

AMMI *Lacombe* MAMI
Canada

Oblate Spirit

November 2014

Christmas
Dreams



Helping the little ones



What is the value of a good night's sleep? How important is the first meal of the day, or the last?

What is the cost of putting a smile on the face of a child that has a better understanding of hardship than of joy?

We can come up with many answers and have countless philosophical discussions about these issues. Or we can simply facilitate a process where we can make this happen for our friends around the world who may not be as fortunate as us.

Once again we are seeking support at Christmas for some of the many projects the Canadian Oblates of Mary Immaculate support in Africa and South America.

In this issue, we feature Blaise MacQuarrie's fascinating journey of beds and mattresses – from funding to factory to the homes of the poor in Peru. It provides some insight into how our Canadian donations are spent, and how carefully and thoughtfully the funds are managed. And it all culminates in thankful joy and comfort for some who could only dream of something as simple as a bed in which to sleep.

The projects, once again, are simple. There are several projects from which to choose: from the beds and blankets in Chinca Alta to helping furnish a patient house in Lima, both in Peru; from school desks and chairs to school fees in Kenya; by helping construct a clinic to help feed malnourished infants and children in Guatemala; or by supporting the Christmas package program run by Cristina Rodriguez in Bolivia.

Ultimately helping a child in need is the common thread running through these worthwhile projects. As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, we should always keep in mind it is about the birth of another child, one not unlike those we try to help.

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators

Christmas Wish List

KENYA

School desk	\$30
School chair.....	\$25
Primary school fees.....	\$50
Secondary school fees	\$150

BOLIVIA

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

PERU

Milk for malnourished babies.....	\$30
Furnishings for patient house in Lima	\$50
Adult bed.....	\$60
Warm blankets	\$20
Child's bed	\$35

GUATEMALA

Square metre of clinic construction	\$500
---	-------

A mountain of a task

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

CHINCA ALTA, PERU – The huge Oblate parish of Comas is in the north part of Lima, the Peruvian city with 11,000,000 souls. The land is flat at the bottom of the mountain, and a few roads take you a short distance up.

Then you start walking, passing well-built homes with foundations. As you climb the scene quickly changes. Here you see rows of shacks built like a huge stairway, and the rows ascend to where it is possible to put another shack.

At the very top sits a chapel, where mass is celebrated and people gladly attend. There are no lights, but there is water. The government installed concrete stairways to help people come and go. You need good legs to do this climb every day.

All these shacks don't have foundations. They use the rocks the mountain provides, placed one on top of the other





with no cement to hold them in place. Lima is well known for earthquakes, and God help these poor souls when a quake does hit. All these shacks will fall one on top of the other and the death toll will be high.

Why do these people live here? They have no other place to go. Wind from the ocean can make it cold and damp, so I chatted with the parish priest about providing blankets for some of these poor souls. He said they are badly needed. Thanks to all you good souls, we are able to provide some heavy and warm blankets for those in desperate need, whether it is in Comas or Chinca Alta, the site of our parish house.

THE BLANKETS

When I use donation funds, I try to get the most value by being thrifty and sourcing good buys of quality material.

Marcos and Teresa are very good friends who have six children, four girls and two boys, the youngest of whom is now 18. Marcos is retired after serving the Peruvian air force for 35 years. He has been guiding the youth in his parish for 22 years.



When I received the donation funds for blankets last year, I asked Marcos and Teresa to go to Lima, visit some of the better blanket factories and make the purchases. If I did this, the price of the blankets would be higher because any person who comes from another country is seen as one who has money, because it costs money to fly. So Marcos and Teresa visited several blanket factories and after some investigation decided to make the purchase.

Women are much better at negotiating purchases. Teresa, being a wife and mother, knew how to make the factory boss cut his prices. When Teresa told the boss they wanted to buy 700 blankets, his jaw dropped. As a result, the price went from 22 nuevo soles (about \$10 Canadian) down to 18 soles. Marcos and Teresa cut the total cost by 2,800 soles, which meant they got 155 extra blankets.

The heavy, warm and colourful blankets were placed in bales that took three men to lift. Marcos and Teresa needed a truck to lug their heavy cargo to our house in Chinca Alta, and by the grace of God a friend of Marcos's was in the city of Lima with a truck. An hour later the 14 bales of cargo were loaded.

At our parish house I opened each bale and placed this mountain of blankets in the visitor's room. The very next day and with the use of a small car belonging to the Oblates, I began delivering the blankets.

Who got them? They were people with brooms sweeping the streets, poor people in their shacks, people in wheelchairs, people selling fruit in the street for survival, people in state schools who work cleaning washrooms, and people picking garbage off the streets and in the city dumps.

