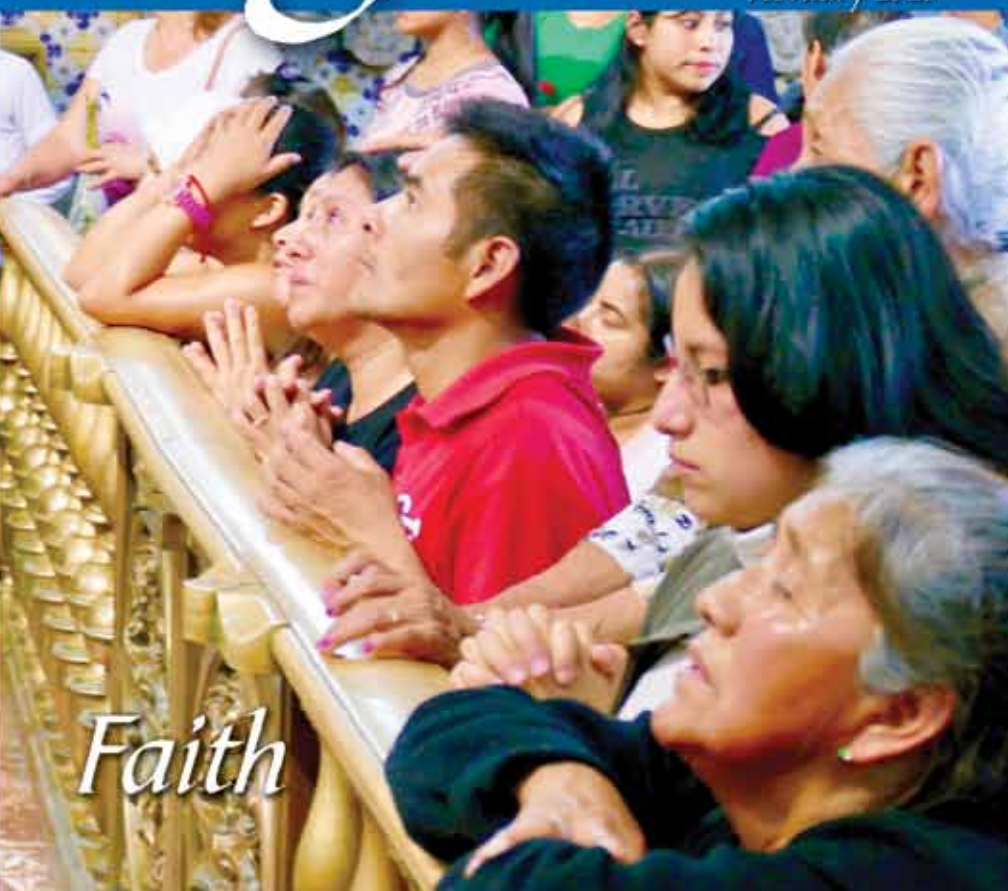


AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

# Oblate Spirit

February 2020

*Faith*



# Supporting the future

We live in a large world that seems to be shrinking day by day, thanks to advances in communication and transportation. The 'old ways' of doing things seem archaic.

We thought we personally were technologically advanced, but those days, too, are gone. Now we need a 10-year-old to help us program our cell phones.

The Oblates in Canada continue to age and diminish, but thanks to foresight years ago, the Canadian Oblate family is seeing continued new growth at the Kenya Mission. The new priests and brothers in Kenya may not be Canadian born, but they are part of the Canadian family, members of OMI Lacombe Canada. They serve communities thirsting for spirituality.

Stories, such as the determination of Elias Mwangi Kimani to overcome poverty and join the Oblates, are inspiring (Page 18).

At the same time, we want to offer a huge thanks to a newly ordained priest, Cosmas Kithinji Kubai, OMI, who celebrated a special mass Nov. 2 to commemorate the deceased loved ones of MAMI members. And we offer a heartfelt thanks to MAMI members for your prayers and support, which in part allows the Canadian Oblate community to flourish beyond our borders.

We are forever grateful.

*John and Emily Cherneski*  
Communications Coordinators



Fr. Cosmas, OMI, prays for our deceased loved ones

# Living on the shoulders of our Oblates

BY CATHIE OBERNDORF

VANCOUVER – More than 15 years ago, when John Brioux, OMI, was pastor of St. Augustine Parish in Vancouver, we came to know of his rooted story of spending a number of his early years in ministry with First Nations People of British Columbia.

