

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

# Oblate Spirit

June 2010



Upon returning from an international visit, the first words one hears from a customs official are: "Welcome back to Canada!" And so we welcome you back to the continuation of our Canadian Oblate story and the varied missionary works in our country.



This issue of *Oblate Spirit* is a continuation of the feature on Canadian missions we began in February. This month we present stories ranging from youth ministry to care of the elderly Oblates, from retreat centres to parish missions.

We are sure there are many stories yet untold in our vast country, both from the Oblate point of view and from those of you who have a memorable connection with the Oblates. We would love to hear from you. Our contact information is on the back cover.

*John and Emily Cherneski*  
*Communications Coordinators*



The front-page picture of the February *Oblate Spirit*, which was provided by Greg Oszust, OMI, was taken by Nadine Lamoureux. She has been a volunteer for the Catholic Mission in Arviat, Nunavut, for 12 years. Her photographs have been featured in calendars and more recently in a book.



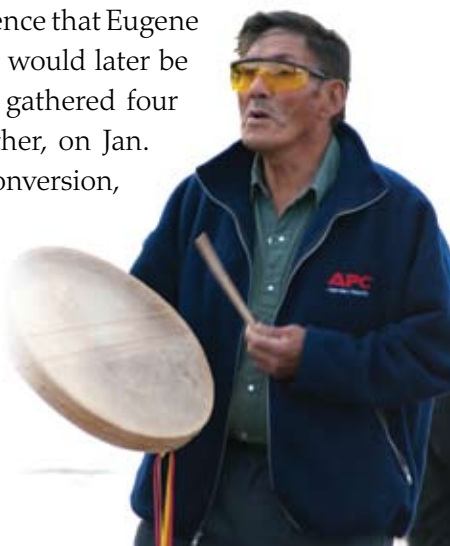
# Oblate Parish Missions

BY ALFRED HUBENIG, OMI

"This mission is an awesome experience. I've been to a mission before but never like this one. No one has ever visited me and gotten to know me in my home before. When did this type of mission begin?"

The man was surprised when I told him, "Oh, back in 1816."

Indeed, it was in Aix-en-Provence that Eugene de Mazenod, a young priest who would later be a bishop and a canonized saint, gathered four other priests around him. Together, on Jan. 25, 1816, the feast of St. Paul's Conversion, they signed a pact dedicating themselves to the poor as the Missionaries of Provence. Then, after a 10-day retreat, they went to the nearby village of Fuveau, first of all to



visit all the people in their homes, and then to announce the Good News through a parish mission. Later this little band would become the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and branch out to more than 70 countries around the world.

Today, the Oblate Mission Team in Western Canada (and others like it in Italy and France) still follows the dynamics – updated for the times – of St. Eugene de Mazenod’s original parish missions. And home visits were his unique trademark.

There are, of course, differences now. Today the mission itself is high-tech with striking graphics and communication tools, but its success still depends on visiting all the homes beforehand. In St. Eugene’s day this was done by the priests themselves. Now, to a marked degree, laypersons do it. Almost a year prior to the mission the team coordinator, Oblate

Brother Louis Andreas, along with Natalia and Ed Schrader, members of the core team, carry out workshops in the parish to prepare volunteers to conduct small faith communities and to be missionaries in their own parish.

These “parish missionaries” go out two-by-two, twice to every home, to invite people to the mission. Then, just before the mission, the Oblate Team itself arrives, bolstered by a body of trained laypersons, to make a pastoral







visit to every home (in Prince George, B.C., that meant knocking on 2,200 doors). Finally, after all those visits, the week-long mission begins. And when it is all over, the Mission Team will return three more times at one-year intervals to provide a three-day mission – a kind of ongoing booster-shot.

Are these parish missions successful? One Oblate missionary to Aboriginal people in the Far North told me, “Father, over a year has gone by since the last Mission and Wah’tí is a changed place.” So, what is success? All we can really say is that the Spirit worked through those missions in Saint Eugene’s time and the Spirit continues to work palpably and visibly through the Oblate parish missions today.

*(Hubenig is a Mission Team member)*

# Sacred time

Louis Andreas, OMI, can attest to the value of working in parish missions. He tells the story of Joe Stazsko, a retired prison warden whose first experience was in Fort Saskatchewan, Alta. “We invited him to be part of the next mission, which has now stretched out to involvement in 15 missions.

“Upon returning from our last mission, Joe said: ‘This was my most powerful experience.’ On one visit he encountered a gentleman in his late 70s who had been angry all his life.

“When Joe was invited into the house, he was confronted with ‘You’re not going to talk church are you?’ Joe politely declined that direction and came back with ‘I am just here to visit with you and your wife.’

