

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

Oblate Spirit



Christmas 2019



*Comfort
and Joy*

Opening our hearts



When we think of the various and different gifts we give or receive at Christmas and throughout the year, is there one that stands out for you?

As we age, we rely on memories and find there is less need for the material things in life. We also have learned there is something more valuable.

Time!

When one is young, there is much time on the horizon, time to do this, time to get that. As seniors, like us, time becomes a precious commodity. There is less of it available in our lives, so every day and every month and every year is more precious.

It is with that thought in mind that we were so moved by Stefan Rodriguez's story, which follows on the next page. He is a young man who found himself with the gift of time. Through connections with Ken Forster, OMI, he made his way to Kenya, lived with Oblate scholasticates and taught automotive mechanics at a Nairobi trade school.

He made a difference in the lives of many people, and all it cost him was time and some spare cash.

In our annual Christmas issue, we try to make a difference in the lives of the poor, here in Canada, in Peru and in Kenya. We likely can't find the time to follow in Stefan's footsteps, but we can provide the Oblates of OMI Lacombe with the necessities to be difference makers.

With that in mind, we once again offer a huge thank you for your prayers and financial support. These are the gifts of giving that will make a difference in the lives of so many less fortunate people in the Oblate world we serve.

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators

A gift of time

BY JUAN STEFAN RODRIGUEZ

(Automotive Mechanics Instructor at a Nairobi Trade School)

NAIROBI – In many ways, I've always felt humbled, and in some ways guilty, of the gifts I've been given since birth. I was provided a good life from the hard-working people around me. I often questioned what I had done to deserve this life, to be born in this wealthy country to a supportive family.

Until recently I didn't think I had the time, finances, or the ability to truly make a difference and start evening the score. This was my excuse anyway. I wanted to do more than dig ditches or donate money, though. I wanted to make a real difference; I wanted to fix things that weren't working, and I wanted to teach. I've always loved teaching, in a more casual environment, that is. I really enjoy sharing my knowledge with others and watching their knowledge grow. In a lot of ways this opportunity seemed like the perfect fit.

Stefan and Fr. Gerry Conlan with a black rhino at Ol Pajeta Conservancy





Upon arrival in Kenya, I got over my weird guilt feeling very quickly. People were just eager to learn ... to learn about everything, about me, about where I was from.

About when the harvest season is in the United States and about what American tribe I belonged to. There was a lot of question answering and clarifying to do. I had to explain that I did not belong to an American tribe, and that in the U.S. we have grocery stores that have any food you would want all the time, something that didn't strike me as strange until recently. Finally, I was able to talk about my trade, and was nervous at first. I felt I was flung into the deep end, never having taught a formal class in my life. I quickly adapted as best I could and started to love my lecture time.

One of the best parts of my day was standing in front of the class and trying to make automotive engineering fun. Yes, that sounds like an oxymoron. The class was Motor Vehicle Mechanics, but the other instructors and I tweaked the lesson plan a bit. Soon all the students were calling the class Automotive Engineering and dubbing themselves Automotive Engineers. In my opinion that's exactly what they were.

At the end of the day, this entire experience happened because I slowed down a bit. I stopped thinking about myself, what I needed to do, how much money I needed to make. I just thought about what I could do for someone else. You can't truly hear God if there's too much background noise, and most of that noise comes from inside. Every day I would have prayer with the Oblate brothers and priests at the seminary. I say every day, but sometimes I just felt like watching a movie or

something. I'd say about four times a week is holy enough for someone who's not a priest.

This prayer was a great time to reflect and think. It's something I had never really done before. You really have to force yourself to just sit there in silence. Your mind wanders. You keep thinking about who won the football game, or if you remembered to pay a bill. Sometimes I would rebuild engines in my head. Once you realize the importance of this quiet time, though, these thoughts start to go away. Using this time for nothing else besides thoughtful reflection and getting closer to God is probably one of the best things I've ever learned. It turns out doing absolutely nothing is one of the most productive uses of half an hour.

