

AMMI *Lacombe* MAMI  
Canada

# Oblate Spirit



June 2018



*Annual Report*

*"There is a lot of good going on in the world, more than all the bad added together. But we often forget."*

- GERRY CONLAN, OMI



We should never forget, nor take for granted, the generosity of those who support the Oblates of Mary Immaculate through the mission office at *AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI* headquartered in Saskatoon. Watch the news on TV or on the Internet. Read the newspapers. We are fed so much information about the negative aspects of our world, whether in our towns and cities, or in countries abroad.

We are always grateful for your prayers and donations that support the missions in Canada and around the world. We use this issue of *Oblate Spirit* to review the last year, but more than anything, to thank our donors for your God-inspired help for the poor and those on the fringes of society.

It only seems like a few weeks ago that we prepared our last annual report, but we are back at it again a year later humbly saying thanks for the many ways you have helped.

Our presence is felt in Latin America, and particularly Peru, where Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI, continues his ministry, building homes and chapels and healing hearts in prison. The Medical Friends of Peru play a large role in the Santa Clotilde Hospital. Poor children in Bolivia are celebrated at Christmas.

The list grows longer as we move to Kenya, where 14 Oblates of Mary Immaculate serve a rapidly-growing mission. Prayer houses, churches, schools, children, the poor, are all beneficiaries of Canadian good will. It's hard to believe this large mission was initiated by Canadian Oblates just over 20 years ago. Today there are several Kenyan Oblates, and many more studying to become brothers and priests ... thanks to the support of our Canadian family.

In Canada, support goes to youth ministry, to Oblate associates who have been given the opportunity to learn more about the Oblates, and to a church (and those it serves) that has been warmed by physical improvements funded in part by MAMI.

Donations in 2017 came to a total of \$1,516,249.70, with \$713,110.80 of that coming from estates. The expenses to operate MAMI, including the publication of *Oblate Spirit*, came to \$294,557.13. Included in that amount are accounting and legal fees, financial charges and fees, meetings and travel, office supplies and equipment, promotion and gifts, rent, staff and production costs.

In 2017, we had 1,718 MAMI members make donations, down slightly from 1,787 in 2016.

As we look back on 2017, we were inspired by the reception of our readers to our request for goats. The purchase of goats was offered as a Christmas option for our readers, with the goats to be used to raise funds for the Nairobi youth group. The response was phenomenal, and at last count more than 103 kind souls donated to establish the herd of support for Christian Kenyan youth.

Christmas was also a special time for Cosmas Kithinji Kubai, a Kenyan member of the Oblates studying in San Antonio in preparation for his ordination. His account of his visit is also one of the highlights from 2017.

Yes, 2017 was a good year, but it couldn't have been done without the wonderful support of our MAMI friends and family. To all of you, we offer a multitude of blessings and prayers.

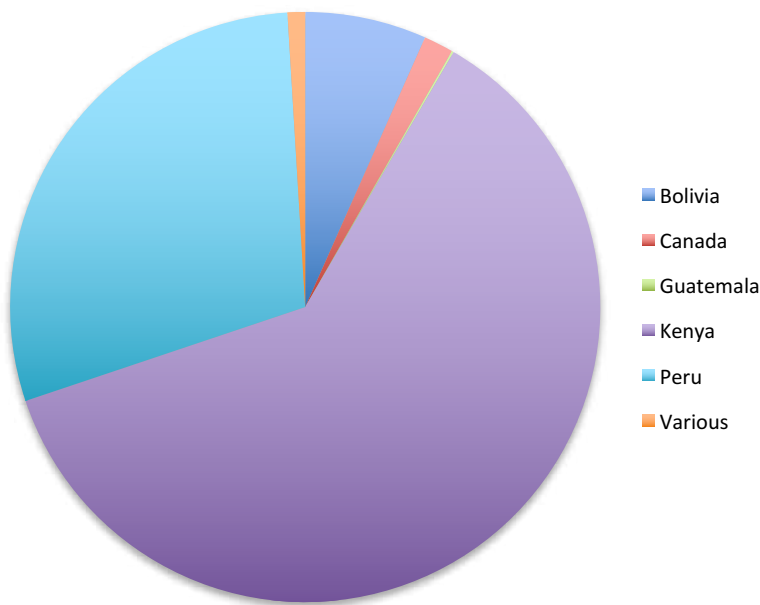
Thank you!

*John and Emily Cherneski*  
*Communications Coordinators*



# 2017 Projects Funded

\$915,938.94



Bolivia	\$61,010.13
Canada	\$14,863.07
Guatemala	\$997.50
Kenya	\$562,863.00
Peru	\$267,402.19
Various	\$8,803.05



Members of Kisaju parish plant a tree

### UNIVERSITY STUDIES ~ KAREN

Post-secondary students who are struggling to attend university in Kenya are assisted with funds for fees, books and transportation.

