

AMMI *Lacombe* MAMI
Canada

Oblate Spirit



February 2019



Appreciation

Forks in the road



The theme of this issue was supposed to be “prayer.” How do we pray?

Why do we pray? What is prayer? Those are philosophical questions left for the philosophers among us to answer at another time.

Instead, we would like to offer a different twist on prayer. It could be called fate. Some might call it divine intervention.

A little more than 16 years ago, we had sold our home in Saskatoon, had our children settled into Victoria, given up our professional careers and were preparing for an adventure in Ecuador. We were learning the language and preparing for a new life, but the move was not coming together smoothly.

Then one day, on a July long weekend, the phone rang. It was long-time friend Glenn Zimmer, OMI, whom we hadn’t spoken to in months. The conversation, simplified, went something like this.

“What are you up to?” he asked. “Moving to Ecuador,” we responded. “Interested in coming to the Qu’Appelle House of Prayer as volunteers,” he asked?

And just like that, our lives turned on a dime. A six-month trial period at QHP turned into more than eight years, which led to another opportunity in Vancouver that has endured to this day.

Interestingly, some of the stories we gathered for this issue all had a similar theme. Fr. Bob Haggarty first chose a military career, Fr. George LaGrange avoided Latin class because he didn’t want to be a priest, Br. Blaise MacQuarrie “ran away” from a mean employer and was inspired by a family that showed him love and warmth.

Those were forks in the road, the little twists of fate that changed the lives and stories of many people.

Some call it Fate. We call it a Blessing!

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators

On the way to Ste. Clotilde



Dr. Barry Adams en route to Ste. Clotilde, Peru:
"First you go down the Amazon River for one hour. There you get off and cross the isthmus at Mazan, between the Amazon and Napo rivers. It takes five to six hours to travel up river on the Napo to get to Ste. Clotilde."



An eye-opening journey

BY DR. BARRY ADAMS

Last summer saw the inauguration of the Water Project in Santa Clotilde, where until now there was no potable water in the Santa Clotilde Hospital, convent or school. With contributions from several sources, there is now potable water in these facilities.

I was fortunate to travel to Santa Clotilde for the official opening and blessing of the water system. Moe Schroeder, OMI, accompanied us as far as Iquitos. The trip up-river from

Stopping for supplies





The tower connects Ste. Clotilde to the health posts
so they can communicate

there was difficult getting into and out of boats and portaging. At one point, we had to walk a 10-inch plank to get into a boat.

It was eye-opening to see the Santa Clotilde Hospital, to meet the resident physician and his family from the USA who was just finishing a year's volunteer commitment at the Santa Clotilde Hospital, and to attend medical rounds with the Peruvian physicians completing their mandatory service in a remote location prior to receiving a license to continue their careers. It was exhilarating to witness the dedication of the nurses, pharmacist, laboratory technician, record librarian and support staff, and to see first-hand the appreciation of the patients and their families receiving care in this remote area.

Without this hospital and the clinics along the Napo River, health services, prenatal care, immunizations,

hospital care, etc., would not be available to the Peruvians living in this remote area. Patients would have to make the long trip to Iquitos for care and probably many would not survive the journey. Your previous contributions have helped develop this amazing hospital that grew under the direction of Fr. Moe and Fr. Jack MacCarthy, the priest doctors. Although more is covered by the Peruvian government, there are always extras not covered such as milk for infants, some medications, supplies and equipment.

It was generous support over the last 50 years that has seen this facility grow from a small clinic to a hospital with many satellite clinics, all due to the dedication and hard work of Frs. Schroeder and MacCarthy and their collaborators.

Dr. Adams, a retired Ottawa pediatrician, has been the President of Medical Friends of Peru for several years. Last summer he made his first visit to the Santa Clotilde Hospital for the inauguration of the Water Mission Project, which Medical Friends (MAMI) have supported.