“Because of Joe’s quiet, respectful approach, the man was able to let go of his anger and feel accepted. The older gentleman began to feel a real change in his life. Joe reflected back on that one-hour visit: ‘That was graced time!’”

Louis Andreas testifies to the effect of parish mission on his own life.

“Every mission I have gone on has been a reawakening of the Spirit within me. I am using gifts that I am not fully aware of, but by using these gifts, especially the gift of faith sharing, I find myself asking, ‘Where did that come from?’ It is a wow moment! It is the Spirit coming alive in me and through me.

“Every time I come back home I know this was a sacred moment.”



*(Information provided by Nestor Gregoire, OMI)*

# Youth ministry

BY MIKE DECHANT, OMI

*Wherever you go, go with God.*

*Whenever you go, go make a difference.*

This is the invitation and invocation we share with the many young people and teachers with whom we work. In whatever is the ministry of the day – teaching a class, celebrating the Eucharist, leading a mid-day prayer, sharing a retreat experience, or just hanging out with the youth – we hope that it will create an evident awareness of the presence of God ... so that “wherever we go, we go with God”.

A constant, recurring message in all our ministry efforts is that each moment of our life – our decisions, our interactions and relationships with each other – is all part of the unfolding of the Kingdom of God. We firmly believe God uses every experience of our lives to unfold His plan of salvation, and to build a kingdom of love, life and joy. Therefore, the invocation to “go make a difference” is the challenge to be co-creators with God.





**Oblate Youth Ministry Team**

*Left to right: Dan Dionne, OMI; Dana Schoenfelder; Mike Dechant, OMI; Doug Kramer*

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As we challenge the young people, teachers, parents, and all those we encounter to “go make a difference,” we also challenge ourselves to “make a (kingdom) difference.” There are two specific ways in which we try to live out this challenge.

The Oblate Youth Ministries Team encounters many teens (and teachers) who attend a Catholic school, but have little or no connection with a faith community (the Church).

For the past two years the Oblate youth ministries team has collaborated with a non-denominational movement called Young Life. The focus of Young Life is primarily to reach out to young people who have little or no background in the “Jesus story.” Two members of the Oblate youth team, Dana Schoenfelder and Doug Kramer, regularly meet with students who attend schools of the Greater St. Albert Catholic School Division in Alberta, and who also participate in activities associated with Young Life.

It’s a ‘ministry of relationship’ – getting to know young people in the context of their daily lives. The young people meet each week for *Club* – an evening of fun songs and skits,

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a time to connect with each other and the Young Life leaders. (The youth who gather represent many different schools). Each evening also contains a spiritual talk, in which one of the leaders breaks open the Word of God to make it relevant and personal for the young people.

It is an opportunity to challenge the youth to look at the world beyond their narrow and limited perspective. It is also an opportunity to connect their experiences with the story (experiences) of Jesus, so that they can slowly develop a personal relationship with Him. For the Oblate youth ministry team, this is one of our initiatives to “build Church where there is no building.”

As Dana recounts: “It’s amazing to see the work of God through the lives of these teens. A recent encounter happened when I was asked to give the spiritual talk. God showed me that Young Life is such a blessed and unique community. Teens, who come from different schools, have become good friends. They have many differences, yet they all come together for a common goal – to meet and know our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. I was blown away with the support and love and comfort this group gives to one another. God shows us His blessings through many little ways – but we have to look for them and appreciate them when they happen.”

Another significant out-reach of our ministry to the youth (and teachers) is through an experience of healing and reconciliation called “stones of hurt.” Peer pressure is brutal for many youth, as is their struggle to grow as authentic and faith-



filled Christians. Life is not always fair, and it can leave us with deep hurts and pains, resentments and desires to hurt back. As we are aware: hurting people hurt people!

Through a ritual using water and salt and stones, the students are able to visibly and tangibly reflect on the hurts in their life. The “stones of hurt” is an opportunity to allow God to touch our hearts and to heal our souls.

The water is blessed, reminding us of our baptism and our faithfulness to the Spirit. The water is also “salted”. For us, in our North American culture, salt is often not much more than a condiment on the kitchen table. We put salt onto our food to bring out the flavour of the food. Salt is to food like the Holy Spirit is to our spiritual lives. The Spirit brings out the “goodness/flavour” within us that is already there – like salt brings out the flavour of the food that is already there. However, the real significance of salt comes from our Jewish brothers/sisters, the people from the Middle East. For them, salt was very





important, very significant to their culture and traditions.