### KISAJU PARISH

Funds are provided for a stipend for Catechists and assistance with transportation, as well as a vehicle for parish use.

### KIONYO ~ WATHINE PRAYER HOUSE

Kionyo Parish has 10 prayer houses. Wathine is located in a strong protestant area served by various branches since the Kenyan colonial period. Wathine prayer house has always maintained its Catholic identity and inspired others around them who have converted into Catholicism, but many others



who are interested are afraid to join them until the church is constructed. The community is in great support of this Church project, but due to their low income, they are not able to pay for the full cost of construction. In addition to their local contribution raising 44 per cent, the larger parish community and MAMI will also assist in its construction.

## **KIONYO OBLATE COMMUNITY**

The Kionyo Oblate community is a parish community facing many pastoral challenges. One of the challenges is poor families asking for assistance and support. Twenty-one families have been identified as having an acute need. MAMI assists by paying half of the school fees with the families paying the other half.

## **KIONYO ~ ST. PAUL NJOGUNE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

St. Paul Njogune Primary School is a Catholic and parish school that provides a holistic and Catholic education. This school has a population of 250 children and every year the number is increasing. The weather is very cold for children



and there is a great need for better facilities. The cost of the project of construction is US \$170,000. The parents have managed to raise US \$57,000 and MAMI is contributing to build one classroom.

## **NAIROBI ~ LANGATA WOMEN'S PRISON ~ SCHOOL FEES**

Children stay with their mothers in prison. MAMI assists the prisoners' children with fees for their education. Without an education the children are vulnerable and exposed to crimes and all kinds of social insecurities and dangers.



## **MÉRU POSTULANCY**

The Méru postulancy buildings have not been maintained sufficiently for the last six to eight years and are now quite run down, making living conditions difficult. There are three main buildings and two smaller buildings. MAMI contributed to the improvement of the upkeep and maintenance of these buildings.



Oblates Phelix Johya  
and Joseph Nziolka

## **MÉRU UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FEES**

The Missionary Oblates in Méru work with university students pastorally to help them spiritually. Some students are needy and very poor but are motivated to work hard in order to change their vulnerable lives. MAMI provides assistance for their fees, thus helping them in securing a better future after finishing their studies.



Young people involved in church activities

## DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE WORKSHOPS

There is serious concern about the rising number of students and youth in general being affected by alcohol, drugs and crime. This project organizes workshops and campaigns at the Méru University, Méru Technical College, Kionyo and Kisaju

secondary schools. The project will help create awareness and prevention.

## CATECHIST TRAINING

The Kenya mission works with catechists and leaders of small Christian communities by providing ongoing training and leadership exercises. The goal of this project is to provide a holistic Catholic teaching along with knowledge of liturgy. The project will help catechists in Kionyo parish, Kisaju and Langata.

Catechist training





## **KIONYO ~ ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH**

St. Stephen's is the main church in the Kionyo parish. The existing church can no longer accommodate the growing number of Christians, consequently the parish initiated a project

for a new church. The new church is under construction above the existing church while the existing church continues to see an ever growing number of parishioners.



St. Stephen's under construction

## **KENYA MISSION ADMINISTRATION AND RESIDENCE**

Currently the OMI Kenya Mission has no specific space for administration but shares facilities with the pre-novitiate. There is a great need for a new administration and residence building.

The good news is that the mission has grown in the last 10 years but the result of that is that the pre-novitiate is overcrowded with students. Furthermore, the number of resident priests for administration and studies has been slowly increasing.

We also recognize the need for formation to take place in places that are separate from the world and separate from other activities. The flexible time schedule required to maintain the administration functions sets a bad example for the students. In addition, for proper discernment and approval of student progress in formation, it is important that the mission leadership be 'at a distance' from the students to improve objective reasoning.

As the mission increases its pastoral activities in more parishes and particular service areas (e.g. youth, justice and peace, and vocation), members need space to meet, to have



Fr. Fidele with novices

temporary or permanent accommodation, and to have a place where they can come for a short rest. As the mission continues to grow there is also a need for accommodation for members who fall sick and need recovery in a place close to good medical care.

*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)*



## FORMATION OF LAITY

In 2017 the Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, Texas launched the *Oblate Studies Certificate Program*. The six online courses give students an in-depth knowledge of the constitutive elements of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate; the founder, history, Constitution and Rules, spirituality and mission. Besides offering the program to students who will be completing the course for a certificate, the program is open to any qualified students who wish to register for enrichment non-academic purposes.