Dr. Ana (in purple top) picks up a patient (the baby, being carried by Mom)



The gift of an eagle feather

BY EUGENE MULE, OMI

EDMONTON – It was a joyful November Sunday in Edmonton when Fr. Susai Jesu, an Oblate priest and pastor of Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples, was honored with an eagle feather by the community at a ceremony conducted by seven prominent elders.

The honoring ceremony took place during the 11:30 am mass that is designated as mass for the First Peoples. Just after the introductory remarks, the elders walked in procession toward Fr. Susai, who stood in front of the altar. One elder explained to the faithful why they were honoring Fr. Susai.

“Although Fr. Susai has been in this parish for a very short period of time, he has shown a great interest in the culture of the First Nations People, especially in his ability to speak the Cree language,” the elder said.

He added that Fr. Susai has “won the hearts of many people since he came to this parish.”

Fr. Susai is honoured with an eagle feather



At the end of the ceremony, the feather was carefully wrapped in a red cloth and placed on the altar for the entire Eucharist. Two more feathers were then tied to the brand-new traditional altar cloth that one of the Indigenous parishioners had crafted and donated to the parish.

The eagle feather is highly revered in the Indigenous culture and a symbol of high honor, trust, and wisdom. It is also the belief of the people that eagles have a connection with the divine and the Great Spirit, *Meyosit Manito*. As a result, to honor a priest with an eagle feather carries a significance recognizing that priest as connected to the Indigenous culture and spirituality of the people.

This event was another important learning moment for me as I continue immersing myself in ministry as well as in the culture of the Indigenous people here at Sacred Heart Church.

The eagle feather Fr. Susai now carries will be a constant reminder of his place in the hearts of the parishioners here.

Eugene Mwape Mule, OMI, joined the Oblate community at Edmonton's Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in September. He is there for one year to gain valuable pastoral experience on his grace-filled journey to priesthood.



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**... and
website**



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



Blaise delivers groceries to a family in Peru

A fork in the road

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

It was a very cold fall day. I was seated in an old half ton truck and going to a place in the woods to cut pulp. The driver of the truck was about 45 years old.

I had with me a club bag filled with heavy, warm clothes that Mom made for my new and first adventure from home. The trip took hours as we made our way on a narrow dirt road through the hills full of trees and the beautiful colours that autumn brings.

Because I had no work it was necessary that I leave home so I could help my family. I had earlier quit school, where I was only wasting my time and the time of my patient teacher.

It was dark when we finally got to the man's house, so I



Hard work has never been a problem for Blaise

could not get a good glimpse of what the house looked like. Once inside, a kind woman sat me down at the table and gave me a plate of hot, tasty stew.

The woman later showed me to a room on the second floor. Going up the stairs and with my bag in hand, I noticed the roof of the house was full of holes and I could even see stars. In short, it was a very old house.

For one reason or another, I felt uncomfortable about being here. I felt nervous and I could not sleep. I was at a crossroad in life. Early the next morning I said my prayers, got dressed, picked up my club bag and made my way down the squeaky stairs. At the main floor I saw an open bedroom door and the couple sound asleep.

Sneaking out of the house like a thief, I made a beeline for the road. Once at the road I took a different direction so the man would not find me if he came looking. It was still dark and I was hungry, but I began to walk. The weight of my club bag made me tired, so I would carry it in one hand, then the other.

The dirt road snaked through the low hills and there was no traffic of any kind, not even a horse. From time to time I would sit down to rest, but never for too long.

I walked until it was getting dark. I was tired and hungry. I was thinking I would sleep under a tree, but I noticed a farm house and a little barn so I decided to ask the people of the house if they would allow me to sleep in their barn.

I knocked on the door and was greeted by an elderly woman. I asked her if I could sleep in the barn, and she said, "Son, come in." She sat me at the table and she brought me hot milk, fresh homemade bread and a hot bowl of soup. Once finished she sent me upstairs and gave me a bed, saying "sleep until you wake up."

A well deserved rest after a hard day's work



I slept until noon. She gave me another hot meal (farmers know how to cook). To show her my appreciation I spent a few hours cleaning in the barn and stacking firewood next to her kitchen stove. When I finished and was ready to leave, she gave me milk, cheese and bread for my journey.