Each student is invited to give to the Lord (in the blessed and salted water) their “attitudes of hardness / their ‘stone of hurt’”. It’s really an act of faith, believing that God can and does touch our hearts, that He wants us to have a “heart of love and forgiveness and healing”. Students are then invited to bring their stone to a priest. Beside each priest is a “Christ candle” – remembering that Jesus said: “I have come to bring light to the darkness of your life”.

After each person describes the hardness in their heart, they leave their stone (sinfulness) with the Lord. From the priest they hear the words of forgiveness and encouragement. The mystery of God’s love touches the soul, giving a new sense of freedom and healing.

The response of the students to this experience of healing and forgiveness has been most significant, and heart-warming. The depth of reflection and admission of “hurtful attitudes” is phenomenal. It truly is a “God moment.” On one occasion, a young man came to me. He firmly shook my hand and said: “Thank you Fr. Mike, I really needed this!”

The last invocation, before the students leave is: “On the way out, please do not pick up your stone, literally or figuratively. Go out believing that you have been truly healed by God’s love ... so, wherever you go, go make a difference!”

*(Dechant, a member of the youth ministry team, is based in St. Albert)*

# Retreat Centres

## GALILEE CENTRE

[www.galileecentre.com](http://www.galileecentre.com) • (613) 623-4242

BY JACK LAU, OMI

Galilee Centre has been a sanctuary of peace and healing for many people throughout the years. It is located in Arnprior, ON, on the shores of the Ottawa River and nestled in an old-growth forest.

Our past is rich and continues to enrich our province and our nation. The McLachlin family, who were lumber barons, initially built the large stone house of the present centre. Featured are high-pressed tin ceilings and French windows with a spectacular view of the river. When stepping through the front door, visitors are met by a beautiful spiral staircase and guided to the second-floor chapel.

In the front yard stands a Royal Oak tree that was planted in 1860 by Prince Edward of Wales. Part of the original property is the old growth Gillie's Grove which now has numerous

walking paths and in which stand some of the tallest and oldest trees in the province.

In 1946, the St. Peter's Province of the Missionary Oblates was in need of a site for a new novitiate. The provincial saw the property, yet did





not have the cash on hand. That very day, he received a wire from an advocate in England that the exact amount of money had been willed to the community and so began the life of St. Theresa Novitiate. For more than 30 years, men entered the Oblate community and learned its history and were embraced by its charism. Like many of the novitiates of its day, St. Theresa's was a working farm and there still

linger stories and memories of a time when Christmas pheasants were raised and sold to the community.

In 1975, St. Theresa's became Galilee Community, a vibrant renewal centre for religious and clergy known throughout the world for programs regarding discernment and self care. Just as the current of the Ottawa River continues to flow and the seasons change, Galilee Community became Galilee Centre and opened its doors ever wider to the local community.

Our core values continue to guide us in our mission – inclusiveness, responsibility, nurturing, compassion and collaboration. As programs develop we are beginning to respond to the need of caregivers and have begun the process of partnering with community organizations to develop a "Care for the Caregiver" program.

Concurrently, we continue to offer a strong foundation to those who seek a spiritual life embracing silence, prayer and the unity of body, mind and soul.

Galilee Centre is also well known for its hospitality. It hosts many groups (corporate, non-profit and spiritually-based) that



run their own programs and retreats. Also welcomed are individuals who just need time away to quiet themselves, reflecting and listening to the Spirit that dwells within.

*(Lau is the director of spiritual services at Galilee Centre.)*

## QUEEN'S HOUSE RETREAT AND RENEWAL CENTRE

[www.queenshouse.org](http://www.queenshouse.org) • (306) 242-1916

BY LUCIE LEDUC

Some years ago, Muslims, Jews and Christians shared a dialogue at Queen's House Retreat and Renewal Centre. David Russell and Rabbi Roger Pavey, the Muslim and Jewish presenters respectively, stopped at the inconspicuous wooden sign hanging on a wall by the front door. It reads: *"Peace to all who enter here."* Rabbi Pavey remarked to his old friend, "This is true of this place; very peaceful" ...



and in a pregnant silence filled with serenity, both departed.

The scene was not lost on Queen's House staff. We were moved and awed by the moment; caught up in the spirit of friendship, hope and peace shared by these two men with us in the unique environment of this Oblate retreat house. Isn't this



what the Oblate retreat ministry is really all about: sharing faith through scripture and story, making room for God's peace, joy and blessings in human hearts, forging bonds, minding gaps between peoples, tearing

down walls of ignorance, prejudice and fear, and most of all renewing relationship with God, each other and the whole of creation?