Through MAMI, OMI Lacombe Canada offers tens scholarships to the associates of OMI Lacombe Canada, covering fifty per cent of the costs. The goal of this project is that associates who participate in the program will share their knowledge and insights with their local Oblate communities and be a source of animation and formation for lay people interested in becoming associates of OMI Lacombe Canada.

## YOUTH MINISTRY ~ SASKATCHEWAN DISTRICT COMMUNITY

From regular masses, to holding students in prayer during exams, to blessing sports teams before provincial championships, Mike Dechant, OMI,

Mike Dechant, OMI





Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples

ministers to the youth at Holy Cross High School. Donations cover the costs associated with hospitality and public relations, as well as church supplies and resource materials to build the youth ministries team for Holy Cross High School and young adult ministry at Potter's House.

## **SACRED HEART CHURCH OF THE FIRST PEOPLES – EDMONTON**

Susai Jesu, OMI, is the pastor of the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton. When he took over as pastor, there were many outstanding bills and an unexpected deficit. The Archdiocese of Edmonton helped cover needed repairs to the steeple, but the windows were in such poor condition it was not advisable to go through another winter without better, more efficient windows. MAMI covered the cost of the much-needed 14 windows to make Sacred Heart Church a warm and welcoming place for First Peoples.

# Latin America

2017 PROJECTS FUNDED

## GUATEMALA

The Centro de Formación Integral San Eugenio de Mazenod is an initiative of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate to reach out to economically and socially marginalized families in the area of the Colonia of San Ignacio (Guatemala City) with a holistic health program.

The initial stage of this project (1st Floor) envisages basic medical attention (six different consulting rooms), dentistry, psychological counseling, X-Rays, a pharmacy for dispensing “generic” medical prescriptions and a chapel in addition to large common areas for meetings with parents and social activities.

Office Depot of Mexico is helping with furnishings (desks, chairs, etc.) and donations such as those from Canada have covered the cost of windows as well as 75 per cent of the doors, illumination and electrical installations and the installation and polishing of the floors



Guatemala health clinic



# PERU

## AUCAYACU, PARISH OF JESUS SALVADOR

The parish is not self-sustaining. Donations from Canada, under supervision from Edgar Nolzco Almeyda, OMI, contribute to maintenance of the parish church, roof construction of the pastoral house and a training program for Christian leaders. Funds also contribute to maintenance of Radio Amistad and festivals of theatre and music with young Christians.

## SANTA CLOTILDE HOSPITAL

Patients who require specialized treatment not available in Santa Clotilde medical mission or Iquitos are regularly transferred from the Santa Clotilde health system to the patient house in Lima. Costs of housing and transportation for them and their accompanying family member, often for unavoidably long periods of time, are also covered, as well as medical costs.

## FORMATION

The main budget expenses are for studies, food, lodging, etc., covered by the income of the Oblate unit and by donations. The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate from the Delegation of Peru have three students studying at the Oblate formation house in Lima city at the pre-novitiate level. These candidates live and participate in a program of philosophy studies for two or three years.

Three scholastics from the Peru delegation are studying in Asuncion city, Paraguay, at the post-novitiate level where the priesthood

Lima patient house



candidates live. They are participating in a program of theology studies for four or five years.

One priest is studying communication at the Salesian University in Rome, Italy.

## **MEDICAL FRIENDS OF PERU**

The Medical Friends of Peru, along with the Water Mission of South Carolina (operating in Iquitos, Peru) and the Wings of Hope from Montreal are collaborating to install a water project to provide safe drinking water to the Santa Clotilde Hospital and the boarding schools for girls and boys



Construction in Peru

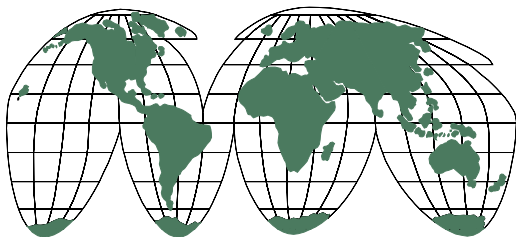
## **BROTHER BLAISE MACQUARRIE MINISTRY**

While continuing to build houses and provide blankets for the poor and impoverished, as well as continuing his ministry in the jails, Brother Blaise has branched out into building chapels.

## **BOLIVIA**

Cristina Rodriguez distributes Christmas packages to poor children and their families in rural areas near Cochabamba, Bolivia. The packages include food, vitamins, clothes and a small toy with a budget of \$ 35 USD for each package for 100 children.

Cristina also assists specially challenged children with medical services, rehabilitation therapies, medications and orthopedic aids.



