheque that does not even cover his food bill. Because these were people in need, our team gave out 200 blankets to those in the lineups.

At the jail where there are 1,400 inmates, we gave 1,172 blankets to inmates who have only the clothes on their backs to keep them warm.

Blankets were given to people who collect bottles, paper and trash to survive. We saw a need at two police stations and responded. Blankets were given to poor people working in the graveyard, and some to taxi drivers that earn very little in their great service to the people.

In short, there is always a need for these practical items.

| | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| BED | \$40 |
| BLANKETS | \$30 |

Bolivia wish list

We've all experienced the joy of lighting up a child's face with happiness and gratitude. Cristina Rodriguez and her helpers continue to brave barely accessible routes along narrow mountain roads to arrive in the poor rural communities of Cochabamba to bring that joy to children.

All these efforts are rewarded in the excited cry of the children as they descend from the mountains. The children's astonishment at the discovery of toys, supplies and food erases the fatigue of long dangerous trips required to arrive in these remote communities.

CHRISTMAS PACKAGES

\$30







The Catholic Women's Association (CWA) from Kionyo Parish recently visited the Méru Formation House, sharing gifts, mass, food and time to talk about formation and the support of the people of God to the formation of those who will be their priests tomorrow.





Andrew Stendzina, OMI, Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB,
Principal Catherine Oberndorf

A dream becomes reality

VANCOUVER – When St. Augustine School principal Catherine Oberndorf asked then-pastor John Brioux, OMI, about the need to replace the old school in Vancouver, he took a big deep breath. It was 1999, just two years after completion of a parish centre. The Oblate parish had taken on a mortgage and the church roof wasn't in great shape. A new school would be a challenge many times larger, and he wanted to make sure it was the right one.

Fr. Brioux first turned the great question over to the care of Our Lady and then asked a group of trusted parishioners to study the case for a new school. A committee was formed and met for more than a year before the 12 members recommended that the old school should be replaced.

The 15-year journey culminated this year when the new school opened its doors and a month later was blessed by Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, Fr. Brioux, OMI, and present pastor Fr. Andrew Stendzina, OMI, during a ceremony in October.

“It was 105 years ago that the Oblates of Mary Immaculate carried forward a vision and passion for Catholic education. Those of us blessed to call St. Augustine home share their passion, vision and belief in these same values for our young people,” said Principal Oberndorf.

“It’s a place where we can express God’s love by the way we treat each other, serve our neighbours and deepen our relationship with the Lord.”

An early decision was made to deepen the relationship between the school and parish, and to remind the community that the school is first and foremost an extension of the parish. This approach eventually led to the support of more than 1,000 donors who made nearly 3,000 gifts for a total of about \$7 million.

Over this same period both school parents and parishioners have given thousands of hours of volunteer time to support major fund-raising activities.

When detailed planning for the new school design began in earnest more than four years ago, extensive consultation with the teaching staff and other schools was conducted to learn from their experiences. Their advice was clear: the school should have good lighting with as much of it as natural as possible, a well-controlled heating system, and good air circulation.

The first phase of the new school was completed on budget at a total cost of \$10.4 million.

The next objective is to complete the five classrooms on the third floor, ideally by the fall of 2017 at an estimated cost of approximately \$1 million. The final phase will be the replacement of the gymnasium at a cost of approximately \$6 million.



Archbishop Sutton

1934-2015

OTTAWA – The Most Reverend Peter Sutton, OMI, Archbishop Emeritus of Keewatin-Le Pas, died on Sept. 5. He was ordained Bishop of Labrador City-Schefferville in 1974 and in 1986 was named Archbishop of Keewatin-Le Pas. In 2006, at the age of 71, he offered his resignation to the Holy Father because of health problems.



Archbishop Sutton was ordained to the priesthood in October 1960 as a member of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Archbishop Sutton's missionary heart was well documented in an article he penned in 2012 for Catholic Missions in Canada. Following are some of his words:

"A couple of months ago, I was privileged and humbled to receive the St. Joseph Award from Catholic Missions in Canada. It's an annual award recognizing a missionary, a community, or several missionaries who have served in missions of the North. I am honoured to have shared both the pastoral work and the responsibility with so many generous men and women.

"I am aware, and I, too, want to recognize the people who are really missionaries, who made the missionary endeavours possible ... (those) who have shown their interest and have been generous contributors when it came to supporting missions and missionaries over the years.

"When I progressed from priest to bishop to archbishop, I always felt and realized that I was not alone in answering the call of the Lord. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate kept gathering us together, inviting us and our families to share in our missionary endeavours.

“Unprepared but hopeful, I did what had to be done – travelling in and with everything, from Skidoo to Hercules aircrafts, from helicopter to float plane.

“There was always something to be rebuilt, Catechetical programs to institute, sick to visit, sacraments to celebrate, and stories to tell.

“To discover the central and northern parts of Canada was a rich experience. The Aboriginal communities were larger and older (than those in the North), with a better sense of their history. One had the sense of a more-travelled people, and it was always a given to share travelling and educational, cultural, artistic and musical experience.”



