

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

# Oblate Spirit



September 2017

*Healing  
Waters*



# Humble beginnings



When Theresa Bird (front cover) waded into the waters of Lac Ste. Anne this year, she was continuing an Oblate tradition that began 128 years ago. The healing waters have soothed the souls of thousands over this course of time, and there is little sign of diminishment of the annual July trek.

When the Canadian Oblates ventured to Africa and established a small mission in Kenya 20 years ago, there was only a glimmer of the potential that existed in this strange foreign land ... at least strange for those of us raised in Canada.

Bill Stang, OMI, was one of the original Canadian missionaries in 1997 and he returned to Kenya this year to help celebrate the 20th anniversary of the mission. He was welcomed by the large Kenyan Oblate family including several who are native to the area who have donned the Oblate Cross as priests and brothers belonging to OMI Lacombe Canada.

When the Oblates developed a cabin at Amyot Lake, SK, as a retreat for Oblates more than 25 years ago, they did not know it would eventually become a place of retreat and renewal for people living with HIV/AIDS in Saskatoon. As maintenance of the property became more difficult for the aging Oblates, they, in typical Oblate fashion, found an organization in need and turned over the keys.

When Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI, offers employment at a fair wage, he is providing hope for the future for people in Peru.

These are stories you will read in the following pages. They have a common thread ... the spirit of the Oblates generated in many different ways, a spirit that continues to unite the Oblate family in Canada and around the world.

*John and Emily Cherneski, Communications Coordinators*

# The healing waters of Lac Ste. Anne

BY ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS SYLVAIN LAVOIE, OMI

LAC STE. ANNE, AB – “Ota mamâwi etasiyâhk; Miyo Saint Anne wi-mamihcimatahk.”

Those words, from the Cree hymn to Ste. Anne, bring back many memories – sights, sounds and smells – of the annual pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne.

First called Wakamne, or God’s Lake, by the Nakota First Nations who live on the west end of the Lake, and Manito Sâkahikan, or Spirit Lake, by the Cree, the lake was renamed Lac Ste. Anne by Rev. Jean-Baptiste Thibault, the first Catholic priest to establish a mission on the site in 1844.

The pilgrimage grounds had been sacred, widely known as a place of healing for generations of Indigenous peoples prior to contact with European fur traders and settlers. Fr. Lestanc, OMI, organized the first annual pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne in July, 1889, after an inspirational visit to the Ste. Anne d’Aurey shrine in French Brittany the previous year.



Archbishop Emeritus  
Sylvain Lavoie, OMI





Archbishop Sylvain and Christine Mispounsas

Over the years the Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage has continued on an annual basis, usually during the week of July 26 (the feast day of St. Anne, mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary). The grandmother figure, or “kokum” in Cree, has a very strong influence within Indigenous culture.

A pilgrimage involves leaving the comforts of home and journeying to a place where two realities meet – either earth and sky, such as the many mountains in the bible, or earth and water, such as at Lac Ste. Anne. The whole venture is itself a prayer, a physical expression of a desire for a theophany, an encounter with God.

My first experience of Lac Ste. Anne happened in 1976 during my first year of ministry in northern Saskatchewan. Pilgrims from adjacent communities camped at Île-à-la Crosse, celebrated the Sunday Eucharist, then journeyed by school buses to a campground near Meadow Lake. After shopping Monday morning, we travelled to a campsite near Smokey Lake, AB, singing, praying and visiting all the way. There I heard confessions in a school bus, sitting in the driver’s seat, opening the front door for penitents as the previous left out the back. We



then celebrated the Eucharist with camp fire smoke wafting in the evening air.

The next stop was at the crypt in St. Albert to visit the tombs of Fr. Lacombe and Bishop Grandin before an outdoor lunch. We arrived at Lac Ste. Anne, singing the hymn Miyo Ste. Anne, in time to set up our tents, attend the opening Eucharist and the blessing of the lake. Thousands then went right into the lake to pray and be prayed over, followed by a candlelight procession that wound its way around the grounds. The main celebration was Wednesday morning with many priests busy hearing confessions all day. Other celebrations of the Eucharist, the Way of the Cross and a visit to the cemetery capped the day. The next morning, after an early mass, the pilgrims set out to return home.