Since its inception, Queen's House has welcomed thousands of people for planned and hosted retreats and workshops, receiving them into a shelter of God's peace, quiet and beauty. Queen's House is a creative blend of leisure and challenge, solitude and community, prayer and interaction. It offers a variety of retreats, workshops and programs for spiritual direction aimed at nurturing body, soul, and spirit.

The facility is bright, spacious and flexible enough to accommodate a variety of groups for different types of programs. An excellent kitchen team and courteous staff enhance the experiences shared by our guests. Gerry Weinkauff is the interim director of the facility, which has 40 small, four medium and five large guest rooms.

Queen's House, and retreat centres in general, are outward expressions of the inner shelter of our human hearts where the Divine presence rests and waits for us to close the door to our distractions and normal occupations, and where we can meet Divine Mystery waiting for us in our innermost being. There we find a peace that surpasses understanding and gentle healing for the poverty of our human condition.

But what is the full expression of this Oblate retreat house?



Fernand Jette, OMI, in his address to Oblate retreat centres, says, "Right from the beginning ... this (retreat) ministry was in some way foreseen and wanted by the founder. We consider retreat houses to be, in a certain way, privileged places for evangelization. They are fully in line with the purpose of the congregation whose first mission is evangelization, especially the evangelizing of the poor, of the most abandoned. A wide-ranging variety of people come to retreat houses ... they should be able to receive a strengthening of their vocation as well as a new impetus for their journey to God and their service to the church."

So we move forward into a new decade with confidence and trust in the generosity of spiritual and financial supporters to carry on the mission of St. Eugene; to offer Oblate hospitality that extends God's peace for the poor.

*(Leduc is the program coordinator at Queen's House)*

## QU'APPELLE HOUSE OF PRAYER

**(306) 332-6765**

**BY GLENN ZIMMER, OMI**

For nearly 150 years, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate have ministered in the Qu'Appelle Valley in southern Saskatchewan. Over the years, they have variously served the Métis and First Nations communities, in parishes, schools and in Oblate formation centres. Their presence con-



tinues today at the Qu'Appelle House of Prayer (QHP), located outside the town of Fort Qu'Appelle along Echo Lake.

"Qu'Appelle" – literally, "who is call-





ing?" The very question evokes pondering one's personal calling, identity and purpose in life. The Hebrew people describe prayer as calling upon the One who calls us.

Being attentive to one's unique calling seems to be at the centre of the Qu'Appelle House of Prayer. Time at QHP invariably helps each to be in touch with one's own sacred story, personal truth, and unique sense of wonder grounded in a wide variety of individual life circumstances. Many faith traditions are represented. The reminder, sometimes reassuring, other times unsettling, is the calling out of the God of Moses from the bush challenging each to remember that the ground on which one stands – that is, the entirety of one's life experience – is holy.

A ministry of the Oblates of OMI Lacombe Canada, the house of prayer was begun in 1995 by Holy Names Sister Margaret Dick and Oblate Glenn Zimmer, both of whom continue at QHP. In 2002 they were joined by Emily and John Cherneski, and together form a community of prayer and hospitality within a spirit of silence, solitude and service. Guests who come, whether for a few hours, a few days or a few weeks, spend time alone, blended with the opportunity for worship twice daily and occasions to meet for personal conversation.

The heart of the house of prayer is a former family home, and over the years has been enhanced by a large trailer home;

the chapel with its breathtaking view of the surrounding valley and nearby lake below, and its quieting sense of peace; four solitary dwellings among the trees; and a residence for a volunteer couple.

From its earliest beginnings, the Qu'Appelle House of Prayer has tried to make real, in a very modest way, the vision and dream of Isaiah 56:7 "These I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer ... for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

*(Zimmer is co-director of the Qu'Appelle House of Prayer)*

## STAR OF THE NORTH

[www.starofthenorth.ca/](http://www.starofthenorth.ca/) • (780) 459-5511

BY LINDA MACISAAC

At Star of the North Retreat Centre, the vision statement sets a goal to be "a mission centre that will challenge, support, and provide ongoing resources for prophetic ministry." Located on "Oblate Hill" in St. Albert, AB, Star of the North has been offering retreats, sacred space, programs and hos-

pitality for 56 years. In recent years 'The Star' has been consciously seeking to reflect the Oblate charism in its programming.

Our "Action for Earth" programs are designed to provide a foundation for conscious spiritual living as we contribute

to positive action for the earth. This year Dr. John Hiemstra is offering a workshop on a topic both timely and controversial in Alberta: *"Excavating the Spiritual Depths of the Oil Sands Developments; Where Are We Going and What Should We Do?"*



Also on this year's agenda is *"Do You know Where Your Food Comes From?"*, an evening to learn more about how we can re-localize our global food system for a more just and sustainable world.

