

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

# Oblate Spirit



September 2015

*Beyond Borders*



# A world of possibilities



We chose the theme “Beyond Borders” because it incorporates the geographical connotation we associate with Oblate missions, and the psychological aspect of reaching beyond one’s normal way of thinking.

We found the latter evident in some of the stories we offer in this issue of Oblate Spirit. We were touched by the fundraising efforts of Oblate supporters in Canada and England, and the many creative ways in which people responded. When you can bag horse manure and turn it into funds for a hospital in Peru, you have achieved something significant.

Then there is the Oblate priest in Indonesia who watched as Islamic youth were integrated into a Catholic wedding ceremony, only because they happened to be present at the time. That is reaching beyond borders, a small step that can perhaps help bridge the divide that a small group of religious fanatics have created.

With the help of Canadian Oblate Jim Fiori, children with disabilities at an orphanage in Kenya were treated to a day of joy when face painters, magicians and acrobats attended a fun day organized by an Italian family.

Oblate missionaries continue to reach across the great divides that separate people, divides created by disability, by strife, by prison walls, by geography and by income disparity.

We all are missionaries. We thank you!

*John and Emily Cherneski*  
*Communications Coordinators*

# The joy of the Gospel

BY JIM FIORI, OMI

KENYA – It was during my time as the chaplain for the Children of God, Nyumbani Centre, which is an HIV/Aids orphanage, that the joy of the Gospel came alive in so many ways.

There are a number of families who choose to attend mass at the orphanage on Sundays, most of them Italian. It is in this context that I have come to know Carla and Diago Canttelin.

Two years ago I learned that Carla and Diago were working with families with disabilities. You can appreciate that there are not too many services available for people with disabilities in Kenya. These people have organized an NGO that serves to provide aid to families with disabilities.

They asked me if I would be able to help them fund a fun day for these families. I received a contribution of 50,000 Kenya Shillings (about \$500 Canadian). I endeavoured to attend the



event last year, but Nairobi is not known for its signage, and while I was close to the function I did not make it.

The following year we made another contribution of 50,000 Kenya Shillings and this time I made it to the function, joining the convoy of the Canttelin family to the event.

My visit began with an introduction to the various players in this project. I learned for example that they provide some basic services like physiotherapy and they have a social worker that helps the families cope with their responsibility of caring and nurturing disabled children. This is Kenya so there are not many resources available from the public purse. These people have worked hard at getting funding, principally from Italy, to make a difference.

And the people came! I was taken aback by the number of people who showed up. There must have been at least 200 and of course they all came with their children. The range of disabilities covered the entire spectrum.

The funding that we contributed was directed toward the entertainment. You can imagine that these people don't often get to have fun! Our contribution enabled them to bring in face painters, magicians and acrobats. What a wonderful experience it was to hear the laughter and delight of the children









(the big children too) as the magicians performed their magic and the acrobats defied gravity and human flexibility.

Before the entertainment there was a program that served to encourage families with disabilities. There were a number of speakers, most of whom have serious disabilities like blindness, who shared their stories of hope.

I was somewhat surprised to see my name on the list of presenters. I endeavoured to share with them that even the handicapped are created in the image and likeness of God. As parents they are not being punished but rather God only entrusts these special children to those who can love them. Disabilities are not a sign of a curse, but rather of blessing.

I was moved by the commitment these people have made and make for some of the poorest people in the country. They are indeed missionaries. While not specifically an Oblate undertaking, it is certainly something that I as an Oblate am happy to support.

I thank you, our supporters, for your generosity in making it possible for us to make a difference in peoples' lives. Pope Francis encourages us to share the joy of the Gospel. Seeing these children laughing, clapping and dancing with glee was indeed an expression of the joy of the Gospel.

*(Fr. Fiori was the Kenya mission superior and has since returned to Canada.)*

# Beyond borders

BY MOE SCHROEDER, OMI

PERU - This is a story about all our benefactors who donate to the Santa Clotilde medical work in the Peruvian Amazon. We would like to share two of these recent stories about people who, like yourselves, reach out to help others beyond their own borders.

**Arthur Allore**, the Grade 8 teacher, along with principal Michele McGrath and the staff of St. Carthagh's parish school in Tweed, ON, organized this year's Lenten school activities to aid the Santa Clotilde hospital. The students raised more than \$1,700 and have contributed this money for a chicken-raising project for the patients' food supply in the hospital. We are grateful to them for their generous out-reach.