In those days, the pilgrimage was as much the journey as it was the destination. Now many people come one or two days early by motor home or with campers, so it starts on Saturday, the blessing of the lake is on Sunday, and runs until the following Thursday. Many walk, bike or come in buckboards. Pilgrims from Northern Manitoba fly to Winnipeg and come by chartered bus from there.

A renewal of the pilgrimage site and program was undertaken by Frs. Jacques Johnson, OMI, Maurice Jolie, OMI, and

'kokums' resting in the shade





Madeleine Spencer (centre) and friends

Colin Levangie that included a major shift to create a sacred space with a berm that linked a new shrine (built through the initiative of the late Fr. Antoine Hudon, OMI) with a pagoda on the shore.

Today, under the guidance of Fr. Garry LaBoucane, OMI, the many Eucharistic celebrations are organized by specific communities or groups, often featuring different Indigenous languages. Other events that make up the pilgrimage are a Cursillo tent of gospel singing and witnessing, the sacrament of reconciliation, children's catechesis and a Sobriety Pledge/Step 7 Healing Prayer. A Feeding-the-Fire ceremony honors the ancestors. Ordinations and granting of headdress ceremonies have also taken place. Attempts to conduct youth ministry were always a challenge. Presently the thrust is to involve youth in the liturgies as much as possible.

One year a veteran reporter for the CBC, Cindy Bisailon, came to do a documentary on the pilgrimage, expecting to find a lot of tension between the Oblates and the Indigenous people because of the Residential School legacy. What she experienced instead, in her words, was a love-in. She was captivated

by the pilgrimage, the people she met and the whole sacred environment. The outcome was a documentary entitled The Healing Waters of Lac Ste. Anne.

In the Jubilee year 2000, the shrine was handed over to a trust involving different Indigenous nations. The Nakota Alexis First Nations is taking greater responsibility in welcoming pilgrims and preparing the sacred grounds. The Archdiocese of Edmonton is also looking at how it can be more involved, to ensure that this week-long pilgrimage will continue the historic peaceful tradition of Catholic Indigenous of many nations gathering on sacred ground to pray, visit, and renew their spirit, very much the same purpose as the traditional Sun Dance.

Looking over all the efforts put into this pilgrimage site by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, I believe that St. Eugene de Mazenod would be proud and give us his fondest blessing.

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How have the Oblates supported, inspired and encouraged you?

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



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



# A Legacy of retreat and renewal

BY KEN THORSON, OMI

The little cabin at Amyot Lake has been a *retreat* for the Oblates serving in the dioceses of Prince Albert and Keewatin Le Pas for more than 25 years.

Lovingly built by Bishop Sylvain Lavoie, Fr. Eugene Warnke, and former Oblates Claude Sheehy and John MacDonald, and maintained in recent years by Fr. John Zunti and others, the cabin sits in the southwest corner of Prince Albert National Park. It has been a place of rest and renewal, a place for Oblate meetings, and of course a place of prayer. It has also served as a berry-picking base for many years for Fr. Albert Ulrich.

In recent years Amyot has seen fewer Oblates visit, and maintenance has become a little more difficult, so the question of the future of the cabin arose. Because the cabin sits on leased Crown land, and because we are a charity, transfer to



another charity was seen as the best option. Over the last few years various charitable organizations were approached, but none were able to take on the property with the lease.

Then, at a Saskatchewan district meeting in November 2016, we invited the Oblates and the Associates to help us in our search for a suitable group.