In November 2009 Star of the North began a second ongoing series, *"Partnering With People."* For the first event, members of the Marian Centre community (Madonna House Apostolate) came to 'The Star' to share a simple meal and an evening of sharing with the guests about their ministry in the inner city. In March 2010 this program welcomed Edmonton's Inner City Pastoral Ministry team.

For the past five years Star of the North has sponsored a Wellness Weekend Retreat for Women from Edmonton's inner city. 'The Star' works with representatives from a variety of inner-city organizations who refer and offer support to the women who attend this weekend. Our fund-raising provides the financial sponsorship for these women to attend.

Star of the North offers a variety of retreats and programs that invite retreatants to deepen their relationship with God. They might attend a retreat that reflects the liturgical season, or one of the monthly *"Away Days"* to explore and reflect on



a contemporary spiritual book, or they may come for some personal time for silence and prayer. 'The Star' also offers programming in holistic spirituality, including women's personal growth retreats, programs for married couples, and yoga classes and retreat experiences.

Many non-profit and ecumenical church groups come to Star of the North for workshops and retreat time. Engaged Encounter recently celebrated its 30th anniversary of gathering at 'The Star.' Regularly welcomed are many First Nations leader training and healing workshops, as well as Cursillo groups, Pastoral Biblical Theology training sessions, AMA Impact Training, and church retreats from a variety of Christian churches.

As a centre for sacred hospitality, Star of the North offers the shining light of opportunities to encounter Christ through prophetic programming, through sacred space, and through the warm welcome received by all who enter.

*(MacIsaac is program coordinator at Star of the North)*





# As We Age

## SPRINGHURST RESIDENCE

Springhurst Residence was built in the late 1960s as a residence primarily for Oblates living in Ottawa who were teaching at St. Patrick's College and in the high school. With the anticipated withdrawal from St. Pat's, where the on-staff Oblates lived in residence, a new residence was constructed.

Over the years the residence also included those in parish ministry as well as the retired and semi-retired Oblates in the area.

Later, as rooms were available, students of nearby St. Paul's University were welcomed to the extended community. The present makeup of the community is 18 Oblates, two students and two rooms reserved for guests.

As rooms are available, clergy, religious and students are welcomed as residents. A part-time administrator assures the smooth operation of the facility on a day-to-day basis. Only the chef and housekeeper are full-time employees.

Individuals in residence are expected to take care of their basic needs. Meals and laundry are provided. A nurse is available three hours a day, five days a week. When a resident requires more care than can be provided by the members and staff, a different facility that offers enhanced care is sought (Saskatoon or St. Albert).





Our day begins with morning prayer at nine, followed by Eucharist. Oraison (30 minutes of quiet prayer) takes place at 5 p.m. Monday to Thursday. Evening prayer is at 6:30.

Attendance at our various services is always close to 100 per cent.

Visitors are always welcome. Friday evening is a special time for the residents as it is an occasion for visitors to come, socialize with the community and join us for the evening meal. Our close proximity to St. Paul's University and to our Lacombe House of Formation assures that we frequently have the benefit of dialogue, and challenge, on a variety of issues.

As space permits, there is always a warm welcome for overnight guests, especially members of our Oblate family. Rooms and meals are available at a nominal cost.

*(Submitted by Ed MacNeil, OMI)*

## **DESPINS RESIDENCE**

Life is always pleasant at the Despins Residence in Winnipeg, which is home to eight communities of nuns, priests and lay people living, praying and eating together.

On the independent-living side there are 80 suites, all occupied by members of the various communities, including Holy Names, Grey Nuns, Sisters of the Mission of St-Joseph, Ursulines, Sisters of the Saviour, 15 Oblates, four Missionaries of Africa, and two lay people.

On the assisted-living side, the population is mostly lay men and women. There are also sisters of most orders, two Diocesan priests, and one Oblate brother.

The building has four floors, and each floor has its own

dinning-room. Three nurses are available during the day, and at night there are people assigned to every floor to look after emergencies. The 120-seat chapel is busy at morning masses, for which priests take turns presiding.

The semi-retired priests are actually quite busy replacing fellow priests in Winnipeg and Northern Manitoba.

*(Submitted by John Paul Isabelle, OMI)*

## MAZENOD RESIDENCE

Mazenod Residence in Saskatoon provides a ministry that intentionally affirms the dignity of the elderly, and attempts to do so in a comfortable family atmosphere.