Away from school, which was a short bus ride away, I was never alone. There were always seminarians at the house. I became good friends with all of them, which was easy. To say they were kind would be an understatement. I've never seen such honesty, in a backyard volleyball game, over whether the ball was across the line or not.

A life-long goal of mine has been to go to Kenya and volunteer. And no, I'm not just saying that. I've been talking to my

Stefan in the classroom



family about it since I was a child. Why? I suppose it's a combination of things. The hunt for adventure is something I feel was passed down from my parents; I love being in unfamiliar situations because that's when I feel I am fully motivated to try my best, and I suppose most importantly, a love of helping people.

I think we all have a duty to help people; genuinely helping people, not expecting any praise or publicity, or anything in return. Although I will admit, a "thank you" is certainly appreciated.

One thing that sometimes holds me back is an annoying idea that helping someone else comes with the assumption that you're better than they are. Smarter, stronger, richer; I am none of that. I didn't want to be the rich white guy using my knowledge to save Africa. I am no more special than the young kid born on the streets of Nairobi. It helps to look at it from a different perspective.

Everyone appreciates someone helping them, and I truly believe that this path was chosen for me. I had a few months of spare time, a bit of money in my pocket and, more importantly, knowledge that I wanted to share with others. The opportunity opened like a curtain and all I did was walk through.

(Stefan Rodriguez, 30, is a marine engineer who was born in Canada and whose family moved to Colorado. Ken Forster, OMI, is a family friend who "opened the door" for Stefan's time in Kenya.)



Gift Payment Option



We have the ability to accept donations by way of credit card! Please complete the gift form enclosed, visit our website at www.omilacombe.ca/mami/donations/ 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.



Christmas Wish List

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

(2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

CANADA

Outreach BBQ	\$50
Christmas hampers/dinner	\$50

KENYA

Women's chicken farm	\$25
Women prisoners' supplies	\$25
Schools girls' personal supplies	\$25
Educational needs	\$50
Formation	\$100

PERU

Bibles/rosaries/catechisms	\$25
Sports vests	\$25
Cement	\$25
St. Clotilde hospital	\$25

Canada

DE MAZENOD DOOR OUTREACH - \$50

HAMILTON – Instead of a hot lunch at the De Mazenod Door Outreach, every Friday of the year, regardless of the weather (rain, shine or foot of snow), guests line up down the street and around the corner for a wonderful Oldies music-filled outdoor BBQ. Each guest receives a hot dog, hamburger, bag of potato chips and a drink while singing and swaying to the music.

Volunteers, the parish team, and sometimes even our BBQ sponsors, help set up, prepare and serve the hungry. Who can resist the smell of BBQ, especially in the dead of winter or on a beautiful sunny summer day? Groups, classes or families often participate.

BBQ Friday is a day to break up the normalcy of the week, which for many of those we serve can sometimes be a tedious and lonely time. Nothing breaks the monotony like a St. Pat's BBQ Friday!

With ever growing numbers of poor and marginalized coming for lunch, the BBQs require sponsorship. It costs \$600 to sponsor each week. Thus, the funds raised by MAMI will be used to help support the BBQs.



CHRISTMAS DAY MEAL - \$50

BY SUSAI JESU, OMI

EDMONTON – Every year Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples organizes several key events for the homeless and poor during the Christmas season. These Christmas activities give hope to the large numbers of homeless, marginalized and the poor. Our Children' Christmas Party and Food Hamper giveaway take place in mid-December ending with our Christmas Day meal.

As the needs of this area are acute, this year we would like to focus on our annual Christmas Day meal, to bring a little bit of the joy and spirit of Christ's birthday to those who are alone on this day.

Last year we were able to provide a full Christmas Day dinner with 800-900 people attending. Our menu includes green salad, potato salad, bannock/buns, turkey, ham, mashed potatoes, stuffing, vegetables, gravy and, of course, Christmas pudding!