The house was simple, but clean and smelled like honey. The woman had a richness of spirit for the way she treated a stranger. Such is the warmth and kindness of farmers.

I was on the road once again and as evening approached I encountered a car packed with people. The driver stopped, picked me up and left me at my home. He was a taxi driver carrying workers but he did not charge me a cent ... because I had none.

Once home I found work at the coal mine. I later learned more about the man who took me to work cutting pulp. I know I made the right decision to run away that night.

See how God looks after us!

One of many homes built by Blaise with help from MAMI supporters



Father George celebrates 50 years of priesthood

BY LEAH BLAIN

SALMON ARM, BC – There was a time when Latin was a requirement for candidates for the priesthood. As a young student, George LaGrange didn't take Latin on purpose. "I was an altar boy and the whole bit," says Fr. George, with his arms waving in his characteristic way. "People were always saying, 'Maybe you'll be a priest' or 'maybe you have a vocation.'" He heard it often enough to keep away from Latin class just to be safe.

As annoying as it was to him at the time, the words turned out to be prophetic. Fr. George just celebrated his 50th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. St. Joseph's Catholic Parish went all out to thank Fr. George who has been pastor in Salmon Arm for more than 15 years. Nearly 200 guests were at the banquet, including many of Fr. George's relatives, some coming all the way from Europe for the occasion, as well as Fr. Garry LaBoucane, his Oblate Superior from Sacred Heart Church in Vancouver.

Lorraine Hurtubise, one of Fr. George's sisters, spoke about the early days in Coquitlam.

"George was born into the loving home of Albert and Theresa on Aug. 28, 1942. He was a healthy weight but soon he seemed to have difficulty



Fr. George at 50th celebration

breathing and the doctor didn't seem to know why. Our grandmother, in trying to comfort mom, suggested that perhaps mom would have to give this child to God sooner than expected. Mom, who was 20 years old, said in no uncertain terms, 'No Way.' Fortunately, it turned out to be nothing serious and she took home her healthy son."

Everyone laughed at her story of Fr. George's first day at school. "When George turned five, mom sent him to school. When asked his name he responded, 'Georgie.' The teacher asked, 'Georgie who?' His answer, 'Georgie Porgie.'"

When he was older, while at boarding school in Saskatchewan, he became ill with rheumatic fever. The doctor advised that he stay in BC with its more temperate climate. When he completed high school at Vancouver College he planned to go to university, become a chartered accountant, get



First mass with his parents

Family picture



married and have lots of children, because, as everyone who knows Fr. George, knows how much he loves children. But God's plan was even bigger and He finally let Fr. George in on the plan at the 11th hour.

"In the last week of high school they brought people in to talk about different careers, doctors and lawyers, and there were seminarians who talked about

being priests so I decided, 'What the heck?' and I applied at Mission (Seminary of Christ the King) and was rejected for two reasons: I didn't have Latin and I was too young," said Fr. George.

Fr. George went to St. John's College in Edmonton to get his Latin and it was there he decided to join the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. It was a natural choice because the Oblates had been influential in his home parish at Our Lady of Fatima in Coquitlam.

After his time at St. John's, Fr. George went to Winnipeg where he studied at St. Norbert's, the Oblate novitiate. On Oct. 19, 1968, Fr. George was ordained and began a ministry that would take him above the clouds in his plane to service isolated northern Native communities and onto the world stage by hosting a papal visit on a shoestring budget.

"The pope was supposed to visit Fort Simpson in 1984



Fr. George goes fishing



Fr. George at mass

but he couldn't land. In June 1987, we heard he was going to be there in September." When the pope comes to visit, the bishop is the host and in this case, the bishop gave Fr. George the job of organizing the whole visit. Father was told, in no uncertain terms, what the bishop expected. "You're on your own - make it good. I had less than \$5,000."