The Missionary Oblates of St. Mary's Province planned and then saw to the construction of Mazenod Residence as a facility with two wings: one for members of the provincial administration, the other with 12 suites for retiring Oblates. The first six residents moved into the building on Jan. 31, 1983.

For most of these 27 years, Mazenod has operated at near full capacity. In fact, due to demand for more space for the retired, the provincial administration moved into other quarters in 1999, thereby permitting the entire facility to become a home of retirement and nursing care. In recent years, due



to a diminishing number of Oblate candidates, welcome has been extended to diocesan clergy. Of the 26 residents, five are diocesan priests.

Four residents require level-four or total-nursing care. Another four receive level-three care and the rest are at first and second level of care. Mazenod offers its residents around-the-clock nursing and palliative care. The 16 employees include nurses, care-aides, cooks, housekeepers and a secretary-receptionist. A family physician makes a weekly visit and is also on call.

Mazenod and Queen's House Retreat and Renewal Centre share a picturesque seven-acre plot of land on the



banks of the South Saskatchewan River. All the living space overlooks the river. For those wanting more walking trails than the sidewalks, there is the 10-kilometre Meewasin Valley Trail along the river.

Each resident enjoys a completely furnished suite that includes a large living room, a bedroom with a full bath, a kitchenette, a small fridge and an air conditioner. In addition, all have the use of the common air-conditioned areas including the dining room, chapel, recreation and TV rooms, and a library with exercising/fitness equipment.

The service of nutritious and tasty meals is done with a focus on the needs of the elderly. All residents are provided with full maintenance and housekeeping service, cable and internet, and vehicle parking.

It is a faith community, daily celebrating the Eucharist and



the liturgy of the hours (morning and evening).

Mazenod Residence provides a ministry of presence and accompaniment to those who have offered a lifetime of service to the Church.

*(Submitted by Syl Lewans, OMI)*

## **ST. MARY'S RESIDENCE**

We are an Oblate Community, for the most part a retirement community, but we are not sitting idle and just waiting to die; we are engaged in Oblate ministry. It is not a ministry where we are on call every day to meet people, but we are on call every day to meet God in prayer and intercede with God for all people.

St. Mary's Residence, built in 1983 beside St. Charles Scholasticate in Battleford, SK, is situated on a hill south of the Battle River. The property consists of 80 acres in the R.M. of Battle River and about 30 acres in the Town of Battleford.

There are 17 furnished rooms, each with a full bath, a chapel, kitchen, dining room, sitting room, office, laundry room, two parlors, and a sun room. It is quite spacious and comfortable and could probably accommodate about 10 Oblates.

A greenhouse and garden patch offer anyone with desire and physical ability the opportunity to indulge in the hobby of gardening. There is also an Oblate cemetery, and a grotto built by the Oblate Brothers about 50 years ago. There are some interesting pathways, cut through the trees, that make for good outdoor exercise.

St. Mary's is presently set up for residents who don't require nursing care, but a hospital and good doctors are within a 15-minute drive. The residents take care of their own rooms



and laundry, and a cook prepares lunch and supper Monday to Thursday. From Friday to Sunday, the residents have the opportunity to sharpen their culinary skills with the leftovers or make delicious meals from scratch.

Presently, St. Mary's Residence is home to a community of four Oblates, not all of whom are retired.

**Fr. Tony Schmidt** began his retirement in 2003 after



Tony Schmidt, OMI

50 years of Oblate ministry in education and as a parish priest. He does most of the grocery shopping, keeps the books, looks after the mowing of the lawn, and cares for the fruit trees.

**Fr. Aloysius Kedl** came to St. Mary's after 50 years of a variety of Oblate ministries. He

taught at St. Charles Scholasticate in Battleford, was director of the Oblate Communications Centre in Battleford, and spent 25 years in the General House in Rome, where he served the congregation as administrative assistant, and then as archivist. He continues to translate Oblate documents into English. He is the house barista, making coffee every morning. He ensures the delivery of mail and paper; keeps all informed of church and world events; waters the house plants; and is guardian of the gates (locks and unlocks the door every evening and morning).

**Fr. Lester Kaufmann** came to St. Mary's in 2009 after 55 years in Oblate parish and missionary service. His last assignments were in Inuvik and Dawson City in the far north. Fr.

Lester takes care of the recycled materials and loads the dishwasher. He can put lunch on the table, and when the need arises can prepare a tasty meal always supplemented with a good variety of vegetables.

**Fr. Ron Dechant**

came to St. Mary's in 2004, but is not retired. He is parish priest of St. James Parish in

Thunderchild, and Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Onion Lake. When not involved in parish ministry, he is a great help with the computers and residence maintenance.