**Fr. Kevan Hayden**, the pastor of St. Matthias Parish in Surrey, England, invited his parishioners to adopt Pango Canada and the Santa Clotilde Hospital as the beneficiaries of







their parish Lenten activities. An extraordinarily creative set of projects were devised by the parishioners and carried out with inspiring results. Christine Donovan walked the Santiago de Compostela Way (113 kilometres) in Spain and raised about \$3,000.

Children and adults collaborated in imaginative projects, including bake sales, Lenten lunches, raffles, knitting circles, ironing services, barn dance, races, school concert and social events. One couple, who board their horse at a riding stable, offered bags of fertilizer to gardeners in a “Poo for Pango” delivery project.

The parish raised more than \$14,000 for our hospital. The funds will be spent on repairs of boat motors, renovations of the medical volunteers’ house and the chicken-raising project. We thank them all and are inspired by their example.

We share with you these examples of donor generosity for their creativity and their willingness to share because they are symbolic of all you generous benefactors who accompany and have accompanied our people of the far-away Napo, brothers and sisters whom you may never see, but who are present to you because you extend a helping hand beyond your borders. Our people congratulate and thank you.



# Children at risk

BY ALFRED GROLEAU, OMI

MERU, Kenya – Last November a government child care officer said that Kenya has 1.5 million children who are destitute. This would explain the number of orphanages across the country and also the great number of children living on the streets.

Those with disabilities are most at risk because they lack the defences for survival. In a visit to Nyahururu in 2008, Jean Vanier discovered that 2,000 such children exist in the vicinity of that city alone. This suggests that there are many more countrywide.

One doesn't have to look far to find children in need of protection. When I visited the Jesus, Mary and Joseph Rehabilitation Centre in Kenya earlier this year, I met Faith Nkirote and her two children Aloise Mutia and Muriki, both with disabilities. Faith also has three other children.

I since learned that their father tried to dispose of his children by feeding them poisoned bread. It was an act of desperation, no doubt. He has been apprehended and fortunately the children were rescued and provided with care.

Time magazine hit us with striking information about youth in Africa in its December 2012 issue:

- The average age in sub-Saharan Africa in 2010 is 18.6.
- The increase in number of African schoolchildren in the next decade will be 108 million.
- By 2100, more than a third of the world's young people will live in sub-Saharan Africa.



- By 2050, 21 per cent of the world's labour force will be in sub-Saharan Africa. It is now 10 per cent. Yet only 39.5 per cent of youths are enrolled in secondary school now. The percentage in Kenya may be higher.
- In 40 years, the population of sub-Saharan Africa will have more than doubled.

On a positive note, youth are much more present in our church in Kenya than in Canada. At the Méru University of Science and Technology, the students fill a large classroom every Sunday and even the weekday attendance exceeds 100.

This year Fr. Francis Rewa invited me to assist him in his ministry at the university, so I have been offering the university students Sunday and mid-week masses. The request came because he was overwhelmed with his responsibilities as the founder of two orphanages (one for 300 boys, another for 300 girls) for destitute children near the villages of Tigania and Ncheru, where he is also the pastor of the parishes.

The youth participation is vibrant. Liturgical dances are a regular part of mass, except during Lent. The singing from this group can shake the rafters. The choir is well rehearsed and the whole congregation joins in. Students in IT demonstrate their skills by projecting texts for singing, the readings of the day and power points for homilies.

Because youth are so active in our parishes, they are a prime market for our vocation promotion. Many answer invitations to join our formation programs, and the Oblates in Kenya are keen to explore this field of youth ministry.





Dionisius Ananua, OMI

# A fruitful first year

**BY DIONISIUS ANANUA, OMI**

**KENYA MISSION** – I celebrated my first anniversary of ordination to the priesthood on June 21, vividly recalling the day when Archbishop Emeritus Sylvain Lavoie of Keewatin-Le Pas conferred the Holy Sacrament of Orders to me.

The day was beautiful, the skies blue and cloudy, the celebration colourful and the liturgical singing moving. It was the day when my childhood desire was not only crowned but also when I was fully absorbed into the ministry of service in the vineyard of God.