It took months of planning, countless meetings and phone calls. When the pope came, he came with the whole world. The small

community was inundated with some 300 members of the press as well as many dignitaries. In the end it was an unqualified success. "Everything went perfectly. The bishop said, 'Whatever you want - name it. That's how I got my airplane.'"

As he worked in various parishes (Hobbema Reserve in Alberta, Fort McMurray, Fort Simpson, Fort Providence, Jean Marie river community, Trout Lake, Fort Liard, Nahanni Butte, and Wrigley) Fr. George saw that an overwhelming number of

Fr. George's reward



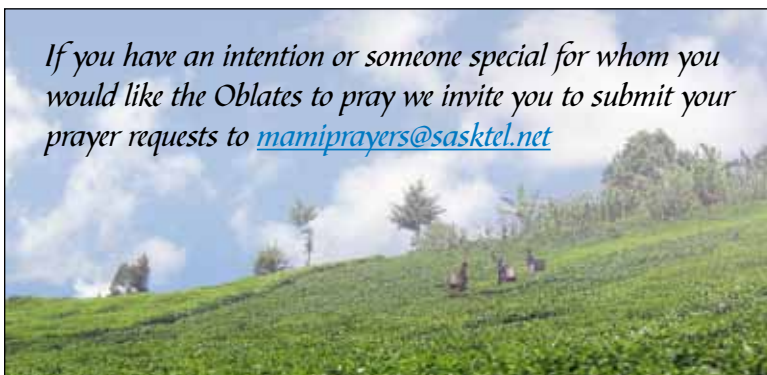
people were suffering mentally and emotionally and needed help with addictions and broken relationships. This prompted him to get a Master's degree in marital therapy and pastoral therapy. "I like working with people and helping them work things through," Fr. George said.

Over the years he has counselled hundreds of people. He smiles as he says he has received thank-you letters even 35 years later.

After years of dealing with the northern climate he was offered the position of pastor of St. Joseph's. He wanted to be closer to his family and he was tired of long winters. The position at St. Joseph's in Salmon Arm was his 'reward.'

"I've never felt so loved in any parish except here by just about everybody. It greatly affected me in how I do my ministry - giving me new life."

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



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Fr. Bob Haggarty

A lifetime of fond memories

LILLOOET, BC – *“We are molded and remolded by those who have loved us, and though that love may pass we remain, none the less, their work ... No love, no friendship can ever cross the path of our destiny without leaving some mark upon it forever.”*

Those words by Francois Mauriac have remained a conviction and have helped guide Bob Haggarty, OMI, since the day of his ordination in 1971.

Fr. Bob is full of gratitude to God for the underlying joy in serving as an Oblate in 27 distinct communities spread throughout the diocese of Kamloops.

He has fond memories of the people he met there, many of whom he is in touch with to this day, including Denise Callaway, Denise Roy, Ann Kiyooka, Germaine Gagnon, and

Heather Smith, who looked after the financial records and annual financial reports in the Mount Currie, Clearwater, Valemount and Lillooet postings.

He is also grateful for the memories associated with the annual Fountain Lake Pilgrimage initiated under the leadership of Adam Exner, OMI, when he was Bishop of Kamloops many years ago. He commends the faithful lay people and the Missionary Sisters of Christ the King who served in many of the communities.

"People were very active and assisted my ministry with hospitality, kindness, prayers and a willingness to be counted on anytime they were needed," he said.

Fr. Bob was born at Holy Cross Hospital in Calgary on Aug. 27, 1938, into a family of eight children and was raised in Cluny, AB. Throughout his life he has visited and revisited the little village of Cluny that was so influential in preparing him for life as an Oblate. It was a community that lived practical ecumenical gesture years before Vatican II.

The Catholic community in the area was served by the French Oblates of Grandin province and the Sisters of Providence. The nearest neighbors to the people of Cluny

Fr. Bob with Lottie and Isaac Lindley, who were most helpful to every Oblate who served in the Nicola Valley in the last 59 years or more





The Peters family witness the baptism of their newborn

were the members of the Siksika Reserve, descendants of the Blackfoot people once led by the historical statesman Chief Crowfoot, a contemporary and friend of Albert Lacombe, OMI.