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? With the tax law introduced in 2006, 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.





BY LEONARDO REGO, OMI

OTTAWA – Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) is in the planning stages for what is expected to be a busy 2016-2017 across Canada in conjunction with our Oblate brothers and allies.

We presently have several joint collaborations between JPIC OMI Lacombe and St. Paul University in Ottawa that are planned for the fall.

In September we held a live viewing of the papal address to the UN followed by a panel discussion, while a symposium in October was focused on end-of-life issues.

November features a symposium on mining – a follow-up to last year's event in Ottawa. The underlying theme is *Laudate Si*, the encyclical letter from Pope Francis on care for our common home. We are hoping to create an ongoing, respectful dialogue between the mining stake-holders with a view to tackling "the challenges associated with the development of mining resources in Canada and abroad and by extension the planet's natural resources in the pursuit of the common good".

*(For more information on JPIC activities,
e-mail Leonardo Rego at jplic@omilacombe.ca)*



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 www.oblatemissionassociates.ca 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.

Oblate Mission travelnews

Since 2004, Oblate Mission Travel has been leading small group volunteer experiences to Oblate missions around the world. Participants are able to experience daily life with the Oblate missionaries who have answered God's call to work with the poor.

You are invited to join us in May 2016 for a visit to the Kenya mission founded in 1997. The Oblates have established roots and witnessed spiritual and economic growth in three communities – Kionyo, Igandene and Méru. For the first time, participants will experience the Oblate's newest parish in Kisaju in the Ngong Diocese south of Nairobi. By visiting this new mission, participants will not only get to see a stark contrast geographically in this semi-desert region, they will also get to share the experience of starting a new mission with the Oblates.

In addition to joining the Oblates in their daily work, participants will be invited to volunteer their time and energies to an orphanage in Méru, Oblate supported secondary schools and local primary schools. Participants will be encouraged to connect with a school in their home community that will be twinned with a school in Kenya and help to create a direct link between Canada and Kenya. We will celebrate the impact MAMI supporters have made on the people of Kionyo as we visit the Women's Co-operative Bakery and the water project.

There will be daily mass and group prayer and the experience will include a spiritual director and a tour director.

For more information, please contact Oblate Mission Travel at 604-736-3972 or by e-mail at omimissiontrip@gmail.com.



In Your Words

BY KATHLEEN BACH

I would like to express my thanks to all the men who gave up everything to follow Christ into the missions of Canada. I came to be baptized in the Catholic Church when an Oblate bishop in the north took the time to remind my dad, a lapsed Irish Catholic, that I was a child of God.

From there I was blessed to attend a Catholic school, supervised by our Oblate priests. How they ever managed the flocks of small children who swarmed around them in the playground or the slow teenagers in Latin class, I will never know. But we grew up knowing the Church was our refuge and help because that's what we received from our Oblates.

They dispensed advice, mediated family fights, fed us spiritually and physically, and modeled the Love of Christ ... all with a laugh and boundless energy.

It was an Oblate brother who approved of my chosen partner in life, an Oblate pastor who drove 1,000 miles to marry us, a semi-retired Oblate who visited me after surgery in the hospital, and an Oblate who consoled me when my mother died on the feast of Mary Immaculate.

Pat Keane, OMI, (see picture below) married us and became honorary "Papa" to our babies who are in their 50s now and still talk about him! There is always a special place in

my heart and prayers for an Oblate parish. I know times are changing but I hope that during the 200th celebrations next year, you will all know the value of what the Oblates have done for individuals in the remotest parts of Canada.





Oblate Vaughan Quinn visiting with his brother Oblates

Fond memories

BY ERNIE SCULLY

SARNIA, ON – I was born and raised in the small mining town of Cobalt in Northern Ontario.

In the early 1950s and while in my early teens we at St. Patrick's Church in Cobalt used to have yearly missions and in most cases the missionaries were Oblates.

One in particular that I remember was Fr. Quinn who was especially good with us young fellows. I believe he had a sister in Cobalt at the time. I was an altar boy until and including Grade 12. A short while after Fr. Quinn returned to Ottawa, there would be that letter in the mail, friendly and encouraging us young fellows to consider the Oblates in our future.

Thus developed my 'soft spot' for the Oblates. I had an older brother, M.J. Scully, who did become a priest in the Timmins diocese, serving from 1953 – 2011.

Christ among us

BY JIM HELLMAN

SALVADOR, Brazil – I was late, and in ‘overdrive’ as usual. It was Dec. 20, under a hot summer sun. The Christmas and year-end rush was upon us, our school year ending and final exams, exam results, festivities and all. It meant rushing in all directions at the same time.

I was late and was supposed to be at the airport to pick up Humboldt Elizabethan Sister Imaculata, OSE, in a half an hour. After 30 minutes on the phone I finally got through to the airport, only to find out that the plane was on time, this time, and that I should have used my ever-so-valuable time to get there on time.