This is our Oblate community, a community in which we can see the variety of ministries we had in our former St. Mary's Province. We can see that the emphasis of our ministry has changed, but Oblates are still serving the People of God as the Spirit calls us to serve.

According to our individual abilities, we help out in parishes for weekend replacement. We help in reconciliation services and youth retreats in various parishes. We find that there are many, young and old, who are earnestly seeking the way to God, and who come for the grace of the Sacrament to help them.

Most of us are no longer engaged in the so-called "active ministry." But we are engaged in all Oblate ministries through our ministry of prayer. We have morning prayer, Eucharist and evening prayer in common. We pray for all Oblates, and for the people with whom they work. We ask God to bless them so that they may proclaim the Gospel as true messengers of Christ.

*(Submitted by Tony Schmidt, OMI)*



Lester Kaufmann, OMI

## FOYER LACOMBE

Foyer Lacombe, a Missionary Oblate project that started in 2001, is a continuation of Placid Place, an apartment building close to downtown Edmonton that lodged 15 elderly Oblates for about 20 years. As the demand grew for better care for our older and ill missionaries, it became necessary to have a better equipped residence. With the sale of Placid Place and other property, the Oblates of Alberta built an extension on the already existent Foyer Grandin in Saint Albert, AB. The new extension is now equipped to serve all levels of care with 24-hour health workers on duty.

Foyer Lacombe is an Oblate house with a capacity of 38 residents from level-1 to level-4 health care. When a suite is available, non-Oblates are invited to apply. At this time we have seven non-Oblate residents: one bishop, one Redemptorist brother and five laymen. Two of our Oblate brothers recently ended their journey on this earth, which left us with empty suites available for new applicants.

This community is vibrant with a family spirit that makes life enjoyable at the Foyer. All the men express their gratitude for being here and find it is the best place for them at this time in their journey. As described in our brochure: "We believe in offering each of our residents a quality living experience, reflecting the value we place on treating each one with dignity and maintaining a warm and welcoming environment." We

have dedicated staff members that care for our residents with an approach that promotes independence in a spirit of compassion that is rooted in human solidarity and in fidelity with the





healing ministry of Jesus Christ. Above all things, this is home.

The attitude of prayer is part of our daily life at the Foyer. The Eucharist is celebrated daily in both of Canada's official languages and we have daily meditation periods as well as

other spiritual exercises. Our recreational staff organizes activities for physical exercise, outings, games and movies on a regular basis. Every suite is equipped with a TV, a telephone with a personal number and Internet. There is mail service, newspapers, on-site barber service and foot care. The large dining room is always a joyful place to meet, share with one another, and celebrate birthdays and special occasions. Visitors are welcome to come and share at our table and we always hear comments about how good the food is at Foyer Lacombe.

Medical care is of primary importance. Each resident, with the help of the staff, is assigned a personal physician. A member of the nursing staff will assist those that need special attention. For security reasons the staff will do the rounds in the evening to assure that everyone is present. In case of an emergency everyone has the option to call a nurse using the beeper placed by his bed. All medications are ordered through Foyer Lacombe contracted pharmacy and administered by the nursing staff.

During the time I have been at Foyer Lacombe as director, I have been impressed with the mood of the community. The residents show a genuine contentment for their lives at the centre. I questioned myself on what makes them feel so good about being here, for I have seen other elderly care institutes where the folks are lonely, sad and not in very good spirit.

The answer I believe is the quality of care that makes a dif-



ference. We have a sufficient number of staff that facilitates the schedule. No staff member is asked to stay on duty excessive hours at one time. This disposes them to be attentive and caring for our elderly. The joyful attitude of the staff members also triggers more life in our residents. We can depend on our personnel for any need at any time. The food that we are served is delicious and the recreation moments are well organized, thus preventing boredom. All of that, along with the spiritual exercises, fills our day and makes life worthwhile and creative even for people in their old age.

*(Submitted by Gerard Le Strat, OMI)*

## **PANDOSY PLACE**

The Vancouver residence was constructed in 1930-31 to serve as a residence and rectory for the St. Augustine Parish, established in 1909. The parish church is right behind the residence.

When the government began supporting the salaries of the Catholic teachers in our elementary school, the parish was able to save money to build its own parish centre in 1967. As a result the two Oblates who served the parish were able to move from Pandosy and live at their own centre.

When this building was no longer the St. Augustine Rectory, it needed an Oblate name. After a community meeting it was decided to choose the name of Father Charles Pandosy, who was among the first group of Oblates to come to B.C. around 1855.