When approaching 18 he was accepted to Royal Rhodes Military College of Canada in Victoria. It offered a challenging career that appealed to him.

However, before leaving home, his father asked him if he would like to make a retreat at the St. Francis retreat centre in Cochrane. The retreat master, Fr. Timothy, was “very inspirational, talking about creation and redemption through Christ,” and at one point asked Bob if he had given any thought to the priesthood. “As a result of this retreat a joy was kindled in my heart and I began to discern a possible call to the priesthood, but I had my bags packed to go to military college.” It was a call that could not be denied in the future.

Before he left for Victoria, he also consulted with Fr. Whelihan, who advised that the experience in the military would be good preparation for the priesthood in the event that it came to pass.

Upon graduation in 1960 he was commissioned as a young officer in the Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada and asked to serve

for a couple of years with the NATO forces in Germany. The military was a good influence and he made many life-long friendships, but the priesthood was always in the back of his mind.

He resigned his commission in 1964 to attend the novitiate in Arnprior, ON, and then Holy Rosary Scholasticate in Ottawa. These were memorable years in formation. A host of new friends was made along with many good memories. During this time he served as an assistant to chaplains in Kingston prison and also attended the supervised pastoral education program in Dartmouth, NS. He was also introduced to the Search and Criseo programs in which Fr. Joe Hattie was such an inspiration.

He was ordained Aug. 14, 1971, in Trochu, AB. Three weeks later he was assigned to the diocese of Kamloops where he would spend 46 of his next 47 years as a missionary Oblate.

He spent five years in the Nicola Valley, 10 years in the Chilcotin Country, west of Williams Lake, six years in the Pemberton/Whistler area, four years in the North Thompson Valley, one year in Edmonton and 20 years in Lillooet.

He retired a year ago at age 79 mainly because of a visual

Fr. Bob presided at a funeral in Skeetchestn for Betty Calhoun





Bishop Monroe and Fr. Bob celebrated the baptism of Darrius, son of Rona Bob and Bernard Chantyman, as well as the 50th anniversary of respected elders Desmond and Theresa Peters

impairment. Fr. Bob still lives in Lillooet where “downtown is within walking distance and there aren’t many obstacles for a person with visual impairment.”

His priority these days is to learn how to live a vibrant religious life with the limitations presented by very poor vision. He is no longer able to drive. He has to adjust to the fact life changes drastically when one has to adapt to a possible future with very limited vision or the real possibility of losing one’s eyesight completely. Certain tasks have to be dealt with now and not put off in his daily routine.

His day now consists of fidelity to the Church’s Daily Liturgy, the divine office and daily offering of mass. This is made possible through a visual aide called the Ruby XL, purchased through the CNIB. By remaining in Lillooet post-active ministry, he is able to maintain contact with doctors assisting him with his visual challenges.

Fr. Bob is able to still function beyond the limitations presented because Lillooet is small, familiar and with limited obstacles for his disability. He is still able to offer his counsel to those who contact him from different communities in which he served since 1971.

A tribute to the Oblates

BY MADGE AND CASEY WEBER

DUNCAN, BC – We grew up in rural communities in northwest Saskatchewan as cradle Catholics, and received the sacraments of initiation in parishes where the Oblates were the administrators.

We remember well the homilies then were given in English and German, and the teaching Sisters of Notre Dame would be asking questions first thing on Monday morning. So we paid attention. We were married in St. Mary's Church in Regina, where Father Gerald Fetsch, OMI, was officiating.

Later we moved to Duncan, BC, and were delighted to learn that the Oblates were in many parishes on the Island. We could visit and celebrate with our neighbouring parishes and feel very much at home.

In 1974 our beloved son, Trent, unfortunately died as a

Madge and Casey Weber





The reply from Aunt Miriam

result of a car/bike accident and again it was the Oblate community who came to be with us during this time of painful separation, sadness and grief. For your support, and many acts of kindness, we shall forever be grateful. You demonstrated God's tender mercy and compassion for us.