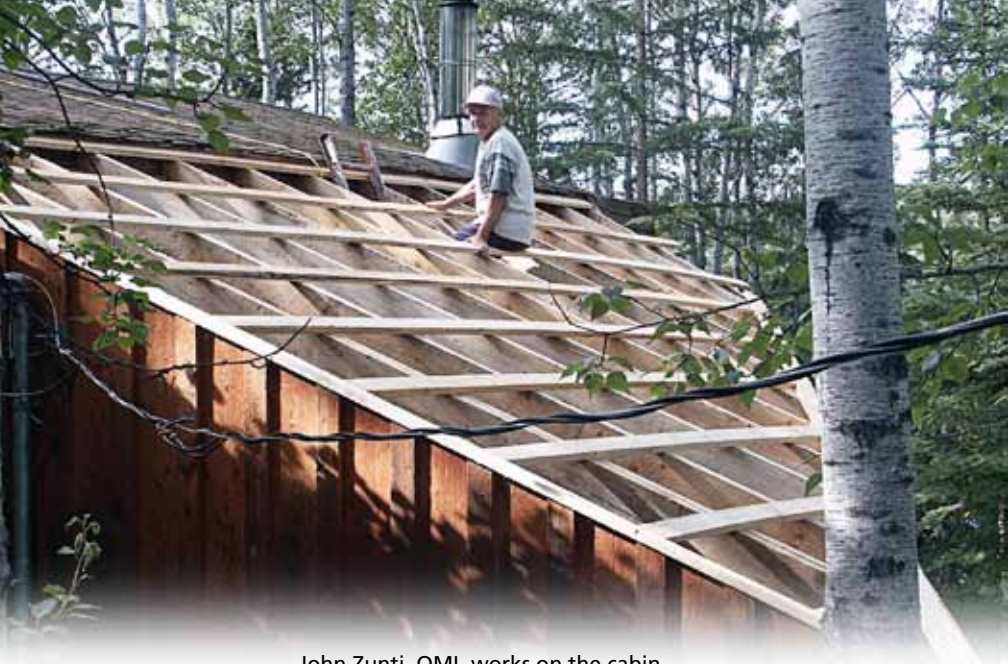
JoAnne Chrones suggested we contact Katelyn Roberts, the co-founder and executive director of Sanctum Care Group in Saskatoon. Sanctum, a relatively new organization, offers hospice care and respite for people living with HIV/AIDS in a city whose HIV rate is two-to-three times the national average. Katelyn immediately saw the potential of Amyot as a place of retreat and renewal for the residents of Sanctum, many of whom have never been on a vacation, let alone a retreat.

On a visit to Saskatoon in February, Ken Forster, Jim

Ken Thorson, OMI, hands over the keys to Amyot Lake Cabin to Katelyn Roberts, Executive Director of Sanctum Care Group.

Also pictured are Ken Forster, OMI, Morris Markentin and Kathy Malbeuf of Sanctum, and Jim Bleackley, OMI.





John Zunti, OMI, works on the cabin

Bleackley and I (as members of the OMI Lacombe leadership team) had an opportunity to visit Sanctum and meet some of the residents and staff. It was clear to us that the care being offered at Sanctum encourages healing, not only of body, but of mind and spirit as well. Sanctum seems to be a place where *spirits are lifted* and where people, through the care they receive, come to *see who they are in the eyes of God*.

In early May the transfer of the property was completed



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and Sanctum's volunteers went to work to ensure the building and property at Amyot Lake were ready for the Sanctum residents who began to arrive in the summer.

The Oblates are pleased to know that the cabin at Amyot Lake, built by sons of St. Eugene who have spent their lives serving Christ in the poor, will contribute to the good work of healing and renewal offered by Sanctum for many years to come.

To learn more about the work of Sanctum, visit their website at [www.sanctumcaregroup.com](http://www.sanctumcaregroup.com)

**A note from staff and residents of Sanctum:**

"The Sanctum board of directors, staff and residents ... cannot thank you enough for the tremendous gift of the cabin at Amyot Lake.

"You have gifted us the opportunity to expand our program and services to include healing retreats for people living with HIV in a tranquil and peaceful setting.

"For many of the people we serve, this opportunity will be a first and will be treasured by all who experience it. We are truly honored by your generosity and support of the work we are doing at Sanctum."

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missionary  
works*



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# Celebrating 20 years in Kenya

BY BILL STANG, OMI

KIONYO, Kenya – Jim Bleackley, OMI, my travelling companion from Ottawa, and I were fortunate to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Oblate Mission here in Kenya in May.

We arrived in Kenya and spent the night at the Oblate house in Karen, Nairobi, before being taken the next morning to Kisaju, our newest parish.

Most of the Kenyan Oblate community had gathered in Kisaju. We met Fr. Gideon, Br. Joseph, Fr. Sam (our Korean Oblate), Fr. Gerry Conlan, Fr. Stephen, Fr. Fidele, scholastic Br. Joseph and Peter, a scholastic from Zambia.

It was a surprise for us to see a new house built at Kisaju. It is large, so there are many rooms for residents and visitors. It is surely better than



Oblates Fidele, Jim, Bill, Gideon, and CWA women in the background



renting at Kithengala and having to travel to the parish each day. There is still much landscaping to do and the property is extensive. They have fenced off a portion for sheep, goats and chickens. The big garden was producing, but it seemed very dry in this area.

The Oblates in Kisaju (Fr. Gideon, Fr. Sam, Brother Joseph, Peter and scholastic Joseph) serve seven out-stations. One can see that there is much construction in the area, where three universities are planned. The traffic is heavy and a bit taxing.

At the Oblate house of studies in Karen, Nairobi, the following day, we met the 14 pre-novices finishing the study of philosophy before they move to the novitiate in South Africa.

The grounds here were green. They had received some rain and the big garden was flourishing. I enjoyed the huge trees around the property, especially the “Flaming Tree.”

After that it was off to Kionyo, where we were met by Fr. Constant, Fr. Dionisius, Br. Zachary, pre-novice Patrick, scholastic brother Joseph and Fr. Bright, an Oblate from Zambia who is now assigned to our mission. The group from Kisaju arrived later.

For me, this was a very touching reunion. I had lived in Kionyo for about four years. I met Martha, our cook from way back. Just meeting so many people with whom I was friends from my time in the mission years ago was overwhelming. To meet Margaret and Douglas Ikunda, his little boy John Paul and the catechist Edward was so life-giving for me. To see how well they are all doing is phenomenal.

Fr. Jim and I explored the property and had a good look at the beginning of the new church. I was somewhat shocked at the huge building that is being erected. My prayer is that we



Oblates Gideon, Bill, and Stephen

will be able to finish this building. This will be a church that can be seen for miles.

In the evening we prayed as a community. I was impressed by the lively discussions on cultural issues that were taking place after supper, and hope this cultural awareness will continue to grow among the Oblates who work in the mission.

May 21, Founder's Day, was the day of celebration. There were tents for those attending. We gathered for mass and went in procession from the church, led by many dancers, some of whom were our postulants from Méru.

At the mass we celebrated the death of our founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod. We celebrated the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Oblate Mission here in Kionyo. We were accepting the final vows of Br. Zachary Mwenda and we installed Fr. Fidele and his council, Fr. Gideon and Fr. Praveen, as the Oblate leaders of the mission.

I led the mass in Kimeru, the language of the people, and had all the Oblates and one diocesan priest, Salesio, concelebrating. After Communion, Br. Zachary came forward to pronounce his perpetual vows, which were accepted by Fr. Bleackley, who then blessed the Oblate Cross and medals and put them on Zachary. Then all Oblates present renewed their vows, prayed the Act of Consecration to Mary and finished with singing the Salve Regina.

The Liturgy was followed by speeches of all sorts, and we were presented with an anniversary cake. Fr. Fidele, Fr. Jim and I had to cut the cake and then receive a piece of this cake, which is a tradition with our people.

This concluded our service, which began at 10 a.m. and finished at 3 p.m. There were more than 1,500 people present and all were treated to an excellent meal.

The next morning we left Kenya, exhausted but happy.

Zachary Mwenda, OMI



# So much has changed

BY ALFRED GROLEAU, OMI

NAIROBI, Kenya – At Eucharist one recent morning, I enjoyed the melodious voices of 14 young African men on their journey to Oblate priesthood. They are studying philosophy at the Consolata Institute of Philosophy in Nairobi.

Three of them have completed their degree and they intend to proceed to Oblate novitiate in January. I then left for Méru, a five-hour trip by public transit called *mutatu*, where I will be teaching 10 postulants who joined last January.

On the following Sunday, all gathered for the final profession of Zachary who was a postulant in Méru when I came to Kenya in 2006.

One evening, the community gathered to celebrate the closing of the academic year. We sat outside on the porch of the beautiful dining room that was still unfinished when I moved into this property in December 2006. At that time, from this sight we used to view the Ngong hills and that reminded me of Karen Blixen's words: "I once had a farm in Africa overlooking the Ngong hills. These hills have a round shape like knuckles from whence comes their name."

Now these hills are hidden by the trees that have grown. Much has transpired in the past decade.

Wind turbines have sprouted on the Ngong hills





# Kenya

## NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

### MAY 13

We received news that Fidele Munkiele, OMI, was appointed as our mission superior, so please pray for him to survive all the challenges.

All were busy at the Kiirua Farm with harvest in progress and trying to stay one step ahead of the thieves. I arrived back at Méru in time for a late snack with 70 university students who had come to celebrate with the postulants and welcome Fr. Alfred Groleau, OMI, who has returned to Kenya for a few months to help out.

We had a nice celebration in Karen to welcome the pre-novices back from retreat and also welcome Fr. Alfred! It was nice, but Fr. Fidele forgot the ice-cream when he'd gone shopping, so he had to go back!

At a dinner with NIC Bank, I chatted with Edward, an interesting man who is a manager at Strathmore (Opus Dei Catholic University) involved in climate change work. He seems well connected and is a committed Catholic.

Edward gave the group (30 of us) a pep talk on taking care of ourselves so we can enjoy family and life in the future. There were nine points, and making money was down the list at No. 6.

Our new security guard Milka with her baby



Gerry Conlan, OMI





This got a lot of laughs. Edward shared how a recent study in Kenya revealed that 70 per cent of young people would do whatever it takes to make money, including dishonest and unethical pursuits. So Kenya has a challenge.



Potato field cleaned out by thieves

Edward and I both wanted to leave early so he kindly dropped me into town in his BMW. He was in Frankfurt the week prior and Vienna last month for UN climate talks, so I think he is more important than he let on.

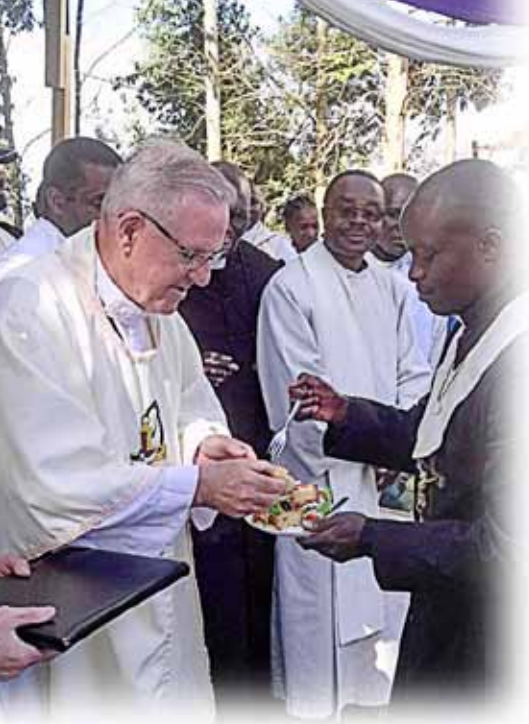
## MAY 20

I'm at a subtly trendy hotel next to the Frankfurt airport (50 per cent discount rate) that is, as the young people would say, cool. I'm on my way to Ireland for a three-day Oblate finance meeting.

Last Sunday was a wonderful occasion celebrating 20 years of Oblate pastoral care ministry in Kenya and the 20th anniversary of Kionyo Parish. Coincidence? I think not. We also celebrated the final vows of Zachary Mwenda to become an Oblate for life. Now Br. Zachary will continue his preparation for priesthood. About 3,000 people came, including Fr. Bill Stang and Fr. Jim Bleackley representing OMI Lacombe Canada. Fr. Bill was one of the founders of the Kenya mission.

Oblates celebrate the 20th anniversary of Kionyo Parish





Fr. Bill shares the celebratory cake

Members of the Kisaju Parish came in a 33-seat bus and arrived at 10:40 a.m. just as we started. Then they left early (3 p.m.) because their bus was a bit slow and arrived home at midnight.

At Frankfurt, I visited the ACN (Aid to the Church in Need) international office. One of the Polish priests there is working closely with the Christians at Mosul,

Iraq, where their houses were systematically destroyed by ISIL. One of the challenges, he said, was to get all the different Christian churches to work together. But they now have a steering committee and he is the acting chair. The cost is only US\$450,000,000.

They divided the budget into three categories of housing damage: totally destroyed, substantially destroyed and partially destroyed. It is so sad. It's literally 50,000 houses deliberately destroyed, and now people have to rebuild their lives. But, in 50 years time people might look back and see how God always brings something better out of chaos and sadness.

## JUNE 3

I travelled from Frankfurt Airport on an express train to Aachen (just past Cologne). I visited Misereor, (specializing in development and justice work funding) and Kinder Mission Werks (specializing in school support funding).

It's been a really helpful meeting in Dublin with some of the people who support us through MAMI (Poland, Germany and Ireland) and CMO (Quebec). We had various presentations. One key message coming through was the need for our formation programs to really create a change of attitude in the young men, training them in story writing, accounting for expenses, and teaching them basic accounting skills/spreadsheets.



Scholastic Phelix

## JUNE 10

I made it back home safely after a long travel day, up at 2:30 a.m. in Dublin and to bed at 10:30 p.m. in Nairobi. It was a smooth trip but I was a little frustrated by the security check at Frankfurt airport when the security people called the police to check my Oblate cross. They were worried it was too big and could be a weapon. After a short discussion they allowed me through. When I arrived in Nairobi the revenue officer quizzed me about being a Catholic priest. He asked me to wait for five minutes so I could bless the rosary beads for a customs

woman. She was very happy, so hopefully I have a friend at the airport now!

I later learned that when I arrived in London, a terrorist attack took place about one kilometre away from the station. Thankfully I didn't know about it until I arrived at the Kilburn Oblate Parish. Sad to see so many people died. I heard that one young woman is from the sister school to our Oblate College in Brisbane. It puts the whole issue of immigration and integration in our minds again. How do we build a society of mixed cultures?

## JUNE 17

We have a great guest among us. Fr. Luc Young, OMI, is a community leader from the Beijing ministry. He celebrated his 25th anniversary of priesthood in February and is on a three-month break, so he decided to visit Kenya and Zambia.

I picked Fr. Luc up at the airport and took him to Kisaju to drop supplies, check the work and let him see our new house and community. After prayer and supper we heard many tales from the China mission – the community was really interested!



Fr. Luc Young, OMI

## JUNE 25

On Sunday, I took Fr. Luc to the HIV children's orphanage and we celebrated mass together. He enjoyed it. The sisters organized a beautiful procession after mass and all joined in with singing while I paused at each of the little houses of the children and gave them a Eucharistic blessing. My arms were killing me by the end, but I didn't want to show weakness or I'd lose respect (this is the influence of African men: always strong, never complain and never cry!).





Youth at the Kickstart International Children's Home

## JULY 1

Fr. Luc travelled to Kionyo with the Oblates and is getting a good feel for the mission. I drove him to Marimba where we met three pre-novices (Sylvester, Edwin and Moses). We arranged for Mass at 6 a.m. so we could beat the traffic jam getting into Méru.

Euticus, the Kiirua farm manager, gave Luc a tour of our farm. We talked about the problem of theft on the farm, as Euticus has been pressuring me to repair the electric fence that was damaged by elephants last year, but I have not had time to look for a project sponsor.

Luc and I then headed back to Marimba and arrived a bit late. Poor Luc was tired, but prepared himself for a 4:30 a.m. departure to the airport on Thursday morning to fly to Zambia – no doubt he will avoid my company on the next trip! After dropping him at the airport, I was able to return to Karen at 6 a.m. before the Mombasa Road traffic jam started.

Saturday was the third-anniversary celebration at Kickstart International Children's Home, started by my Australian friend James in Kisaju Parish. The children danced, sang and performed African athletics.

There are 16 vulnerable youth living there aged 6 to 15.

They come for one year and then move on, if possible, to their families. Next year, they will handle 32 youth, because two new buildings are almost complete. It's really an oasis in the desert, a sort of pressure relief valve in an area where the culture is changing, but many parents are not keeping up.



Fr. Gerry and Nairobi youth group

## JULY 8

I had a stay-at-home week, but still managed to get distracted by a number of things. I accompanied our Nairobi youth group to Ngong Hills where we got to 2,325 metres above sea level and seemed like we could see forever. Nairobi looked small in the distance. Only nine youth could make it, but it was relaxing and inspiring.