# 2018 Goals

\$1,200,000

Bolivia .....	\$10,000
Canada.....	\$100,000
Guatemala .....	\$10,000
India .....	\$10,000
Kenya .....	\$600,000
Peru .....	\$400,000
Sri Lanka.....	\$10,000
World ( <i>Haiti, Madagascar, Pakistan, etc.</i> ) .....	\$60,000





# A new church home

**BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI**

PERU – A couple of years ago a group of young people, associated with the Oblates, came to our parish, Christ the King, to carry out a mission in a most forlorn area where you will not find a blade of grass.

In charge of this young group was Father Beto, now the general councillor of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Thousands of souls live in this desert area, and there was no presence of the Church. The huge and flat land was made from the run-off from the Andes foothills ... rocks, sand and dust. So, the young missionaries built a small chapel made from reed matter with plastic sheeting for the roof. A kind neighbor lent concrete bricks for the benches and the altar.

The young missionaries visited the people of the region, and established times in the chapel offering themes that interested the people. There were sessions for children, for young people and for the adults. The young missionaries stayed for two weeks and the parish helped out with food and places to sleep.



A year passed and a new priest came to carry on the work, along with young missionaries. Once the young groups finished their apostolate works, they returned to their studies. Our parish then sent adults to continue the work in ongoing evangelization and each Sunday one of our lay members went to this new community to teach and to give out Holy Communion. Mass was celebrated on the first Sunday of each month.

About four months ago, Fr. Nick, our parish priest, Fr. Leonard and I visited the area looking for the best place to build a chapel. After studying the region, we returned to where the young missionaries started.

It was the ideal place for a chapel, and the community was overjoyed with the news.

Along with my faithful workers Marcos, Walter and Paulino, we marked the chapel area with white lime, 8 metres wide by 20 metres long. We decided to put three layers of ornamental



bricks on the walls because these bricks have holes that allow for air circulation.

This community is materially poor, but willingly rich. We asked them to look for help from people of means, and they were able to get donations for two front windows and another for a huge door from a man who is a candidate for mayor.

Someone donated the paint for the chapel, another person who owns a huge gravel pit donated all the material needed for the base, including rocks, sand, gravel and crushed stone. She also donated the table for the altar.

On March 4, Fr. Nick blessed the chapel, called St. Theresa of the Divine Child Jesus, and thanked all those who made it possible. This, of course, includes the Canadians and a few people from the United States and Ireland.

The mass was packed. The young parish choir had the whole community singing. And it was all recorded by television and journalists.

Today, there is a real presence of the Church in a bleak area, thanks in part to the young group of missionaries who started it all and were also in attendance to celebrate this beautiful day.



# A friendship rekindled

BY TRINA BYSOUTH

BURNS LAKE, B.C. – In 2009 I was one of the fortunate Canadians that experienced a mission trip to Kenya led by Ken Forster, OMI.

In Kenya, we were introduced to many seminarians who were studying in Nairobi. While there I had the opportunity to spend more time with one incredible young man whom I saw had great potential. To see and hear about his passion for our Lord was amazing. His name is Cosmas Kithinji Kubai.

Cosmas and I became friends in the three weeks we were in Kenya. Upon leaving Kenya I vowed we would meet again, thinking that I would eventually return to Kenya, not ever thinking Cosmas would come to B.C.

Once hearing that Cosmas was granted the opportunity to come to Canada, I was thrilled that he would meet and spend time with our Oblates. What an amazing experience this was going to be for him.

My family and I had the privilege of spending some time with Cosmas over Christmas. He had not been to Canada



## 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 [omilacombe.ca/mami/donate/](http://omilacombe.ca/mami/donate/) 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.

before so as a family we shared with him our Christmas traditions, some winter activities, a tour of our local sawmill and, yes, even Tim Hortons!

Though the temperatures were not so much in our favour (lows minus 28, highs minus 15) we did manage to get out into the great outdoors on the sunny days. Cosmas was a great sport, trying skating and snowmobiling, and we even ventured out for a couple of walks on the lake.

Words can't explain really how I felt. To be reunited after all these years was truly a prayer answered.

I would like to thank Cosmas for being adventurous in making the journey to Canada for the first time. We hope you enjoyed your time with the Oblate family and ours as well. It was a privilege and honour to rekindle the friendship. We hope you will have another opportunity to return to continue your mission.

# 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: [lacombemissions@yahoo.ca](mailto:lacombemissions@yahoo.ca)**



# A visitor in a strange land

BY COSMAS KITHINJI KUBAI, OMI

SAN ANTONIO, Texas – I had an inspiring, insightful and amazing Canadian winter experience last Christmas in British Columbia, when I had a providential opportunity to visit several of our Oblate communities and missions in Vancouver, Prince George, Fort St. James and Fraser Lake. I also had a chance to visit friends in Burns Lake.

The inspiration and insights came from the stories I heard from the Oblates I encountered, the hospitality they gave me, the ministries I saw them doing and the community life I saw them living. Some of the stories were about the courageous ministries done by some of the Oblates who had been missionaries in countries with civil and political strife, and even hostile to the church. I was moved by the closeness of the priests and devotion to the people they serve.

The striking thing about the Oblate community life that I experienced at The Crescent community, Pandosy community and Prince George Oblate District was the intentionality to create community and care for each other.

In the two retirement communities I saw the Oblates help each other in so many ways. In Prince George I was moved by

the regular phone calls the Oblates make to check up on each other. They are their brothers' keepers. I was also inspired by the missionary zeal and outlook of two Oblates from



Cosmas with  
Gilbert Bertrand, OMI



Cosmas ice fishing

Poland and Sri-Lanka, who are doing ministry in B.C.

All this brought to life and illustrated for me the Oblate values of hospitality, community, charity, collaboration, internationality, and closeness to people that I have been learning in my Oblate formation since I joined the Oblates in March 2006.

I was also privileged to meet Fr. Joachim Singarajah, one of the four Canadian pioneers who founded the Oblate Mission in Kenya back in 1997, in response to the request of the Bishop of Méru in 1995 to the then Oblate Superior General, Fr. Marcello Zago. I was happy also to catch up with Frs. Jim Jordan and Mario Azrak who had been missionaries to Kenya, and both of whom played an important role in my formation; Fr Jim was my formator and Fr. Mario, as our Mission Superior, sent me in January 2016 to my current house of formation in San Antonio, Texas.

During the trip I was also moved by the faith of the people. South of the Equator we are told churches are dying in the North Hemisphere. It was inspiring to see students at St. Augustine's Catholic School in Vancouver have an evening of advent prayer marked by the presentation of advent songs from every class. It was also moving to see the missionary and charitable outlook of the students, teachers and parents of this school as they made a collection to support the Oblate Mission of Kenya through MAMI and the building of St. Paul's school in Kionyo.

Another highlight of this experience was seeing how parishioners generously volunteer and wholeheartedly perform various ministries in their parishes and liturgies. I was also filled with joy and hope for the Canadian church from meeting a family that has a son in the seminary and a daughter in a contemplative monastery.



One source of amazement for me was the racial and international diversity in Vancouver. It was captivating to see all the races from the four corners of the earth represented in this city and their apparent peaceful co-existence. The well-organized and dependable public transit system and the beauty of this city, the mountains, the water and magnificent buildings and infrastructure, was also remarkable.

I was also amazed during the lumber mill tour in Burns Lake. I was thrilled to see the fully computerized and mechanized process of making various wood products. I was happy to hear of the measures taken to ensure that new trees are planted as mature ones are harvested.

Having been born and raised in Kenya, near the equator where we do not have extreme cold temperatures, it was amazing for me to have my first experience of winter! I was exhilarated when I went up Cypress Mountain in Vancouver and saw all the snow and the people who were skiing. Later, as if to show me where snow comes from and how it is handled, my first day in Prince George was graced by snowfall. What followed was an experience of voluntary snow shovelling.

I was also fortunate to participate in some winter activities

with Trina Bysouth and her family in Burns Lake. There was ice fishing in minus 25 weather while dressed for minus 50, or ice skating suited in all possible protective hockey gear and with strong guides on either side. I was able to make a snow angel, go snow shoeing, and ride on a snowmobile.

I am grateful to all my brother Oblates for their fraternal hospitality,





kindness to me and the inspiration they provided. I am also grateful to all the people I encountered.

Now I know what it means and takes to be a good missionary who is devoted and close to all God's people and charitable to his brothers like the Oblates I met, and an intentional disciple who puts his faith into action like the faithful Christians I met.

I also know first-hand what winter looks and feels like and how Canadians celebrate their Christmas.

All this has enhanced my formation and broadened my missionary outlook as I get closer to my final vows as a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, and ordained ministry.

*Cosmas Kithinji Kubai is a Master of Divinity student in San Antonio, Texas*

#### **Making gingerbread houses with the Bysouths**



# Do not be afraid

BY MOSES OWINO ODHIAMBO, OMI

ROME – As Jesus said, “Come and See.” I came to Rome not only to see, but to learn numerous spheres of life in general.

It was a swift change of environment, coming from South Africa to this foreign land, the core of the Catholic Church, as well as the heart of our congregation, the central government of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Unless you reside in an environment you will never understand the beauty of its core.

As Pope Francis said, “Let us not be afraid of change.” It was a change full of fear and restlessness for me, not to mention the anxiety that came as a result of change.

I understand that fear is part of human life, and as a human being I was engulfed by so many fears: fear of the new environment, of new people, a new language, new culture and tradition, climate, to mention but a few.

However, more than nine months have passed and the reality of this new place is unveiling itself daily.

Oblates  
Phelix Johya and  
Moses Owino  
(on right)



The environment is becoming friendly, the community is full of life, and my brothers here are supportive and hospitable. I am getting used to the place.

I thank God for all that He has done for me within these few months that I have been here. Now I am able to express myself in Italian, something I did not expect, and follow and understand lectures in Italian. I am finding my place in the community, something I longed and yearned for during the first six months after stepping into this place.

I know that I still have a long way to go: learning, facing challenges and making mistakes here and there but, by the Grace of God, I hope all shall be well.

*Moses Odhiambo, who was born in 1989 in Kenya, joined the novitiate in South Africa and professed his first vows in 2017. He was sent to the international scholasticate in Rome for his formation and studies in theology.*

## 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? 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.

# A busy year for JPIC

OTTAWA – The JPIC (Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation) OMI Lacombe Canada office has become a hub of activity. Since its inception, it has engaged in more than 30 actions and petitions involving the defence of human rights, protection of the environment, the safeguard of the right of indigenous peoples, the condemnation and exposure of mining industry abuses and violations, the protection of the rights of women and the promotion of a more egalitarian society.

The JPIC office has been focusing its work in three main areas:

- Indigenous issues
- Climate change and ecology
- Mining and human rights

Within those areas it works in four main ways:

- Promotes dialogue through events, symposiums, and snack and chats
- Denounces injustices and raises awareness through *JPIC Voices – Go and do Something*
- Engages in actions and signs petitions to add voice to the millions of voices in the pursuit of justice
- Maintains a broad network and connects with allies, partners and key stakeholders to promote social change



- Since the beginning of this year, the Snack and Chat sessions have touched on themes such as human trafficking, the underground commerce of human beings; child poverty and poverty reduction; emotional intelligence; taxes, inequality and justice (mining and the Canada-Guatemala connection); ethical dimensions of extractive industries in Catholic social teaching; and, prophets of today: tolerance and truth

As part of the Ottawa Kairos Chapter JPIC has been engaging in dialogue with City Hall in employing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action through the implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan and the Statement of Reconciliation.

With the St. Paul University it has been developing a new project for JPIC to become a centre within the university. Serving both the faith community and academia, the centre envisions becoming a resource for professors, students, churches, ecumenical groups, faith communities and civil society. Maintaining an activist role, the centre would serve as a platform for continuous engagements and further the engagement of students as well as broadening networking opportunities between the university community and allies.

On another note JPIC is also happy and enthusiastic about the new *Centre Oblat - A voice for justice* in development with St. Paul University and in collaboration with OMI Lacombe, Notre Dame du Cap, Assumption, and USA provinces. The centre will be a resource for the university faculty and students as well as Oblate brothers, parishes, religious groups, church groups and civil society. Promoting the work in which the JPIC office is already involved, the Centre will be a hub for networking, dialogue and connection for the North American region, building a bridge between church and society.



# Kenya

## NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

### MARCH 17

NAIROBI – It is wet here in Kenya! And I'm feeling cold today. Sadly several people have been killed in vehicle drownings as they try to cross flooded bridges and causeways. This morning we heard a four-storey building collapsed with people in it. Let's pray for all the families affected. Thankfully the rain is widespread and even drought areas are getting soaked.

During the week I made friends with the head of CID (Criminal Investigation Police) for Nairobi town. He invited me to drop in. It's good to have friends if/when I make a mistake one day!



Gerry Conlan, OMI



Last month we connected our workers with bank accounts to make it easier to pay them and for security (no walking around with lots of cash). I was able to get mobile banking working for them, but getting cash is not easy for them because of distance and fees. So I give them small

Stuck on the way  
to Sunday mass



Youth group visits Mt. Longonot

amounts of cash during the month and they do free transfers using the mobile phone. They are very happy, and happy workers make for good business. NIC Bank was kind by allowing us to open sub-accounts under our corporate customer number, meaning they get fee-free accounts. A dollar a month doesn't sound like much, but for them it is 16 per cent of their salary.

Kisaju is okay, we think! But much rain has cut access to several parts of the parish. A big finance meeting was cancelled due to the flooding.

On Sunday I collected our Nairobi youth from town using our student van, so we could climb Mt. Longonot near Naivasha. Mt. Longonot is an extinct volcano and the climb up is 400 metres vertical over 3.1 kilometres, getting steeper the higher we went. The first to reach the rim took one hour, and the others caught up after another 20 minutes.

Kenrod, the chairperson of the youth group, led the group around the rim, another 7.2 kilometres and not an easy track. I decided to keep guard and rest. (Lazy or smart? It gave me time to pray my daily prayers.)

They were truly exhausted and hungry by the time they arrived at 1:45 p.m. and then they had to walk down! A few had blisters and we walked slowly.

It started gently raining as we finished the walk and then it poured as we entered the van. We were to have mass and lunch, but the rain forced us to the little town nearby, where we found a large hotel. They all enjoyed their meal but most complained about how tough the beef was. The hygiene didn't inspire me so I contented myself with black coffee, a huge homemade cookie and two over-heated samosas.

Our friend Godfrey was amazing. He didn't come, but paid for the fuel, the entry fees and lunch, as well as a cup of tea at the end. The budget had included a car for the extra members, but we cancelled due to cost. So, 30 per cent of the budgeted money Godfrey gave to us was left over. He refused it and said: "Put the rest in the kitty for next time." He really inspires and encourages the youth.

On Friday, I received a call for coffee when our neighbours had a visit from Irish friends. One of them is Brian O'Shea from Pemberton in West Australia. He and his wife set up a charity after their three children were killed in a car crash in Denmark in 2013. He comes to Kenya each year and installs 10-metre diameter water tanks – pre-fabricated sheet metal with plastic liners. If the prep work is done for them, they can finish one tank in one day and it holds about 150,000 litres.

He ships them over in containers from Australia. He also brings about 300 hearing aids each year because one of his daughters was deaf. His wife is a country doctor and he keeps food on the table by running a business called [www.ecofriendlysolutions.com.au](http://www.ecofriendlysolutions.com.au).

## MARCH 24

Thankfully on Friday the rain eased and we saw the sun for a while.

The young men, Samuel and Onduso, and Fr. Daquin are busy helping out on the farm and caring for the cows at Méru. I managed to book their tickets to Manila, Philippines, where they will start novitiate after getting a missionary visa.

During the week we received the bill of lading for a shipment of hospital equipment from Adelaide, South Australia. Rotary International and our friends there have kindly paid for the freight and container. There is a lot of good going on in the world, more than all the bad added together. But we often forget.

## MARCH 31

The sun is shining here in Nairobi, a welcome relief from the rains.

On a trip to Watamu, we ran into a police check just north of Malindi. This is an area of security concern for Kenya with Al Shabab terrorists sometimes sneaking down the coast from Somalia. The policeman asked: "Do you have any water?"

So I offered him our plastic bottle and he refused. "Not that one, one with the plastic seal."

Sorry, we replied.

Then he looked at the driver and said, "you don't have any fresh water?" James shook his head. Eventually, we were allowed to leave. Patrick explained. "If you were not here, Father, we would have had to pay something. The fresh water meant 'money.'"

I'm glad I'm useful for something!

## APRIL 7

I've been on a magical mystery tour this week. I had a wonderful opportunity to visit family in London for a day before travelling to Canada to gather with the Oblates at our convocation.

Kenyan Oblates celebrate a special mass for MAMI supporters







Oblate convocation in Cornwall, ON

## APRIL 14

We have had a wow week. The convocation went very well. On Sunday we enjoyed celebrating mass with the people at Canadian Martyrs Church. Tim Coonen, OMI, led the mass with a female acolyte and female alter server. I mention this because we don't see that in Kenya. At the end the children gathered to sing for us. Very nice!

That evening Fr. Warren Brown (regional councillor for USA/Canada), Fr. Ken Forster and I watched the very moving vigil for members of the Humboldt Broncos hockey team killed when their bus crashed with a semi-trailer and 15 people died. Later Fr. Ken's grandniece, who was the physical trainer for the team, also died.

On Monday I drove one of the cars from Ottawa to Cornwall, ON, to help ferry the Oblate elders to the convocation.

The convocation highlight for me was the talk on inter-culturality by Fr. Roger Schroeder, SVD, from Chicago Theological Union. It challenged us to understand other cultures by taking time to understand the other cultures. One differentiation that was helpful was the understanding of socio-centric cultures (e.g. Africa) verses individual-centric cultures (e.g. Canada). This day of reflection was supplemented by a talk on the Oblates and church response needed for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the cultural damage done by the church as it provided education for the children of the First Nations peoples.

An eye-opener I heard was the change in justice groups: in the past they were the voice for the voiceless. But now the

focus is on turning up the sound of the oppressed peoples, to help their voice be heard instead of trying to speak for them.