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. This was one of two Christmas Day meals that were provided for the homeless and poor. This much needed event takes 50 to 60 volunteers starting two days before Christmas day.

In order for us to provide this much needed ministry, which costs \$4,000 to feed 800-1000 people, we depend on donations to help with the purchase of all the food for the meal. Donations will be gratefully accepted on behalf of the homeless, poor and those who are alone on this special day!





A diligent student

Kenya

CHICKEN PROJECT: \$25

It has been a year since the Oblates were entrusted with the pastoral care of St. Eugene de Mazenod Irinda parish in the Diocese of Méru. Our pastoral survey has identified some important needs, including youth empowerment, education, care for women and vulnerable orphan children.

The chicken project empowers and supports the women, helps improve their farming knowledge and skills, and serves the needs of the vulnerable in the community. It also improves their family lives by providing them with income.

The project started with a small contribution from each member. One hundred chicks have been purchased and they would like to increase the number of chickens to 600. Due to lack of income and resources, they will struggle to achieve their goal and objectives without assistance. One chick costs \$5.

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS: \$50

SCHOOL GIRLS' PERSONAL SUPPLIES: \$25

The Irinda parish includes three schools, a primary school and two secondary schools. The schools are government run but come under the sponsorship of St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish. Despite some government funding many of the children come from vulnerable families who are unable to pay for school fees and uniforms, proper nutrition, shoes, or sanitary supplies for the girls. Most parents can't afford the dollar-per-day for their children's lunches and some children come to school hungry.

The Irinda Primary School is in the middle of two slum areas, Majengo and Kibra. The infrastructure is old and in need of an upgrade or refurbishment. Most of the students are orphans of parents who succumbed to HIV-related diseases.

The Gachanka Secondary School is unique in that students come from across the country. The majority are from communities that are economically and educationally disadvantaged. They come from counties such as Mombasa, Kisumu, Kitui, Machakos, Turkana and Méru. The majority of the students have run away from cultural pressures. Attending the day school saves them from early marriage and other regressive customs. The school is in need of something as simple as bedding.

LANGATA WOMEN'S PRISON, NAIROBI - \$25

The Missionary Oblates have been working with prisoners from the time of their founder, St. Eugene De Mazenod. Prisoners are the poor and most abandoned who need to feel love through the church's ministry. In OMI Kenya Mission, we try our best to attend to the prisoners at Langata Women's Prison, the major women's prison in Kenya.

Our ministry provides *Spiritual Care* (masses, sacraments, prayers) and *Pastoral Care* (counselling, welfare of the prisoners, care and education for prisoners' children and other needs).



Children in the prison

The ministry is organized by Fr. Fidele and the pre-novices are actively involved on a weekly basis. There are two sections, the *main prison* and the *remand prison*, with about 1,000 prisoners.

The majority of prisoners are women 18 to 30 years old. There are many prisoners who are single mothers and/or orphans. They are generally poor with a low standard of education. Others are married and separated from their families. Some prisoners are accompanied by their children when they are unable to leave them with other people. The prison has a small school for prisoners and staff. The school was in bad shape, but now with the assistance of MAMI we were able to fix the toilets, water tank (with a stand), upgrade the floor with tiles, and add desks and a small kitchen.

There is also a day care for babies, some of which need care, food, fruits, milk and clothing.

Some of the needs are school fees and uniforms, shoes, food and milk, medication, sanitary needs, and basic hygiene needs such as toothpaste, soap and toilet paper.

FORMATION - \$100

Every year is an important one in the life of the mission, but 2019 has been a special year for the Kenya Mission and for many reasons we call it a year of Grace. From a formation point of view, it was a fruitful year.

In February, our five novices professed their first vows in South Africa and they are all now in theology (Stephen Makori, Paul Imanyara, Charles Okeyo, Edwin Onyango and David Odhiambo).