He spent time at Esquimalt, Kelowna and Penticton, working with First Nation people. He died in the arms of an Indian chief in Penticton, and was buried near Kelowna. While in the Okanagan he started to plant fruit trees (apples mostly) and that helped lead to the Okanagan Valley becoming a fruit-producing region.

Thus, we felt the name Pandosy would be fitting for a residence of retired Oblates in British Columbia.

The residence has always housed between eight and 11 Oblates. The last one who left us for the Youville Retirement Residence in Vancouver was Father Jack Sullivan, who for many years served as chaplain at St. Michael's Hospital in Lethbridge, AB.

There are 12 rooms available at Pandosy, two of which have no bathroom. Three rooms are double rooms, and like the others have their own bathroom. The house is well built and conveniently located with excellent bus service.

Pandosy grows on its residents. Cooked meals are provided every day, a housekeeper works three days a week and a house manager is employed four half days a week. Their contributions are always greatly appreciated.

*(Submitted by Oscar Pauwel, OMI)*

## WANTED: YOUR STORIES!

*There are many charities and good causes which 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)**

# Reaching out

EDMONTON – In 1993, Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples was established in Edmonton as the national parish for all Métis and Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal Peoples claim Sacred Heart as their church family. While everyone is welcome to take part in the parish, its expression of spirituality is always as a First Nations parish.

Today the parish serves as the worship and community centre for First Nations Peoples. While there is much variety among the First Nations of Western Canada, they come together in this community where they feel accepted and welcomed. It is a parish secure in working with material and social poverty within the urban environment.

As you enter the Church, the walls, paintings and carvings speak of the First Nations' culture and spiritual heritage. Surrounding the large cross on the front wall is a large medicine wheel with the four colors signifying the four groups of people on this earth. The circle indicates that we are all one people, one family.

The Sunday liturgy and the prayers have incorporated First Nations' traditions into the ritual. The people receive smudging

from one of the elders, which is a sign of purification of the Spirit and a prayer to bring harmony to the building and the parish community.

Each Sunday the congregation prays in the four





directions. Praying in the four directions acknowledges how much we are connected with the earth and all of the cosmos. By deliberately stressing the languages of the First Nations, the Church is recognizing that their languages are important. The languages of the Dene, Cree and Kainai (Blood) are used in prayer and worship.



Jim Holland, OMI

The pastoral team has introduced First Nations icons that depict Christ as a First Nations person and in symbols that the people can identify with and claim as their own.

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate have long been involved with the First Nations in the Edmonton area. Jim Holland, OMI, observed that it was significant that when the first gathering of former residential school students was organized at Fort Chipewyan in northern Alberta, he was invited to be part of the gathering. The people wanted an Oblate to be with them – a sign of the strong connection between the Oblates and our First Nations Peoples.

Holland was asked why he wants to remain in Sacred Heart Parish after 15 years of intense ministry (a typical year would see about 36 marriages, 240 baptisms and 150 funerals).

His answer was simple.

“The Aboriginal people. We have to give them a future. We have to give them hope. The future of these children is my passion. They are our future.”

*(Information provided by Nestor Gregoire, OMI)*

# In your own words

*Anna and Henry Wald, longtime supporters of the Oblates, moved from Allan, Sask., to British Columbia in 1955. They have many fond memories of their Oblate connections.*

## BY HENRY WALD

When we still resided in Allan, one of our parish priests was Henry Bermel, OMI. He was very active in the parish and was instrumental in building the town's first closed-in rink. I will never forget the one trick Andrew Boechler (long deceased) and I played on him.

We had weekly movies in the hall and Andrew and I collected the entry fees.

After the movie began, we left the hall, entered the Parish House, had a cardboard box and set up a picture of a beautiful girl on the front of the box, with a light bulb behind it. Andy, his wife Rose, my wife Anna and I went to our house to play cards. No sooner were we well into our game when the door burst open and Father stormed in, pretending to be angry.



60TH WEDDING  
ANNIVERSARY  
30 DECEMBER 2006



After Father retired he became a golf nut. For many summers he would come to visit us in Port Coquitlam and remain for one, two or three weeks and we would golf three or four times a week. He would be sitting, reading his Breviary, when he would raise his head and ask: "Henry, have you made a tee time for us?"

Growing up, all our priests were Oblates. I attended St. Thomas College in North Battleford, Sask., for three years, and all the priests I knew were Oblates.

Both Anna and I admire all the work the Oblates do in so many countries and we continue to financially support their efforts.

Anna is in her 85<sup>th</sup> year and I am in my 90<sup>th</sup>.

*"Witness to God's infinite tenderness  
to every human being."*

– St. Eugene de Mazenod

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