Since then I was appointed an assistant pastor in a parish and my ministry has been fruitful. My ministry, apart from sacramental celebrations, involves working with the youth, visiting the sick at home and hospitals, home visits, care to the elderly and pastoral counselling on individual and family issues.

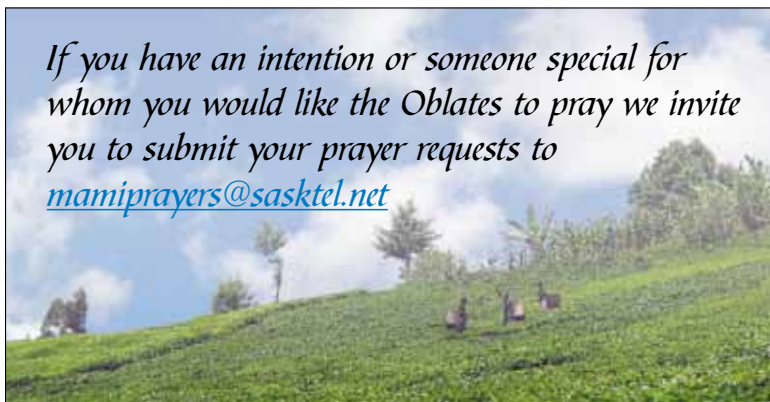
In youth ministry, I have been conducting a monthly youth recollection day combined with a human development program. This program is aimed at helping youth grow into spiritually and well integrated people.



I have had an apostolic experience in sacramental ministry. Jesus dispatched his disciples to proclaim the Good News to the world, telling prisoners they are prisoners no more, telling the blind that they can see and to help set the downtrodden free. I have been a witness to all this, seeing hope restored to the sick and even the captives of mind and spirit released. I have also witnessed many baptisms and conducted several weddings. Indeed the Oblate call “Evangelizare pauperibus misit me; Pauperes evangelizantur” (He has sent me to evangelize the poor; the poor are evangelized) is still relevant to today’s world.

I am thankful to God. It has been a year full of blessing, and I have been deeply touched by the faith and the spirit of the people to whom I have been evangelizing. They are witnesses of the hand of God in their personal lives and in their families. It has been a year of grace. I pray that God continues permeating into the work to which I have been entrusted.

*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)*







Faustin Litanda, OMI

# Prison worship

Prisoners in Méru joined Christians from around the world to celebrate Corpus Christi Sunday with devotion and faith. Other Christians who like coming to the Méru Prison Catholic Chapel joined the prisoners. So, many were there to adore and venerate the sacred Body of Christ. The mass was conducted





by Faustin Litanda, OMI, the chaplain of Méru Prison. After mass there was the procession of the Body of Christ in the prison's compound. Even military personnel and other members of the prison staff were present to make it a colourful and prayerful day.

## 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](mailto:lacombemami@sasktel.net)**



# Our new home

BY PAUL FACHET, OMI

SASKATOON –“Wow! Look at those crystal chandeliers, that classy fireplace. Why, there’s even a simulated hanging waterfall, and huge vases with freshly cut flowers on the tables, elegant, leather upholstered sofas, and posh carpets. Looks like a five-star hotel.”

Such are the comments visitors make as they step into the large main lobby of Trinity Manor at Stonebridge (TMAS), the new home of the Oblates who, back in October, 2014, moved out of Mazenod Residence, their home for more than 25 years that was demolished in March, 2015.

Trinity Manor is a huge, sprawling, three-story structure, built as a senior’s residence by Catholic Health Ministries of Saskatchewan. It is located in the Stonebridge district of Saskatoon in the midst of a mushrooming sector of this rapidly expanding city.

The entire edifice houses 173 condos or rental suites. It is divided into two sections: the independent-living section, with more than 130 suites, and the assisted-living section, with more than 40 suites and a nurses’ station with nursing staff on duty 24/7.

In October, 2014, seven Oblates from Mazenod Residence moved into seven assisted-living suites on the second floor



of wing E. From the day they moved in these Oblates began sharing the corridor and dining room on the second floor with other assisted-living residents, mainly women religious but also lay persons both women and men, single and married. Thus, from the very start, the original contingent of seven Oblates living at TMAS has been experiencing significant change and newness as members of a larger, more complex Christian community with all of its stresses and richness.