We finished each day with mass and later attended break-out groups on topics like leadership, associates, the Kenya mission, and youth. Wednesday was a good day of reflection about the province, primarily Canada, but also touching on Kenya ... seeking new directions, ways of communicating and what are the important challenges as we move ahead. It seems getting younger leaders to step up is important and strengthening the justice and peace movement.

## APRIL 21

Back in Nairobi, it rained every day while we were away in Canada. It should help recharge the underground water supply somewhat.

I was sad to learn that Joseph, our farm worker in Karen, lost his phone when he visited his family over Easter. Luckily

for him, a good friend in Vancouver was able to collect six older smart phones from her work colleagues and sent them to Ottawa for me to take back to Kenya.

I was happy to read in Kenya's newspapers that all secondary school children will benefit from a new government health insurance program. Basically they get free full medical coverage. I think



Phones for workers at the farm



Friend Godfrey (on left) with Denis Conlan

it's 3,000,000 students. Even parents get covered for transportation if they go outside the country for specialist treatment.

I'm still struggling to get my sleep pattern working. Thursday night I was wide awake at 1 a.m. Never mind, there'll be plenty of time to sleep in heaven (assuming I make it of course!).

## **APRIL 28**

My father Denis arrived in Kenya on Saturday for a six-month stay. I was caught in traffic near the airport so, 55 minutes after Dad landed, I received a phone call from a security guard telling me my father had arrived. I was impressed he thought of asking someone to call me. Not bad for a man who is 85 years old.

## **MAY 5**

We are still receiving rain every day which makes life interesting for domestic chores. But it is such a small problem compared to thousands of people north of Kenya who have lost homes. The Red Cross is doing good work providing water

purifiers to avoid cholera. Even here in Karen people are being flooded due to poor drainage and care by the landlords.

Sadly, we received word that the grandfather of Cosmas passed away near Méru. Cosmas is still studying in Texas and won't be able to come home for the funeral. So, let's hold him in prayer.

It's been an up and down week, but the struggles make sense when you stumble over a street boy lying on the median trying to sleep with people walking around him. I was also rushing and passed him by. Then about 10 metres past I stopped and looked back. It was so sad. There was a teenage boy just lying there, sleeping, and many people just walking around him. I had to go back.

As I approached I could see his pants were tied with a rope and half his buttocks were showing. I knelt down beside him and tried to wake him up. His eyelids flickered and closed again. I shook his shoulder gently and said, "kuja kwa chai" (come for tea). He grunted and closed his eyes. I tried a few more times, but it was clear he was not just tired but unable to move because he was high on glue sniffing. I couldn't do anything. Where to take him? He's too heavy to lift.

We need to try and make a difference.

## **MAY 12**

A terrible flood in Nakuru was a tragedy. One man had two children swept away and drowned, then the remaining two he could not reach because of the force of water and they also got swept away with their house. I heard government and owners arguing about what was legal and what was advised, a classic duck-for-cover situation. In the end, it was caused by excessive rains that overflowed or overloaded the dam. We pray that the poor victims will get some compensation, somehow, to replace houses and assist with medical costs and funerals.

# Dear friends of the Oblates and their missions,

Enclosed with this edition of Oblate Spirit is a brochure with information about the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate (MAMI).



We know you are familiar with the Oblates and their good works and would like to invite you to share this brochure with someone you know

who might also be interested in learning about the Oblate missions. We would also encourage you, when you have finished reading Oblate Spirit, to please pass it on to your friends.

If more people become familiar with the Oblates and are willing to support their missionary work, our outreach becomes even more possible and widespread.

We sincerely appreciate your continued generosity and be assured of our prayers for you and your loved ones.

**Check out  
our  
Facebook  
page**



**Lacombe Canada MAMI**





# Remembering

*We remember the following Oblates who died in 2017:*

January 31	Robert Kelly (1929)
February 2	Edmond Turenne (1919)
March 19	Lionel Dumont (1922)
April 1	Alphonse Roy (1935)
May 16	Alexander Shahun (1920)
May 24	John Brioux (1942)
June 18	Daniel Lafrance (1928)
September 17	Joseph Kane (1929)
September 24	Donald Douglas MacDonald (1933)
October 24	Yvon Boulianne (1926)
November 1	Paul-Eugène Plouffe (1925)
November 26	Carl Kelly (1931)
December 4	Omer Desjardins (1932)



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<https://www.omilacombe.ca/mami/>

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*A publication of the  
Oblate Mission office.*

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Have you considered  
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Oblates*  
as a beneficiary  
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Phone (306) 653-6453

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