Just as I kissed my wife Iêda goodbye and bolted to get out the door, the phone rang. “For you, Jim. An emergency!” Iêda looked concerned. It was Joseline, her sister on the phone, and she sounded serious.

“Jim, there is a man lying out on the street beside the garbage dump near our condominium. He is inside a large plastic bag to protect him from the rain. His family left him here two days ago. We give him food and water, but he is dying now. Can you get an ambulance to help us?”

“Ambulance? No. I don’t have time to try to find an ambulance. But my hatch-back Volks Parati car can serve as an ambulance. If I fold down the seats I can carry the man lying down. I’ll be there in 10 minutes”.

The scene was absolutely depressing – a 40-degree hot sun, a garbage pile the size of a semi-trailer. The guy was lying there, alone, in a large heavy plastic bag the size and shape of a person. A squealing-banging-clanging garbage truck was there with three workers picking up the garbage, apparently totally oblivious of him.

The 130-decibel noise pitch, the heat, and garbage-removal stench were overwhelming. How can I talk to this guy? No

one could give me any information. There was no one around, except for the workers who were absolutely indifferent to this man's destiny.

I knelt, and as I came near his head to talk to him, I noticed that he was lying in slimy liquid. A whiff of the horrific indescribable smell of rotting human flesh overwhelmed me. I nearly vomited right on the man's face. I had never ever experienced such a horrible smell. I wheezed, and wheezed again, pivoting back on my knees just in time to vomit away from his head.

Then I stood there, dazed, hopelessly alone, helplessly praying: "Jesus, what the heck would YOU do in this impossible situation? YOU got me into this. Help me get out of it!" Then I remembered Mother Theresa, kneeling on the street, dressing the wounds of a leper with this same horrible rotting-human-flesh smell, and an American photographer saying, "Mother Theresa, I wouldn't do THAT for a million dollars!!" She smiled at him, "Neither would I."

There I stood, alone, unable to think clearly because of the ridiculous noise pitch, unbelievable garbage-removable stench and human-rotting-flesh stench still stuck in my stomach. I was in shock. I felt like screaming at the unjust situation that a human being, image and likeness of God, had been submitted to.

I felt like crying, being so absolutely helpless, not knowing what to do. I felt like running away as Sister Mac had arrived at the airport by this time. Not knowing which way to turn, I was about to ask the garbage men for help.

Then I spotted a young man standing a few metres away, looking at me.

"Do you want help?" he gestured.

"Yeeeeessss" I shouted over and above the shrieking garbage truck.

He shouted, telling me that he had been giving food and water to this man for the past two days. I backed my

hatch-back car in alignment with the man's head. We agreed to breathe deeply, and at my sign, lift the man into the car.

I left the trunk lid open as we drove, to make the smell less unbearable. Then, as we went up a hill, the trunk lid slammed down and drove a wave of putrid air to the front seat. I drove the next two kilometres to an emergency centre with my head totally outside the window. The young fellow, too, had his head outside the passenger window.

When we arrived at emergency, two male nurses came with a stretcher to get the man. When they leaned into the car to lift the man onto the stretcher, they jumped back and yelled, "He can't come in here. He stinks too much. He is filthy. Take him to Sister Dulce's hospital."

Now what? The airport? Sister is waiting? The other hospital is half an hour drive from here. Will they take him there? He may die on the way? A thousand questions raced through my mind.

I chose the other hospital, where we put him on a stretcher. I knew the door guards wouldn't let us in if we were polite, so we started running up the ramp, shouting as loud as I could, shoving every which way to clear the path for the stretcher, and in we raced, through the door, shoving aside the astounded off-guard guards. The guards wanted to push us out, but the stench was just too much, so they backed off. Luckily threatening looks don't kill, or I would have been a dead duck right then and there!

Then the young fellow said, "I know you are late for the airport. Go! I'll take care of the rest. I'll get him out of this plastic bag and into a shower, wash and clean him for medical care. Just go. Don't worry about me. I'll take care of the situation."

Airport! Poor Sister Mac. After waiting for nearly two hours, she thought I'd forgotten her arrival day and time.

Once home, after getting Sister Mac into Iêda's care, I returned to emergency. The only information I could get from medical care was that the young fellow got the man into a

shower, washed, cleaned and shaved, then got him to the operating table and saved his life from wounds, infection, fatigue and acute dehydration.

I want back to search for the young man. No one knew his name. No one could tell me where he lived. No one could tell me where he was. No one knew.

After a few days I returned to emergency, but the man had already been discharged. No address.

One thing became clear: Jesus used that young fellow to save this man's life. As St. Paul has it in Philippians 1:21 "For to me, to live is Christ!"

What a beautiful lesson of love, service and courage that young man gave me! Christmas: Christ born and reborn in and among us! Did Jesus simply use an angel, in the figure of a young man, to announce His coming and re-birth within each of us and among us, once again?

(Jim Hellman is a former Oblate from Saskatchewan who serves in Brazil.)

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: lacombemami@sasktel.net





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in your will?

*Your gift to AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI
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*Oblate
Spirit*

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