In May, two novices professed vows in the Philippines and are now studying theology in Manila (Sylvester Kakuku and Samuel Onduso).

In August, two other novices professed their vows in Cameroon and are starting their theology in Yaounde (Benjamin Karani and Stephen Wekesa).

In June, we celebrated the joyful priestly ordination of Fr. Cosmas Kithinji.

In August, Br. Joseph Nzioka professed his final vows at Cedara, then was ordained a deacon in September.

All events are received in the mission as a gift of God, a sign of blessings and great hope for our future.

The year wouldn't have been successful without the support of Lacombe Canada MAMI. The mission is most grateful and ever energized to continue growing by the generosity of our friends and supporters in Canada.

Br. Samuel
Onduso
proclaiming
his first vows
to Fr. Fidele



A humble beginning

BY CHARLES OKEYO, OMI

ROME - It was barely two months after I had made my first Oblation when I had the privilege to exercise the vow of obedience: I was admitted to join The Oblate Roman International Scholasticate in Italy.

I experienced mixed reactions, all of them overwhelming. All the ideas about famous places, the new language, new brothers all over the Oblate world, were just too much to digest, let alone to comprehend. I really wanted to experience this unique yet unknown adventure.

I boarded a plane to Rome on March 15. It was the first time that I was to travel alone for a very long journey.

All went well at the check-in points, except that I had to open my luggage several times because the security personnel were alerted that I had carried something that looked weird through the scanner. It turned out it was my candle which I had used to profess my first vows.

I was flying with Etihad Airways, so I had to go via Abu Dhabi. There I waited for nine long hours. I could not sleep because I was worried that I might miss the next flight. I kept asking the security personnel when I could get in line for the flight. Patiently, with a smile, she would say, "In a while, sir."

The journey from Abu

Charles Okeyo, OMI, on the airplane



Dhabi to Rome was long, maybe because I was exhausted after nine hours of waiting or because I was too excited.

Finally, we arrived safe and sound. There was a long queue. A lot of things were happening there and everybody seemed to know what to do except me. I tried to use English but no one understood me, hence I had to use my broken Italian mixed with French and with a lot of sign language. Frankly, I do not know if they really understood what I said, but certainly they knew what I wanted.

The most touching experience came as I was about to exit Fiumicino Airport. A police officer stopped me, asked who I was and my purpose for visiting Rome. My heart stopped beating for a minute. However, his face changed when he heard that I was a religious brother.

He excitedly asked me, "Which congregation do you belong to?"

I said, "Missionary Oblates of..."

Even before I had finished uttering my religious congregation, he jumped and hugged me, saying that he knew the Oblates from his parish. At that point I took a deep breath and thanked the Lord for that Divine Providence.

He personally took me to my brothers who were waiting for me. From that point I knew that my life was going to change, hopefully for the best.

Charles Okeyo, OMI, in Rome



Words of gratitude

I finished my primary education in 2018 at Irinda primary in St. Eugene de Mazenod Irinda Parish. Due to family struggles, I did not have any hope for any further education though I was one of the best students in the school. My parents are among the very low income families in the community. My mother has a calf that has not yet started producing milk, and my father is a motorcycle driver.

By God's grace Fr. Daquin, OMI, visited our school and heard about my story from the headmistress, other teaching staff and church leaders. He visited my home, not far from the church, to see our daily life situation. Touched by my story, and aware of my intellectual capacity, he shared with me the news that I would join secondary school. This was unexpected and great news for me and my parents.

I attend Materi secondary, a private Catholic secondary school, where I have been performing very well and am certain to score an excellent grade at the end of the school year.

I wish to thank you from the bottom of my heart for giving me such a great opportunity to get educated and empower me as a woman in a culture where women are not given a chance to stand on their own feet.

May God bless you for helping underprivileged and vulnerable people.



- Brenda Kinya

I would like to express my profound gratitude for your financial support during my first year of teacher training at Machakos College. Your generosity has enabled me to study without worry.

I am committed to work hard to achieve my dreams and to honour your sacrifice for the sake of my life as I enter my second academic year. May Almighty God bless those who offer underprivileged and vulnerable people a chance to become educated.

– Doreen Gaki



I am a student at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and interned at Neoplan Kenya Limited, which is an architectural firm. I have had a good learning experience learning what is needed to work as a project manager after my graduation.

I am looking forward to my final academic year, which will end in April. I would like to reiterate my profound expression of gratitude for the generosity that has enabled me to achieve my academic dream.

– Ngina Sylvia





I am very happy to write to you and share my appreciation for counting me among vulnerable children, whose future would be uncertain without any help.

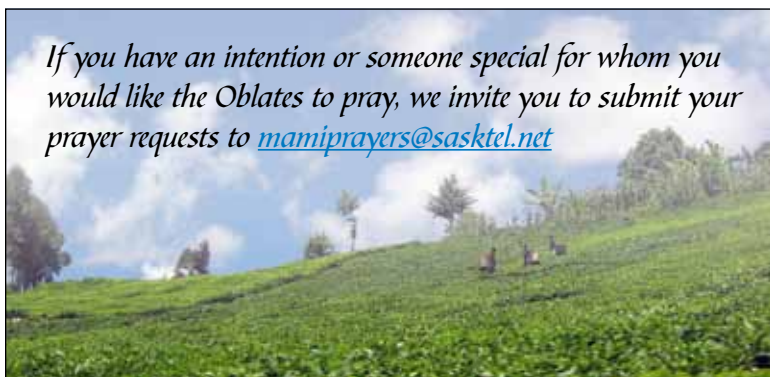
I am a child of a Muslim single parent, my dear mother Fatuma Duba. My father died when I was little. I became a Catholic through contact with the Nazareth sisters of Annunciation working in our area. Sr. Mary Magdelene continues to help me and shared my story with Fr. Daquin, OMI, who chose to sponsor me in 2019.

I see a future for me because you have given me a chance to be educated. I am working hard to become a surgeon one day. I am happy to be the first girl in my family to study because my older sisters married at early ages as it is part of our culture.

May God bless you for what you are doing to help me and others.

– Mary Sharon

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



Peru

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

The future of the Church in Peru is with the youth. The parish is growing by leaps and bounds, so there is always something to be done. Thank God for the important role the readers of Oblate Spirit play so we can help teach the people about the love of God, by word and action.

Recently a group of 40 teenagers from the three regions of Peru (the jungle, the Andes, and the coast) came to our parish for a special mission. As part of the weekend the teenagers made a hot and tasty dinner to share with the poor souls who live in and around the city dump.

BIBLES/ROSARIES/CATECHISMS: \$25

We recently provided 720 catechisms to 270 prison inmates, four parishes and several groups of young people. Before Christmas last year 173 inmates received the first three Sacraments of the Church and there are 270 more working to that goal this year. Bibles are much needed.

We have close to 400 teenagers to be confirmed this year and we have already started a program using sports as a means to reach the young people.

Catechism class



SPORTS VESTS: \$25

The Oblates in Peru work considerably with the youth, the future of the church, to help promote vocations. We do a lot through sports, bringing the young together and forming teams through the seven parishes in the area.

There is a young teacher next to the parish retreat centre that brings a group of children from one of the poor zones in the area and teaches them soccer.

Because many of these children and teenagers come from poor families they are not able to pay for a sports uniform. The solution is to buy vests, which are inexpensive. When the teams come to play sports, the vests are given to them only for the game. There will be a number of colours to identify the different teams. After the games the vests are returned, which means they can be kept clean and loss is avoided.



A new chapel

CEMENT: \$25

In addition to continuing to provide homes and beds for the poor, we initiated the construction of chapels. The second chapel is built in a desert area where thousands of people live. There are no paved streets, clean running water or electric-



Santa Clotilde Hospital

ity. A very kind lady who owns a gravel pit has provided the material to put down the base of the building. The community puts down the concrete floor, plasters the walls and then paints.

Soon there will be marriages and baptisms and once a month mass will be celebrated, and each Sunday there will be a Celebration of the Word done by lay people.

SANTA CLOTILDE HOSPITAL: \$25

Santa Clotilde Hospital, located along the Napo River in the jungles of the Peruvian Amazon, serves the poor in Peru.

Your gift will provide supplements like powdered milk for the malnourished newborns, medicine, and contribute to hospital equipment and patient care at Santa Clotilde and at the out-patient house in Lima.

God needs us to make a difference, to be a message of hope



BY GERARD CONLAN, OMI

NAIROBI – One of the common features of young people is their desire to make a difference in the world. This is not just a youthful desire for recognition and praise, but is deeply rooted in our DNA.

Unfortunately, for some of us older people, it drives us mad when enthusiastic young people want to try this, try that, fix this, help those people over there. Too often, we grow old and grumpy or disillusioned!

But we were created by Love, to be loved, so that we can experience joy by loving others. We cannot love others unless we feel loved or lovable, and neither can we love others effectively (meaning unselfishly), unless we have a clear purpose in life.

I believe that Jesus wants us to realize our purpose: someone, somewhere in the world, needs you or me to be a message of hope ... not simply to carry a message (like the water-boy in a football game), but TO BE a message of hope.

As I often remind myself, it's good to put ourselves into the Gospel. Today we can be the disciples going out or the people who receive them. At different times we should be both!

When the disciples were sent out, they did two things: they shared the good news about Jesus Christ and what he was doing

(giving hope); and secondly, using their God-given power, they helped people overcome sickness/evil(giving freedom).

It has reminded me of the power that one person can have, any one of us, when we sacrifice our time to visit others: *words of encouragement rather than judgement; words of understanding about a bad habit or challenge, rather than condemnation.*

In short, the Christian purpose in life is to help people see a better way of living: *one that is connected to living in a healthy community where we give and receive.* And out of that healthy community life, we are able to bring the power of healing to others.

At times we also need encouragement. The mission can be disappointing when people reject us. Therefore Jesus sent the disciples out two by two. With a companion, we can keep our focus and be accountable. We can encourage each other.

As religious life is supposed to reveal, the happiest life is one lived in community: The witness of two or more people laughing and caring for each other is more powerful than many words. This is why a respectful and happy marriage is the best teacher for our children. Education is important, but knowing how to live a happy life is what brings true success.

Jesus sent the disciples out two by two



Some of the instructions by Jesus to his disciples caused me confusion trying to understand them. But this is what I'm hoping the Holy Spirit wants me to share:

- 1) **Carry no purse, no haversack:** trust in God to provide what we need. When we carry a lot of "stuff" we cannot concentrate on our purpose (mission), and are slowed down.
- 2) **No sandals:** I'm not sure about this one. No sandals means I will walk very little in a day! However, I believe this is about looking and dressing humbly. When we see somebody barefoot, we don't usually feel threatened by them. So people might be more open to listening and learning. Perhaps religious people these days are too affluent, and that's why people don't listen to us: our message and our behaviour do not always match.
- 3) **Salute no one on the road:** This is not a question of bad manners or being rude. Saluting no one on the road means being focused on our mission. There is an urgent need in our world today for the message of hope and healing to be

Women in the marketplace





Kionyo associates gather for a meal

spread far and wide. Too many of our youth commit suicide because they've lost hope/purpose in life, and too many of our families are breaking apart, causing anxiety and sometimes poverty among our children, as well as sadness in our brothers and sisters.

Perhaps we think because we feel loved, have hope and a purpose in life that, therefore, God doesn't need me. The mission of Jesus to his disciples is still much needed today.

I'd like to pay particular respect and recognition to all our dedicated teachers in our communities. Many committed teachers are healing our children every day, giving them hope, a sense of belonging and sense that each of them are valuable. Thank you. We know it requires a lot of "going without" and walking "in bare feet" in order to reach many children.

Let's not be fooled into thinking we'll not be affected by the sadness around us. When there's too much sadness and brokenness in our society it leads to increased violence and loss of peace for all. Even financially speaking, everyone



has to pay the government more to “keep the peace” with more police; and increased spending on emergency services in health, housing, etc.

We either bring hope and freedom to others or we end up losing our own. May God bless our efforts to be a presence of hope. With God’s help we shall give freedom to some.

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





Kenya

NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

AUG. 18

NAIROBI – During the week we had wonderful celebrations at many places. Fr. Praveen travelled to Kionyo for the lay associates and youth mass, while Fr. Cosmas travelled north to help Fr. Daquin, who travelled to Eldoret to visit a Congolese family before coming to Nairobi for a finance committee meeting.

At Karen, we held a great party to mark the start of the new year for the students, to bid farewell to Stefan, our Canadian volunteer, and Br. Moses Wafula Khisa, who left the next morning to start his novitiate in the U.S.

On Saturday, Fr. Daquin, our JPIC (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation) leader in Kenya, kindly agreed to meet with a refugee family being supported by our Oblate parish in Vancouver. The family of nine is applying for immigration to Canada and has no means to support itself. We received funds

from Vancouver to support them and didn't want to just send it to them, but to also offer some pastoral care each month.

Celebrating Our Lady of the Assumption feast day in Gachanka



Gerry Conlan, OMI



On Sunday, after the usual morning mass at Nyumbani, I gave a three-hour seminar on human development and sexuality awareness to the high school students home from school, the early university students, our Nairobi Oblate youth and 12 youth from St Peter's Prison Chapel at Langata Women's Prison.

A new Oblate also arrived in the mission. Fr. Joachim Koye came from Chad, an Oblate mission started by the French Oblates in 1946. He'll be here for up to two years studying at Tangaza University College.

AUG. 25

I flew to Johannesburg for the annual Oblate treasurers' meeting on Sunday, and my friend Joe from Kionyo was the first officer flying the same flight. He sweet-talked the hostess, and she seated me in business class. He invited me in for take-off and, later, the final landing. It was a great experience and my first time in the cockpit of a 787 Dreamliner. The controls are amazing and I joked that it seems a bit more complicated than my old Cessna 172. He said it's easier to fly than a 172.

AUG. 31

Fr. Cosmas celebrated one year of final vows, which he took in Texas. We thank God he has survived the first year. Meanwhile, the youth group is busy preparing for an outing to Hell's Gate

at Naivasha,
a national
park.



Fr. Cosmas
at a home
baptism in
Inyenjere
Village



Kisaju House is taking shape

SEPT. 7

It seems like all our projects are finishing at the same time and of course everyone wants answers and money at the same time. We are also finalizing the fittings for Karen Residence and trying to get agreement on types of finishings that fit inside the budget. So I'm feeling a little pressure. But, as I tell others, work hard, get up early and do as much as we can.

Today we are celebrating and thanking God that Benjamin Karani and Stephen Wekesa took their first vows on their journey to final commitment sometime in the future. Every blessing comes with a bit of pain as we bought a new phone for each of them and sent money for laptops as they began their theology studies.



Youth group chairman Kenrod during a visit to Kionyo Schools



Celebrating the first vows
for Oblates Stephen Wekesa
and Benjamin Karani

SEPT. 14

We were happy to receive Fr. Fidele back from Cameroon, after he stood in for our provincial Ken Thorson, OMI, and received the first vows of Br. Benjamin Karani and Br. Stephen Wekesa.

On Wednesday, Fr. Fidele and Fr. Constant visited Naivasha to look for an investment property and were very excited by the opportunities.

SEPT. 21

Our three student priests (Fr. Joachim from Chad, Fr. Vŉng from Vietnam and Fr. Pascal from Congo) along with Fr. Cosmas, visited the FMM Sisters to bless their renovated convent and a new statue of Our Lady. I believe some of the sisters are Vietnamese, hence the connection.

On Saturday, we were happy to see some of our Nairobi youth visiting the Bahati Child Rescue Centre near the slums. The centre is run by the Sisters of Mary Immaculate.

Nairobi youth visit the Bahati Child Rescue Centre



Several youth, who couldn't make it, sent small contributions. Donations to the centre included two bales of maize flour, two 10-packs of tissue papers, one carton of long-life milk, one carton of biscuits and one packet of lollypops.

SEPT. 28

Sadly, this week we heard of the sudden death of Fr. Peter Daly, OMI, the rector at Mazenod College in West Australia. He suffered a seizure and will be difficult to replace. May his soul, and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

As one sadness comes, God always sends a blessing. This week we give thanks for the diaconate ordination of Joseph Nzioka Kyuli, OMI. It was at our St Joseph's Scholasticate in Cedara, South Africa.

From Tuesday to Friday morning, Fr. Faustin held the annual vocations Come and See, and by all accounts it was successful. Eight young men came. Br. Phelix came from Méru

and assisted. Young Fr. Pascal also assisted. I'm starting to get the message that I'm too old and might discourage the candidates!

At the farm, I met with Euticus, our manager, and we inspected the trees. Everything is so dry, waiting for the rains. The elderly Sr. Jacinta, who was using two acres at the



Farm manager Euticus
inspects the trees

farm, has decided it's time to let go, so I hope we will plant more trees this year in that area, as well as replace trees that died. There is a water crisis at the farm now, partly due to corruption in the water project that supplies us, but also because it's so dry. Fortunately, the Diocese of Méru has a project that has recently come next to our farm, so I hope we connect soon to give certainty to water supply.

OCT. 6

Fr. Daquin attended a special JPIC workshop on human trafficking. It seems that Isiolo, just north of Méru, is a major transit point for smuggling people from Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Kenya. The people then get transferred to Nairobi and then on to places in Europe, South Africa, the Arab countries, and others. It's sad and very serious, and only flourishes due to corruption and the people being desperate for money to survive, but for some it's the easy life of money versus the hard life of sweating for your bread.

On Friday morning, we were happy to welcome Greg Oszust, OMI. He is a Polish missionary who has just completed

Greg Oszust, OMI, arrives in Kenya and is welcomed by
Faustin Litanda, OMI, at Karen community in Nairobi



21 years in the far north of Canada. He came to us after a holiday with his family in Poland. I did mention that we were building a new chapel and if he could “borrow” any old liturgical necessities from

around Poland, it would be much appreciated. He arrived with a thurible and a small monstrance for exposition. Very nice. Thank you very much Fr. Greg.

On Saturday, the National Catholic Day of Prayer was held at Subukia just north of Nakuru. Fr. Faustin drove the pre-novices there at 4 a.m. and they returned at about 11:45 p.m.



Oblates Moses Wafula Khisa
and Ken Thorson at the Novitiate
in Godfrey, Illinois

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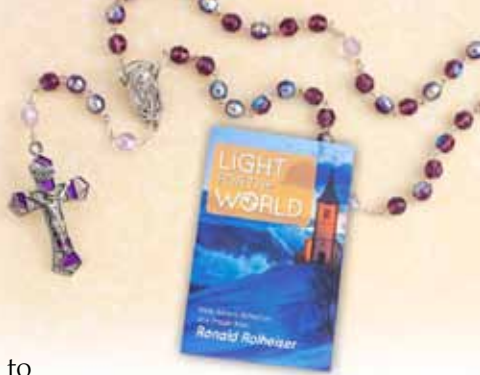
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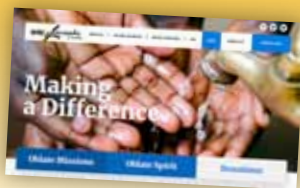


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