I found one family with seven children living in a shack with only one bed. The others slept on cardboard on a dirt floor. So I issued them seven blankets, three beds and mattresses plus 300 soles worth of food.

The expression of gratitude was priceless. You see, the Church needs the poor for its own sanity!



BEDS FOR CHILDREN

Looking ahead, we will call our next project *beds for children*.

We have delivered close to 450 large beds for adults, so beds for children will be much smaller and cost much less ... \$35 for a bed and a mattress.

The plan is to involve the schools, of which there are many in our parish, both Catholic and public. The idea is to get the teachers to speak with the students. If there are 60 students in the school needing beds, but there are only 30 beds, we would have a draw of the 60 names.

The school director can explain that not all will receive beds because there are other schools with poor children and a little help is to be given to them as well. The children who will not get a bed will leave with the hope that another bed project will be realized with the help of our Oblate supporters in Canada.

This is another approach to touching the hearts of little ones.

THE BEDS

Once again we call on Marcos and Teresa to buy the beds because they know how to get the most out of money. They went to Lima where there are a number of factories that make beds. They asked a policeman for better directions, as the area is quite huge, and his advice was “be careful because there are a lot of thieves in the area who would kill for a little!”

After investigating a number of factories they found the one with the best prices, quality of wood and workmanship. They made a great buy! The same bed made here in Chinca Alta costs 125 soles. At the factory Marcos and Teresa were able to get a price of 65 soles.

A few weeks later the beds were ready for the long haul to Chinca Alta, a five-hour drive by truck. It took five hours to load the truck and it was overweight. The trip was made even longer because of rain, thick fog and a mechanical failure. The driver arrived the next morning with 258 beds.

Where are they to be stored? Well, I found a place ... in the Guest Room! The beds came in three parts: the front and back of the bed, two long boards to be attached to the front and back of the bed, and nine slats to make the platform for the mattresses.

It took nine men more than two hours to unload the truck.





Now our house, at least a part of it, is a warehouse. The wood for the beds is of a high quality and cut by machine, so they are easy to put together with eight bolts, two for each leg of the bed.

THE BEST PART: DELIVERY OF THE BEDS AND MATTRESS

At the moment our Oblate Parish House is used as a warehouse to store the beds prior to delivery. Our means of transport is our workhorse (the truck the Peruvian government gave us years ago) and a pickup truck that belongs to one of my workers.

Because the beds come in a kit, I can assemble 20 beds in an afternoon and pile them in a corner until it's time to load them on the truck.

But before we do this, we investigate where they are needed, and we don't have to go far. We go block-by-block in the poorest area. A person of confidence investigates the family to determine need, and whether one or more beds are required.

Once we know the number of beds to deliver, the crew is gathered and we establish a time and place for the beds and mattresses to be unloaded in the presence of the recipients.

The beds and mattresses are placed in a row, the names of the recipients are called and they are asked to stand next to their bed.

This is my time to give them a little *talk* before taking pictures. Mentioning that with the help of the Canadians and their act of love, these beds and mattresses are here to show that you are loved by strangers, people that you will probably not see in this life. They are asked to pray for these strangers, who also need prayers for themselves and their loved ones.

And thus ends the story of the beds and mattresses, of the hearts and minds that have been touched. That is, until the next delivery arrives!

With that we offer many blessings to our Canadian friends and wish all a merry Christmas!

ADULT BED	\$60
WARM BLANKETS	\$20
CHILD'S BED	\$35





Peru Wish List

BY DR. MOE SCHROEDER, OMI

LIMA, PERU – We are putting a third floor on our patient house in Lima to accommodate the growing needs on that house. It will consist of four bedrooms, a bathroom and an administrative area. We have the construction costs in hand, but we would appreciate donations of \$50 to help us with the furnishing of these areas.

Hospital referrals from Santa Clotilde that require care beyond the capabilities of the Santa Clotilde Health Centre are provided in Lima hospitals. A patient house for referred patients and their accompanying family members is maintained in Lima under the direction of a full-time care facilitator.

There are usually about 12 patients from Santa Clotilde in Lima for treatments of typical cases such as cancer chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Children with congenital malformations or leukemia are another main treatment group. Patients sent to Lima usually have a family member accompanying them.

MILK FOR MALNOURISHED BABIES	\$30
FURNISHINGS FOR PATIENT HOUSE	\$50

Education in Kenya

SCHOOL DESK	\$30
SCHOOL CHAIR	\$25
PRIMARY SCHOOL FEES	\$50
SECONDARY SCHOOL FEES	\$150

In Kenya the Oblates introduced and encouraged the development of affordable day schools rather than boarding schools, which make education unattainable for most because of the associated expenses. Even with day schools, many cannot afford student fees. If student fees are not paid, students are sent home and cannot continue. Some families have to choose which child is to be educated. In the classrooms, it is not uncommon to see three students sharing one desk and two chairs.