In November, 2014, nearly a month after the seven 'pioneer' Oblates had moved in, a second contingent of six Oblates began occupying suites on the first floor of the independent-living section. Beyond the lobby and elevators is a mail room, staff offices, a large exercise room and a swimming pool.

There is a main large dining room with an adjacent bistro plus outdoor patios. The dining room is brightly lit by multiple chandeliers and with an attractive fireplace in the middle. It seats more than 100 with four to a table. An 'open table' policy for seating provides a wonderful opportunity for the residents, guests and staff to mingle freely and share in conversation, make new acquaintances, reconnect with old friends and deepen relationships. Thus, it is mainly here that a spirit of Christian community is fostered and deepened. This has proven to be a blessing for everyone at TMAS, including the Oblates.

On the second floor of the central hub of the independent-living section is a beauty salon, a conference room, a decorative fireplace with sitting area, a multi-purpose area serving both as theatre for watching movies and videos, and as an extension to the chapel beyond. The chapel is rectangular in shape,



Jadwiga Cwik (former cook at Mazenod)  
with birthday cake for Bishop  
Gerry Weisner, OMI



being wider than long, and seats about 70. Here, at least three times a day, the Oblates gather for morning prayer, mass before noon, and evening prayer. Others, mainly women religious, join in the daily prayer. On Sundays, a much larger congregation including visitors gathers to celebrate mass.



Paul Fachet, OMI

On the third floor of the hub of the independent-living section is a self-serve, honors system library, a computer nook, another decorative fireplace with a sitting area, and a large arts, crafts and hobby room that is available to all residents.

Besides daily prayer in the chapel, twice a month the 13 Oblates of TMAS gather in the second floor conference room to participate in an hour-long faith-sharing session including 'happy hour.' This is followed by evening prayer in the chapel. At every other bi-monthly session, the 'happy hour' follows evening prayer. Then we all proceed downstairs to the main dining room for supper together.

Moreover, about twice a month, usually on Thursday afternoon, two of the support staff of the Oblate district community plus two former cooks of Mazenod Residence join the Oblates of TMAS in the small dining room on the second floor of the assisted-living wing (E). There, we share coffee and the pastry (cake if an Oblate's birthday is being celebrated) generously baked by one of the visitors, as well as humour, updates and stories. Such moments of sharing help foster our community spirit and are very much appreciated by all.

Thus, after more than eight months of adapting to the new life within the larger community of TMAS, the 13 Oblates there seem to have begun the process of integration very well. Consequently, although the physical appearance of TMAS may continue to strike a visitor as being that of a five-star hotel, it has nevertheless begun to feel like our new home.

# Building bridges with Islam

BY CHARLIE BURROWS, OMI

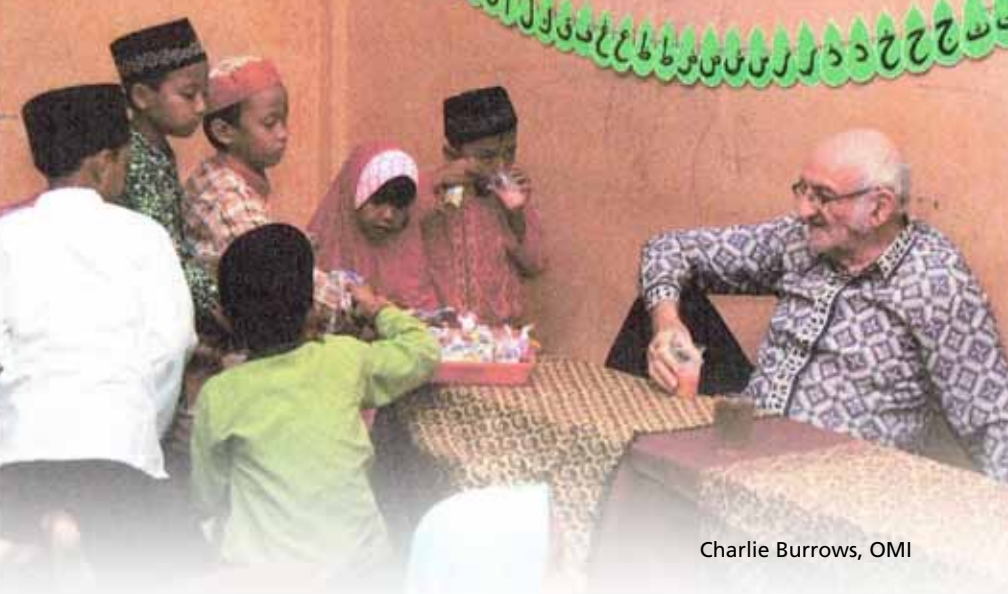
CILACAP, Indonesia – With all the negative attention being given to Islam because of the atrocities of I.S.I.L or Islamic State, the efforts of continuous dialogue get lost. So I share the following.