We so looked forward to the parish missions and retreats here at St. Edward's, facilitated by the Oblates. They were so well attended and appreciated. They gave us the nourishment we craved and so needed, at that time in history, on our journey. We would wait, too, for the monthly publication of the "Our Family" magazine. Our first issue arrived in the mail, unannounced, as a gift for Christmas. Thank you. This delightful teaching tool inspired us, and brought connection with the events and celebrations of the church on the prairies and beyond. The letters to Aunt Miriam were a highlight.

Needless to say, we were ever so sad when the Oblates decided to leave Vancouver Island in 2013, to assume their responsibilities in the Vancouver community. Whoever or whatever could replace the charisma of the Oblate spirit? There

was a sense of joy working alongside these faith-filled men of integrity, hope, love, and peace. Our liturgical celebrations need special mention here. Those early sunrise Easter Sunday liturgies are embedded in our memory. Alleluia was the word!

Our family will always be grateful for your friendship and years of dedicated missionary ministry here in Canada, too, especially in our diocese of Victoria. Each one, in your unique and dauntless way, anointed us with the Oil of Gladness. Considering that we might forget someone, we hesitate to mention names. Please know that personally and collectively, you have made a huge difference in our hurting and broken world by your presence, prayers and action. We, too, will always have a special place in our heart of the cross you wear.

May our beloved Oblate friends who have died be embraced in love by the Mother of God.

Mary, Queen of peace, pray for us.

St. Eugene de Mazenod, pray for us.

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





Volunteers assemble Christmas gifts

Christmas miracles

BY EUGENE MWAPE MULE, OMI

EDMONTON – It is said “Sacred Heart is the parish of miracles.”

The miracle of Christmas was experienced by more than 900 children at a special Christmas party at the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton.

It was a miracle in itself to host a party for 900 children, but it couldn't have happened without the many generous donors who helped financially to make sure that all the children from infants to 16 years old have cherished Christmas memories.

Parcels wrapped and ready for delivery



Susai Jesu, OMI, offered a prayer of thanksgiving to begin the festivities. Oblate associates and young volunteers helped with the registrations. The Lions Club served food to children and their parents. Several generous volunteers helped with face painting.

A group of First Nations children sang Christmas songs in the Cree language in the hall that was decorated with stuffed bears. An Indigenous woman and her son sang and played traditional drums.

Santa found his way into the packed hall to greet the children as he handed them age-appropriate gifts. This was a special time for the children to meet and speak with Santa while their parents snapped photos. Soon, all the stuffed toys around the church hall were also given to the children.

Apart from the joy of celebrating Christmas with these children, the one thing I appreciated most was to see different people of different ages come together. This was a great opportunity for all of us as a community to encounter each other with our presence and shared stories in the name of Christ. Pope Francis tells us that “this word is very important. Encounter with others. Why? Because faith is an encounter with Jesus, and we must do what Jesus does: encounter others.”

In an effort to provide opportunities to encounter others, the parish also organized and provided Christmas food hampers for a complete Christmas meal for 550 families in Edmonton. Many volunteers worked tirelessly to sort the food, assemble the hampers and deliver them throughout the city. It

Families and children gather to celebrate



was a good opportunity for me to speak with different people as I took registrations. During deliveries of the hampers, I came to see the living conditions of the people we are called to serve. This is an image of “encounter” that has remained with me.

As I continue on my ministerial internship here at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples, I pray that experiences of this kind will empower me in both faith and material ways of responding to the needs of people around me.

Christmas bags ready
for delivery





Kenya

NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

OCT. 6

NAIROBI – Fr. Faustin went to Méru and Kionyo to prepare and run a special workshop for vocation candidates. It was an opportunity to provide input, share more about OMI Kenya, and assess the young men more carefully for selection into our 2019 postulancy program. The young men who come to the workshop are specially invited and have been visited several times during the year by Fr. Faustin or Fr. Daquin. Some have been journeying for more than a year.