Because most do not have electricity, studying or doing homework after supper is nearly impossible. Children walk to school, up to 10 kilometres each way. Classes are six days a week and start at 7:30 a.m., so many children are walking by sunrise.



Children helping children



BY CRISTINA RODRIGUEZ

COCHABAMBA, BOLIVIA – It has been a difficult year to maintain pastoral support for all of the poor children in the rural areas of Cochabamba because of social upheaval during election campaigns. However, there is always hope and faith that these children can have a joyful Christmas, an important event when we celebrate the great miracle of God made Man to save the world.

With the generosity of many benefactors, several of our children want to convey the beauty of Christmas 2014 to blind children in their communities.

It is a big challenge for sighted children to reveal the knowledge of the manger of Baby Jesus to the blind. This experience, which children want to live, touches the depths of our hearts because we all know that 80 per cent of knowledge is through the eyes, and blind children are at a difficult disadvantage.

During this time of preparation for Christmas, we know that love for others, our neighbours, is the key to overcoming these obstacles.

Children tell us they reserve a star in the sky at Christmas for each of our friends who send their generous gift packs. You can be assured that your gift this year will result in having your name registered in the stars of heaven as our blind children experience the beauty of Christmas.

I wish to express deep appreciation to each of our benefactors. May the Child God reward you for your generosity and fill you and your families with all His blessings.

CHRISTMAS PACKAGES \$30

From dreams to reality

GUATEMALA – As missionaries to the poor we are faced with ongoing challenges addressing needs such as education, housing, work, health, food and security. We are moved to action by the pleading eyes of children hungering for love and food, and mothers mourning the imminent death of one of their loved ones who are victims of poverty and sickness.

The response to social needs as missionaries usually begins with a dream, a desire to do something for the poor. There are the hours spent in prayer and meditation on the way Christ responded to the needy. His compassion and closeness to the poor is a light that shows the way to respond, or an action that can bring hope.

These and other motivations were sufficient to begin looking for the expertise that could help us formulate a project based on the social-economic reality of the Colonia San Ignacio.

In July 2010 we purchased a lot next to our centre of operations (Villa Oblata) with funds from Mexico, our mother province. In December 2011 a group of professionals and a handful



of Oblates began formulating a project that would eventually serve the poor.

One of the first steps was to legalize what is now known as the Fundacion Villa Maria (FUNVIMA). It is a non-profit organization that can solicit funds, is exempt from paying taxes, and can donate tax exempt receipts. About the same time another group of professionals, architects and engineers began the arduous task of developing a plan for the clinic.

The first step in this process was to invite the architectural students from the University Rafael Landivar to present projects according to the specifications required. After a month of work, the students presented 10 projects and we selected three of them. From the three selected our group of professionals modified and determined the requirements of the clinic and the long process of preparing the plans was begun.

We now have all the plans required for the construction of the clinic along with the documents required: impact of traffic,

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



study on the environmental impact, and authorization for the construction. The vast majority of these works was donated, and the government offices charged us a minimal fee.

Due to lack of funds we have not begun construction. We have connected water and electricity. Four toilets have been installed with the required septic tanks. We have constructed a large gallery that accommodates about 100 people and a small storage building for the food for the poor.

In November 2013 the first block was laid for the construction. The mayor of the municipality of Mixco and his close associates were also present. The mayor promised to make available the heavy tractors to move the earth when we are ready to begin the work.

To make the project more attractive from a financial point of view, we decided to proceed in stages. The first stage will cost about \$175,844. A donation of \$500 would equate to one square metre of construction.

We have several activities planned to raise funds. In July we began a second collection on the first and third Sunday of every month. The 10 collections generate about \$500 a month. Other fund-raisers include a swimming activity, a car raffle and a walk-a-thon.

Once we begin construction we will approach companies for donations such as cement, steel, blocks and other building materials. We will invite members of the parish to donate work hours that we hope will reduce costs and primarily get the people involved in the project.

We are hoping that generous people from Canada will help by donating \$500 for a square metre of construction of the clinic.





'Give us this day our daily bread'

GUATEMALA – For the majority of us food is a reality. God has blessed us greatly, and most of the time we take it for granted. Nevertheless, in our world of abundance, every few minutes a child dies from lack of food.

Here in Guatemala, land of the Eternal Spring, the high rate of malnourished children and infant deaths is one of the highest in Latin America. As we all know, malnourished children are also victims of fatal illnesses. Our hearts go out to these innocent victims and the suffering of their mothers who often are without recourse due to the high level of poverty.