We live in Central Java, Indonesia, a region with more than two million people. Only 2.5 per cent are Catholic, Protestant, Hindu or Buddhist, while the remaining 97.5 per cent are Islamic.

In June I received a phone call telling me that the children from a local Pesantren (Islamic) school were on the way to our church for a “study tour” to see what a Catholic church looked like and to meet a Catholic priest and presumably see what he looked like.

I explained to the caller that I had a wedding in the church 15 minutes later, but urged them to come anyway. The children arrived just as the wedding was finishing, but because we have troops of monkeys in big cages behind the presbytery,





Charlie Burrows, OMI

the children amused themselves studying the monkeys and vice-versa.

When they returned to the church I invited them in as the wedding party was heading for the church veranda to release two white doves and lots of balloons. There are two balconies in the church and the children could enjoy the view from the second one.

However, the wedding group invited the children to hold the balloons for the releasing ceremony, which the children thoroughly enjoyed.

We shared a snack with the children after a photo with the “chief monkey” (me). We can only hope that interaction from an early age will help better relations in the future.



## Gift Payment Option



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# Celebrating truth, reconciliation and healing

**BY RICHARD WINK**

OTTAWA – The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 2008 as a result of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. Its purpose was to give a voice to victims of the residential schools system so that they could express the injustices, pain and suffering they had experienced as a first step to healing and putting the past behind them. At the same time, it provided an opportunity for the Christian churches and civil society to understand the damage it had done to First Nations people and to participate in the process of forgiveness and healing.

The closure of the TRC was celebrated from May 31 to June 3 this year in Ottawa through a number of public events culminating in the presentation of the TRC recommendations. Acting as agents of the government, the Oblate community had a large role in setting up and running residential schools and has made two public apologies for its involvement, expressing its deepest sorrow and remorse for the abuses that took place. The JPIC OMI Lacombe office in Ottawa took the initiative to organize a Eucharistic celebration at St. Joseph's Parish on May 30 to recognize the importance of the occasion. Three Oblate parishes (St. Joseph's, Sacré Coeur and Canadian Martyrs in conjunction with the Kateri Native Ministry of Ottawa)



co-operated in putting together a deeply spiritual experience for a congregation of more than 250.

The church was decorated with magnificent Native art work. Twenty-one Oblate priests and five bishops, representing the 19 First Nations parishes they serve across the country, concelebrated a service that included a smudging ceremony, the six directions prayer, drumming and choral music from the Kateri Ministry community, and joint choirs from the three parishes. The homily by Ken Forster, OMI, was insightful, reflective and did not in any way avoid the responsibilities of the Christian churches and civil society. Mary Lou Iahtail conducted the final blessing with gleeful good humour, instructing the bishops to sit because she had a few words to say. A video of the service can be seen on YouTube and the JPIC OMI Lacombe website.

The Eucharistic celebration was a deeply moving spiritual experience of forgiveness and hope, an encounter with God inviting us to commit ourselves to solidarity with our First Nations brothers and sisters. We recognize that we are at the beginning of a long road of spiritual growth and reconciliation and that there is much work ahead of us.

The Oblate community is making a start on this work by co-operating with St Paul's University in developing courses that will educate students about the TRC recommendations and their implications for the Christian churches and civil society. In parallel with this activity, it is expected workshops will be offered at the parish level.

JPIC OMI Lacombe will continue to seek ways of enhancing our relationship with Native People and of advocating for respect for their culture, traditions and spirituality as well as for economic justice for all.

# 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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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.



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*Oblate  
Spirit*

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*A publication of the  
Oblate Mission office.*

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can be given through:  
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**Printed in Canada by:**

St. Peter's Press  
Muenster, SK

**AMMI Lacombe MAMI**  
Canada