We also learned through story and images of his personal love of the arts, so when we began discussing the possibility of building a new school, these two passions of Fr. John became woven into what is now a school all bright and new.

About 16 years ago, on one of Fr. John's walking explorations of a Native art gallery in Gastown, he came across a stunning totem pole carved here in British Columbia. A great story teller himself, Fr. John's enthusiasm for the piece fell into the hearts of a couple who bought the totem for the express purpose of having it displayed in what was to become *some-*

*day*, our new parish school in Kitsilano. (Because Kitsilano was Native land long before it became our parish's home, Fr. John was so delighted at this couple's great generosity.)

For more than 10 years, Morris Sutherland's totem remained wrapped up in the basement of the parish centre, waiting for the



John Brioux, OMI +



www.tribalhistory.org  
The Totem Pole is a  
symbol of the  
tribe's history and  
culture. It is a  
monument to the  
tribe's past and  
future. The Totem  
Pole is a symbol of  
the tribe's identity  
and pride. It is a  
monument to the  
tribe's history and  
culture. It is a  
symbol of the tribe's  
past and future.

*someday* to arrive. After many years of working to raise the money to build our new St. Augustine's School, the designing architects asked if there was anything special we wanted them to consider. That was an easy answer!

Fr. John called us to have a design that was beautiful and reflected the role of nature, the spirit of the Sisters of St. Ann and would incorporate his gifted totem into the interior architecture of our building.

Certainly, the mission and ministry of the Oblates is to serve the poor, and we at St. Augustine's Parish had to work through the justification of building a brand new school in an affluent city such as Vancouver when so much of the world lives in poverty. Throughout our years of planning and preparation, we came to believe that poverty shows itself in many ways – and in our current culture of abundance, there is often a deep poverty of spirit, of faith and of a living commitment to Jesus. We are deeply committed to witnessing to such a relationship as we mentor all our children and their families in these important years of formation.

This story is deeply connected to the Oblate story. It is rooted in relationships, in its honouring of First Nations' peoples, in an appreciation for all that is beautiful, both in God's creation and in how people use their personal gifts to bring others closer to God.

Should you travel to British Columbia, please come visit and see Fr. John's totem gift, and learn more about yet another way that the Oblates continue to touch the lives of so many.

*(Cathie Oberndorf, an Oblate associate, was the principal at St. Augustine's School for 27 years.)*





Students at prayer

# School raises \$3,800 for Kenya mission

St. Augustine School has been a long-time supporter of the Oblate mission in Kenya. The 2019 Advent evening raised more than \$3,800 for the Kenyan mission. The generosity of the donors is greatly appreciated.

The school children and families continue to partner with the Oblates in the service of the poor. The Oblates rely on friends who have been journeying with them over the many years because they are diminishing in numbers and are not in as many parishes as they were at one time.

If communities in Kenya are in need, the community decides what is most essential for the community, raises money themselves or offer labour. The Oblates, through MAMI, match their donations shilling for shilling. Obviously, the raising of the Kenyan portion from meagre resources is a greater sacrifice for them than for us. They have great pride in this method because they own the project and we respect their dignity.

# Residential schools legacy a deep wound for many

BY FRANÇOIS PARADIS, OMI

WINNIPEG – I have today a greater understanding of the intergenerational impact of the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) legacy. I have had the opportunity to hear from many indigenous persons their honest sharing of their painful experiences as descendants of IRS survivors.

During a non-Indigenous Returning to Spirit workshop, attended by a few international priests, I had this insight: It is not only the indigenous children of IRS survivors that are impacted but also all the generations of priests and religious women who follow the generations involved in the IRS system.

What impact has IRS had on me as I became an Oblate and started ministering among the indigenous communities? Most of these communities had either an Indian Residential School or those whose older generations had attended an IRS.

My initial understanding of the IRS system as an Oblate student, then as a seminarian and finally as a young priest, was a glorious rendering of the successes of the IRS and the evangelization of the indigenous communities. I consciously chose the indigenous ministry. As a young priest and as many of my predecessors, I chose to learn the language of the people.

Shortly into the ministry, I encountered the effects of IRS on the persons I was meeting in my ministry. On one hand, I experienced respect and politeness; on the other hand, I never knew when there would be an angry outburst or an accusation reflecting their experience with the IRS. On such occasions, they identify me not as who I am but as the same as those



Francois Paradis, OMI, (left) is presented with a picture

other priests whom they have encountered at school or in the community: painted with the same paintbrush!

The intergenerational effects of the IRS on me were many. Painted by the same paintbrush of their IRS experiences, who I was as a priest and person did not enter into consideration. I was the target of their anger and resentment. No wonder I had heard missionaries before me mention that it usually took about four years to establish trust. I experienced pain as they shared their experiences. The pain came from the perceived contradiction between their experiences of the Christian faith and whom Christ is, what the Church is to be, and what the Gospel (Good News) is. It took many years to establish trust, friendship and community.

A few elements came to my rescue and transformation in the midst of it. Other young Oblates experience similar reactions. Through conversations, mutual support and educational reflective conferences we learn to navigate the situation and discover other ways of being with. Believing in the dignity of each person helps me in the relationships. With others, we started dialoguing with the indigenous culture and with the religious ceremonies within the culture. The call was one of



reconciliation: healing of the past to move forward on another path, decolonization, and creating a new partnership.

The Returning to Spirit workshop was a pivotal moment in freeing myself from some of the IRS effects. However, as you may be experiencing, reconciliation is an ongoing process of acknowledging what shows up, accepting that it is what it is, and choosing to let go: thus, creating new possibilities in the relationships.

In a short article, there is a limit of what one can say. This is just skimming the surface. In every situation, there is always a certain transition from the former generations to the next, as life and culture continue to evolve. The IRS legacy is a deep wound for all who were involved in that historical period of our country, of our church and of our religious community.

## 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.

# Why a synod on the Amazon?

BY JOE GUNN

OTTAWA – For three weeks in October, more than 175 bishops gathered in Rome for something called “*The Synod on the Amazon: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology.*”

The Amazon is far away. How could this event have anything to do with us here in Canada?

Days after the synod ended, the Cardinal who co-presided the event, explained precisely why the Synod on the Amazon marked new relationships with Indigenous peoples, for working towards ecological justice and for all Catholics attempting to live our faith.

On Nov. 12, the Centre Oblat, Caritas Canada and St. Paul University welcomed Peruvian Cardinal Pedro Barreto, SJ, to Ottawa, where the university granted him an honorary doctorate. In a symposium that afternoon, more than 150 people heard how the Amazonian synod affects us all.

In the past, synods focussed on topics of concern, especially church dogma. This synod, however, was about a region. The Amazon Basin covers 7.5 million square kilometres in nine countries of South America, and is home to 33 million people, including three million Indigenous peoples who speak 240

Joe Gunn and Cardinal Baretto



languages in 330 groups. (More than 100 of these still prefer not to have *contact* with outside influences).

Cardinal Baretto presided over the Pan-Amazon Network (REPAM) that engaged more than 85,000 persons in preparation for this synod. He recounted how 45 territorial assemblies were held on various themes, with the results of these consultations infusing the working document of the synod itself. (Development and Peace helped finance REPAM's consultative process across this vast region.)

Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Sí* coined the term "integral ecology" to mark the church's vision of linking social and ecological justice. Francis visited the Amazon region in 2018, calling it "the lungs of the planet." Nonetheless, in 2019, 76,000 fires burned in the Amazon, an increase of 80 per cent, to make way for increased planting of export crops, mining, hydro dams and illegal logging. Residents of Boreal forest lands in Canada also confront similar challenges of adapting to climate change, forest fires and extractive industries.

Press reports highlighted other issues: the synod fathers voted overwhelmingly in favour of increased roles for women and ordaining lay men ministering in communities without priests, and the loud opposition of traditional, conservative Catholics to the synod and to Francis.

Fr. Mark Slatter told the symposium how this synod challenged us to five areas of conversion: personal conversion of lifestyle, pastoral conversion to modify the discipline of celibacy in ministerial leadership, cultural conversion to reject colonialist blind spots, ecological conversion evoking examination of our "ecological sins," and synodal conversion from hierarchical control.

Such challenges evoke heartfelt responses from missionaries and all people of faith – well beyond the Amazon region!

*(Joe Gunn worked in Latin America for seven years and is now director of the Centre Oblat: A Voice for Justice. Recordings of the Symposium, highlighting the interventions of Cardinal Barreto and three respondents, can be viewed on the OMI Lacombe YouTube channel.)*



People praying

# Pilgrimage to Mexico

BY ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS SYLVAIN LAVOIE, OMI

EDMONTON – A November pilgrimage to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico seemed a natural extension of the developing activity of the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton.

Relying on his relationship with former parishioners in Pelican Narrows, SK, new pastor Susai Jesu, OMI, made this pilgrimage happen, with some help from me as co-chaplain, and the expertise of Maria Drucco of Marianatha Tours, who organized the pilgrimage.