Motivated to serve Christ by serving the poor, our Oblate community and a group of generous lay persons have dedicated time, talents and money to a project that will one day be able to respond to the needy people. We are working towards the construction of the Centro de Desarrollo Integral San Eugenio de Mazenod.

In the meantime, giving use to the property where the clinic will be built, we have installed an “enramada” where we can attend to groups of women, children and youth. Since last October we have helped a group of 44 mothers with undernourished children. The main components of the program are education of the mothers, weight control of the children, nutritional measurements and food delivery. The program is supported by Caritas Arquidiocesana de Guatemala and is operated by volunteers from our parish, Santa Cecilia.

After one year of properly feeding the undernourished children, the program has proven results. The child will reach its proper weight and stature for its age. This program does not work miracles, but it does prepare the mothers to properly feed their children. An important component of the program is precisely this: preparing the mothers to become aware of their responsibility in child care during the first years of life.

Once we have the clinic functioning, we will be able to assist the children and their parents at another level. There are countless doctors, nurses, nutritionists and volunteer university students willing to give some of their time and expertise to the poor.

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.



Perpetual vows

BY BILL STANG, OMI

LAC ST. ANNE, AB – It was a day for celebration.

Accompanied by a number of Oblates, we travelled to Lac St. Anne to be present for Brother Rusty Gardiner's final vows as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate. When we arrived at the Shrine many had already gathered because this was also pilgrimage week.

Archbishop Murray Chatlain of the Keewatin-The Pas diocese was the main celebrant for the vow ceremony, which began with a large procession from the vesting teepee to the shrine. About 40 Oblates and altar servers were welcomed into the shrine by energetic and joyful Cree music.

Brother Rusty was introduced by Fr. Raol Salas, the formation director from the Oblate School of Theology. OMI Provincial Ken Forster then proceeded with the questions of interrogation for Brother Rusty.



Oblates Bill Stang and Rusty Gardiner

The readings were proclaimed by First Nations people from Ile-a-la Crosse, followed by Archbishop Emeritus Sylvain Lavoie's homily. After the homily Brother Rusty was again called to the altar area where he now prostrated himself on a beautiful star blanket as we sang the Litany of the Saints.

When the Litany was completed Fr. Forster asked Brother Rusty to pronounce his perpetual vows and sign the relevant documents. He was then presented with the Oblate Cross and a Medallion of Mary.

Before we left in procession, another touching moment occurred when the chief of one of the reserves near Lac St. Anne made Brother Rusty an honorary chief.

There were about 2,000 people gathered in the shrine for this happy occasion and it was extremely touching to see the involvement of our First Nations people throughout the mass. It was a delight to see so many people from Ile-a-la Crosse, Brother Rusty's home town, present for this memorable occasion, along with many from the parishes in the Keewatin-The Pas Diocese. They were there to witness a great event. When I spoke to Brother Rusty after the ceremony, he said he did not know he had so many relatives.

We all wish Brother Rusty a happy and fruitful life in the Oblate community.





Christmas Rosary Bracelet

Keep prayer close at heart by wearing this rosary bracelet. This charming bracelet includes red and green filigree capped beads with a white pearlized Our Father bead on a gold-plated chain. The beads are accented with a gold-tone crucifix and Madonna medal, and the claw clasp allows for easy on and off. The Christmas Rosary Bracelet is 7 ¾ inches long. Quantities are limited. If you would like to receive a rosary bracelet please indicate it on the Christmas Dreams gift form.



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.

AMMI Lacombe Canada
MAMI is pleased to
support our Missionary
Oblates serving the poor
around the world through
humanitarian works –
feeding the hungry,
caring for the sick,
clothing the naked and
bringing the love of God
to those most in need.

*We support Oblate
missions and ministries in
areas such as:*

Bolivia
Brazil
Canada
Guatemala
India
Kenya
Pakistan
Peru
Puerto Rico
Sri Lanka





Have you considered
including the
*Missionary
Oblates*

as a beneficiary
in your will?

*Your gift to AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI
would ensure that the good ministry and
mission works of the Oblates continues in
Canada and throughout the world.*

*You could even specify an Oblate mission
that is dear to your heart.*



*Oblate
Spirit*

**Communications
Coordinators:**

John and Emily Cherneski
lacombemissions@yahoo.ca

www.oblatemissionassociates.ca

*A publication of the
Oblate Mission office.*

**Donations for Oblate
Missionary Projects
can be sent to:**

*AMMI Lacombe
Canada MAMI*

601 Taylor Street West
Saskatoon, SK S7M 0C9

Phone (306) 653-6453

TOLL FREE:

1-866-432-MAMI (6264)

Fax (306) 652-1133

lacombemami@sasktel.net

On-line donations
can be given through:
www.oblatemissionassociates.ca

Printed in Canada by:

St. Peter's Press
Muenster, SK

AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI