

Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!



Many blessings to you in this special season! I am now well into my second three-year term serving you as Provincial. I want to thank all of you for the support, prayer and advice that you have offered to me, the Council and staff of OMI Lacombe Canada.

We are “Advent People”, we are called each morning to live from a hope that commands our energy and best effort.

“Do not say, 'It is morning,' and dismiss it with a name of yesterday.

See it for the first time as a newborn child that has no name.” *Rabindranath Tagore*

The presence of the long-expected Jesus spoke to the world of the plan of God; inclusion of all, welcome the stranger, all at the table, forgiveness and reconciliation, compassionately sharing both the joys and the sorrows of the world. When we say, “Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!” this is what we claim we long for.

Our world today needs to welcome this Christ Child with his message. The plight of refugees has not missed a month in the news. Refugees willing to risk the lives of their children, not to find some material paradise, but a place of peace to raise their children. How happy they would be to remain in their beloved land that they know and have grown up in, but because of war and insecurity they conclude that they must risk their very lives to find life. He has come that we might have life and have it to the full.

We have great pride as Canadians and speak loudly of our desire to open our home to refugees, yet we cannot imagine the sacrifice that neighbouring countries to conflict are living today. We are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. UNHCR states that, as of figures in 2016, an unprecedented 65.6 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 22.5 million refugees, **over half of whom are under the age of 18. Many countries host well over a million refugees.** Our Canadian problem is not that we don't have more resources than most of the hosting countries. Our problem is just the opposite. We know that this finite world cannot welcome others to live at our standard, and we are unwilling to live more simply and be less consumerist.

The Risk of Birth

This is no time for a
child to be born,
With the earth
betrayed by war &
hate
And a comet slashing
the sky to warn
That time runs out &
the sun burns late.

That was no time for a
child to be born,
In a land in the
crushing grip of Rome;
Honour & truth were
trampled by scorn-
Yet here did the
Saviour make his
home.

When is the time for
love to be born?
The inn is full on the
planet earth,
And by a comet the
sky is torn-
Yet Love still takes
the risk of birth.

Christmas, 1973

Madeline L'Engle

*Our world is a world torn by strife and wars. There is poverty and greed.
There is racism and exclusion. Can we embrace hope in the face of this?*

How important that we cling to hope and celebrate the good we see. I find myself looking at several more things that must get done before the end of 2017, but I will take time, make time to be quiet in gratitude for the signs of His love incarnate, where Love still takes the risk of birth!

I am grateful for you the members of Lacombe Province and our dear Associates who often, I must say, bring us to the table, to the living room, to be in touch with our humanity. I am grateful for the zeal of so many brother Oblates who truly are an Oblation in service of the poor. I am grateful to the elders who can celebrate their past in happy memories and still be willing to carry their crosses with courage.

As we move forward into 2018, I hope we will let **Love still take the risk of birth**, especially as we are called to embrace “Interculturality”; called to encounter, called to inclusion, called to respect, called to welcome the stranger, called to bring Christmas!

Merry Christmas!

Ken Forster, OMI