Gerry Conlan, OMI

On Friday, Fr. Fidel went to Méru to meet the bishop and finalize our new parish agreement. We were relieved to know that at last our friend Peter in Mombasa has located a good Toyota Rush to import from Japan. This will be needed by Fr. Daquin, who has been managing without a car for two months. We expect delivery soon, which is important because after November this car would not be accepted because of the age restriction of seven years.

A little God moment occurred Friday. As I left our house, I saw a young man running to the main road, so I pulled alongside and he gratefully took a lift towards Karen. He was quite amazed I stopped and offered that he's a Catholic studying at Africa International University nearby.

OCT. 13

We were happy to be united with the Pope as he canonised Bishop Oscar Romero from San Salvador who was murdered by the government in the early 1980s – a very recent saint.

Let's pray more religious and bishops stand up to fight for the poor. I wish we could do something in South Sudan.

We were blessed by a visit from our postulants who came from Kisaju to Karen for spiritual direction and lunch on Saturday.

We received good news from Quebec where our friends there have agreed to fund a prison project to upgrade the education facilities where Fr. Fidel is working hard to assist the women and children.

OCT. 20

The sun has been shining a lot, giving us a good chance to pour the ground floor slab on Tuesday and Wednesday at the Karen residence, so that will be a milestone for us. During the week we completed installing sewerage lines under the ground floor, and applied insecticide before placing the black plastic and steel mesh.

The Nairobi youth, St. Stephen's on the Move, showed their Oblate spirit by visiting the children's home in Mitunguu,

St. Stephen's on the Move, Kionyo Youth visit a shrine
at Kyumbi near Machakos Junction





Catholic Women's Assoc. members attend a recollection day at Impolosat prayer house

near Kionyo (some youths from Kionyo also joined). They are busy trying to register a small company “Youth Making a Difference.” They hope to make it into an income-generating project, obtaining supply contracts with the government. All government departments have to give a percentage of contracts to youth organizations, but they have to be registered. Even if it doesn't work out, it's proving to be a good process of dialogue and argumentation.

On Friday, my father and I dashed into town at 6 a.m. On the way, we provided a ride for some on foot. Dad was a bit surprised, but I said they are regulars. I believe we religious have to be pro-active in doing good to help offset the bad behaviour of a few.

OCT. 27

The day we wanted to start pouring the ground floor slab, it started seriously raining, but fortunately it's perfect for curing the slab!

Our Karen residence project is progressing slowly, but I've been happy for

Ken Forster, OMI, inspects construction at the Karen residence during his recent visit to Kenya



the pace while we wait for the environmental approval. Can you imagine, the officer wanted our architect to give “something” in return. Now they are harassing him with phone calls which he refuses to answer. What’s wrong with the government employees? They get a good salary, lots of extra perks and allowances and still they must ask for something more.

NOV. 4

I’m sitting here in the barber shop trying to look a bit sharper. My usual barber is Kariuki and he always finishes with a head and shoulder massage, not to mention a number of oils and scents he applies over the head and face.

He’s a nice chap who is saving to take his girlfriend home and offer her parents an “appreciation” of foodstuffs. Then, with their blessing he’ll return with a “customary wife,” not just a girlfriend. To get married in the church he’ll have to give a dowry. So, every time I come for a haircut (\$3.50), I round it up to \$5 as a tip. It’s a bit of a standard joke as his colleagues all get a good laugh as I tell him, “a contribution for the wedding.” He’s been tending my shrinking ‘paddock’ for three years now. Not sure when I should ask him for a discount as his workload is reducing!

On Sunday I accompanied the pre-novices to the prison, before borrowing the student van to take the youth to a small retreat centre just outside Nairobi.

CWA women meet at the entrance of the church in Irinda





Nairobi youth participated in the “Dance for Kindness” event
(Nairobi in the background)

NOV. 11

The Kisaju Church structural designs are under way so the County can approve them and then work on land title transfer. I received a shock on Thursday hearing that Denis, our Kisaju structural engineer, had a bad accident and nearly lost four fingers on his right hand. Thank God he’s okay, but whether his hand will heal completely I don’t know. Let’s pray.