The day was brightened by four Maasai shepherd children who befriended the group and two of them walked all the way with us. The youth spoiled them and they were so happy to be included in games and competitions. It reminded me again how simply inviting people (especially the young) to be part of something is a powerful way of building dignity and self-esteem.

## JULY 15

I hear from Canada that many fires are out of control in B.C. We will keep you in our prayers. During the week I also received a shock as my friend Pat Moroney, OMI, had a heart attack in a London hotel as he was preparing to head back to Australia. He had successful open-heart surgery. Please pray for him – he said he’s feeling a bit sore! Thank God he survived the operation.

I had a nice God-moment as I travelled up to Marimba. I passed by Kariene Market Catholic Church to see the parish priest. He’d asked for some ideas for their new church. He was not around, but the school children next door were very curious about this white man. They barely come up to my waist, but one came over to greet me.

As soon as we shook hands, about 20 more kids rushed over to do so, and then it started a stampede of the rest! Finally I reached some adults to talk to, but a few of the kids started pulling the hair on my arms out of curiosity. So I asked them, “Am I a monkey?” They laughed.

Then, one said “you can be a leopard.” So, for fun, I growled loudly like a lion. They all jumped back about two

New gate construction at Kionyo Church



metres before bursting into laughter. The simple things in life, like making children laugh, make us older people happy, too.

Thursday I spent the morning at Kiirua Farm going through the accounts with Euticus and checking out the farm.

## JULY 22

This week I sadly learned Fr. Con Campbell, OMI, passed away in Ireland. Thankfully I saw him in Ireland last month. He spent all his priestly life in Australia and was a great support for me in my first parish in Adelaide.

Another two Oblates are having health problems. If you can spare a prayer, they are Fr. Charlie Burrows (Indonesia) and Fr. John McGinty (Sydney). Thank you.

As we come closer to the Kenyan elections there is a generally calm atmosphere.

It's good to see Fr. Sholto Douglas, who was in the Kenya Mission from 2000-2008, in one piece after spending so much time recently with Uncle Mugabe in Zimbabwe.

Things are tough in Zimbabwe. If people mention Mugabe in e-mails, they are tracked. Five years ago a 30-year-old Oblate celebrated a memorial mass for the victims of a massacre in the early 1980s. An opposition leader attended. A week later they were both arrested. The Oblate was stripped a few times in front of women officers to embarrass him, and locked up for a week with little food and water before being taken to court.

Fr. Sholto said he is frequently stopped by the police for driving issues, and he has to pay. Any arguing and the car is impounded immediately. Locals



Fr. Sholto Douglas, OMI, helps with road repair at Kiirua Farm



get a reduced fine but white men pay 100 per cent. I felt sorry for him, and thanked God I was in Kenya with a good friend like Godfrey.

## JULY 29

This week had a lot of variety and many joyful moments as I travelled to Méru and back with Gideon and Sholto. Apart from the Holy Spirit keeping the police away and opening up the traffic for me, I had two little God moments.

The first was Monday evening when Fr. Gideon and I stopped for takeout supper at Chuka. I bought some meatballs for a couple of street-boys. When I came out there were none to be seen, but the guard found one and he was most appreciative of the food. Sadly, he acted and looked drunk, but I know it is glue sniffing. Family breakdowns and loss of parents has a much higher price in poor countries.

Kionyo Church construction



My second moment of joy was providing a ride for a high school youth as we headed to Nairobi. We only carried him two kilometres but he was so happy. He managed to fit among the vegetables in the back, while Gideon, Sholto and I were squeezed in the front. Simple acts of kindness bring many smiles and joy. I said to Fr. Sholto, "I need all the blessings I can get to balance the ledger!" We had a good laugh.

## AUG. 5

The Kenya elections are upcoming and some issues have arisen. The computer manager for the election board was tortured and killed, and no one knows why. Some say it was to get the password for voting fraud, others say it was a love triangle revenge. Sadly, the buses have doubled the fare for people to travel home to vote. So it is causing some pain for people.

Although we are not worried or believe there will be major trouble, in Karen we have filled all the cars with fuel, and stocked up the kitchen. We hope the power stays on. Many government offices close early, so our title deed for Kisaju and our incorporation update are on hold. Some attacks have

taken place north of Mombasa (by Al-Shabab) and several people were killed. The Australian government warns not to travel on the coastal and border areas up north – even north of Méru we are to be careful. We have some low-cost land we want to check at Malindi, north of Mombasa. But we are sitting still in Nairobi, probably until mid-September before it will be safe again.