NOV. 17

Sunday after the children’s mass I joined the Nairobi youth in the city. First we participated in the “Dance for Kindness” event that is a world-wide phenomenon. We are the first in Nairobi – maybe Kenya. Dance for Kindness is a world-wide event that helps inspire, empower and educate people of all backgrounds to lead a life of kindness.

The youth were pleased with themselves. Next year we plan a competition between the youth in all our centres. But,

I then want to see them go out and do an act of kindness as a team. We have already seen our youth visiting three orphanages this year, so that makes me very happy.

The women at Kisaju have been saving money for a tent and chairs so they can hire it out to people and generate income. They were asking the Oblates for assistance. We agreed 50/50 plus a loan they pay back. They need it for the upcoming youth seminar.



Kiirua farm family L-R: baby Joycelyn Nehema, proud dad Euticus, proud mom Ann and Denis Conlan

NOV. 24

Sunshine and occasional showers have blessed us this week. Some are worried the shortage of rain this wet season will cause a food shortage later next year. However, in Méru at our farm, manager Euticus tells me they are getting good rains: not too heavy and not too little.

The Kisaju Parish hosted the Oblate Youth workshop/seminar. Youth from Méru and Kionyo parishes arrived Friday night and stayed until Monday.

Youth gather for a three-day event at Kisaju Parish



DEC. 1

At Kisaju Parish, about 150 youth gathered for a workshop to encourage their faith and provide life-skills training. Meanwhile, the locals continued building the water tower at the Olturuto Prayer House, and are preparing to install the pump.

DEC. 8

One of my God moments for the week was Monday morning. As I entered the bypass, I offered a ride to three men heading to work on Mombasa Road. Of course they were very happy, and I figured we had secured at least three blessings for the day.

I received a message from one of our Kionyo youth studying in Méru that he was in the midst of exams and desperately needed some house rent, saying “I promise to pay back.” I said I’d pray for him, while secretly arranging for Kenrod, our Nairobi youth chairman, to help him out. I figured there was a better chance of the youth paying back another youth than paying back an Oblate! I remember St. Eugene used to secretly pass donations to some people via the women fishmongers in Marseille.

Youth attend a seminar in Méru on drugs and alcohol



The Karen building project is continuing well, but too slowly. They have not added the extra workers, saying the public transport problem makes it difficult.

DEC. 15

Our young friend Denis is doing well, and just finished his exams on Friday. He'll be excited to go home to family in Kionyo. Our brother priests also finished their exams and Fr. Pascal went to Kionyo until university starts again in January. Br. Kalenga also went to Kionyo to start his regency year.

DEC. 22

This week started with lots of rain and then turned into beautiful sunshine. The Karen building is progressing well, but still a bit slow. We hope to skip the walls in the first floor and do columns and beams to speed up the work rate.

We were very happy for Kenrod, our youth chairman in Nairobi, to graduate from Kenya Technical University this week. Unfortunately I couldn't make it, but I reduced his debt by a little bit, so that made him smile. He was short \$25 last week in order to graduate this week.

We were also very proud of our Nairobi youth. Some visited Malindi on the coast, and visited a children's home there

Youth group brings gifts to children's home





Christmas day celebration in Nyumbani

with gifts and laughter. When we see young people with little, sharing it with children in need, it means God is not dead!

DEC. 29

After Sunday Mass I met with the Kisaju Parish committee about our goat project. Because the Oblates are helping the parish, could the parish organize one of the Maasai families to care for a flock of goats for our youth group in Kisaju and Nairobi? We plan on getting milking goats (at least half) and the “shepherds” can keep the milk, while we take the progeny each year. They liked the idea and will discuss it. Let’s pray they say yes so we can begin the goat project for youth and raise funds for their activities. We have the money to buy the goats but nowhere to run them. I see God’s hand here, giving the community a chance to assist us as we assist them.

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