The last week or two I've been procrastinating to start a project



Moses taking soil samples

proposal for a water borehole at Kisaju on Oblate land donated by a parishioner. But I finally relented and four days later finished a design for the four-acre property, a vision of what might be. It's not final by a long shot, but if we don't have a vision of something, people are reluctant to invest in us.

## AUG. 12

The Kenya elections were so smooth and peaceful, but we were urged to remain cautious. On the day after the election I was planning to visit Kisaju for bank-form signatures, but our lawyer came with our updated trust certificate and said "stay home, just in case."

The following evening we all sat glued around the TV to wait for the electoral commission announcement. People at the venue looked exhausted with all the waiting. I excused myself to prepare the weekly homily. About 2 a.m. I heard lots of whistling, hooting and shouting as people celebrated President Uhuru's re-election.

Saturday morning it was calm in most places, though two slum areas had some disturbances with youth blocking roads, but the police sorted it quickly. I hear there are a few pockets of disturbance in the western side of Kenya, where the opposition is based.

So, until next time, thanks for your ongoing support and prayers.

*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)*



# A just wage

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

CHINCHA ALTA, Peru – From time to time men come to the house to see if I have any work for them, be it for a few weeks or longer. Usually I respond to their needs, tell them to wear a hat providing it is summer, to have water and also to come to work in a good spirit.

One Sunday morning a man came to see me about work and I told him to come to the pit at 6:45 a.m. I noticed he was thin and did not look strong and his clothes were shabby.

The man came to the pit on time Monday morning and was given a pick and shovel to start his new trade. When it came close to the end of the work day, I asked the person in charge of the work to give the new employee a part of his pay. The man receiving the money was most surprised at this gesture. This is something you don't do by normal standards but, to be honest with you, I am a bit crazy!

The man performed to his best ability and no doubt was tired after an eight-hour shift of hard physical work.

The next Saturday we stopped work at 11 a.m., and it was time to pay the workers their much-earned wage. The new man was given the same wage as the others, but this caused some of the permanent elderly workers to question why this new employee received the same pay as themselves.

The answer to their question was expressed in this manner: "This poor man came, not to beg, but to work because he had no job. He worked hard like you but I had no idea if he had breakfast when he came to work. I had no idea whether he had a wife and children. I had no idea what he lives in. When he received a part of his wage on Monday morning he had at least something to put food on his table, providing he has a table!"





Workers in the pit

I ended the talk by saying only this: “This man could have been you!”

I don’t recall how many men, or drug addicts, have come to see me about work. I like to give people a chance to get them started at something.

As there is no future working in the pit, I tell the men to look for something better and some have found much better employment.

It is so easy to exploit people by not paying them a just wage according to the nature of work. Some say: “We will pay you so much just to see how you work” and a person can be at that job for a long time before receiving a just wage. Many of these workers lived in reed shacks, but with the help from people like you in the MAMI community, they now have a place to call “home!”

# St. Kateri Tekakwitha

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, canonized in 2012, is the Patroness and Protectress of Canada, the Patroness of Ecology, and the first Indigenous North American saint.

Kateri was born in 1656 and at age four was the only survivor in her family when her parents and her younger brother died during a smallpox epidemic. The disease left her with limited vision, poor health, and pockmarks on her face and body.

Her death in 1680 marked what is said to be her first miracle: Her face became radiant with no sign of scarring. The miracle that culminated in her sainthood was the healing in Seattle of a young Jake Finkbonner in 2006. A relic of Kateri was taken to the Children's Hospital in Seattle, where Finkbonner was dying of a flesh-eating disease. The boy survived.

## St. Kateri Tekakwitha Rosary Bracelet

In the Native American spiritual tradition, the four cardinal directions have special significance. Each direction is represented by a colour with symbolic meaning:

- White (north) corresponds to cleansing and healing to endure life's trials
- Yellow (south) like the rising sun, symbolizes warmth and stability
- Red (east) is where peace, light and new life rise up with each new day
- Black (west) represents the end or finality

Please see the enclosed gift form to indicate your request for this lovely rosary.



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