After a midnight arrival in Mexico City, our mixed group of 29 pilgrims experienced a tremendous first day, beginning at the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

We celebrated the Eucharist in the Antigua Parroquia

de Indios Chapel, toured the grounds, prayed at Templo del Tepeyac where St. Juan Diego received the roses from Our Lady, stepped onto moving sidewalks to view the miraculous Tilma of Guadalupe created by Our Lady, and meditated in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

Then we journeyed to Teotihuacan, where some of us climbed the Pyramid of the Sun, built by the Teotihuacan Indigenous peoples and taken over by the Aztecs, who practised human sacrifice there. We prayed for all the intentions we brought at both sacred sites.

On the second day, we went to Tlatelolco, where Juan Diego was baptized, where he would come daily for catechism and Latin classes, and where he brought roses to the bishop. The pre-colonial temple here was destroyed and the material was used to build the first colonial church, so typical of colonization around the world.

A highlight was celebrating the Eucharist at the Oblate parish of El Senora del Guadalupita with Fr. Gilberto Pinon from Cuba, who was giving the local Oblates a retreat, and

Group mass at the Church of San Miguel del Milagro







The Tilma

Br. Abraham, who had spent part of his formation at Sacred Heart Church in Edmonton. Following that we visited the Church of Sacrada Familia and the Museum of Fr. Miquel Pro, who was martyred during the anti-Catholic phase of Mexico's history. We closed the day with a visit to the 16th century churches of San Juan Bautista and Santa Catalina in the city of Coyoacan.

The rest of the pilgrimage included a visit to

Tlaxcala, where we were amazed at the Church of San Miguel del Milagro bursting with decorations of fresh flowers, and visits to the markets, plazas and churches in Ocatlan and Pueblo.

The Pyramid of the Sun



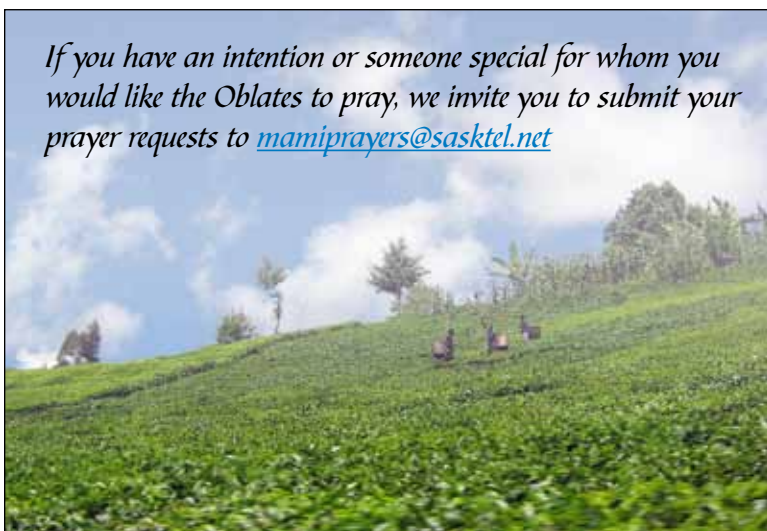
Fr. Susai remained behind for a few more days with the Oblates in Mexico City, where he walked back to the shrine and got to know Mexico City at the street level.

The pilgrimage for us all was a time of growing in faith, as well as gaining a deeper awareness of the maternal love of Mary, our spiritual mother who is also Our Lady of the Americas, and who showed God's love especially for the poor and the marginalized, appearing as she did to a humble peasant and speaking his language.

Words cannot really describe what one feels upon viewing the tilma, a cloak upon which the Virgin's image is imprinted. It is made of guava fibre, should have deteriorated after 30 years, was unprotected for the first 130 years, and bears an image science cannot explain.

The faith of the people is very moving, as we witnessed a procession of faithful walk by our hotel, and others making their way to the front of some churches on their knees, praying out loud regardless of what else was going on in the church. We returned home more humble and more appreciative of the priceless gift of faith we have been given and saw expressed so vividly in architecture, artistry and worship in Mexico.

*If you have an intention or someone special for whom you would like the Oblates to pray, we invite you to submit your prayer requests to [mamiprayers@sasktel.net](mailto:mamiprayers@sasktel.net)*



# A lesson in faith

BY PHELIX JOHYA, OMI

NAIROBI – When I joined Oblate formation as a postulant in March, 2011, Fr. Alfred Groleau taught us a song that we used to sing and feel good about: *“Faith believes nor questions how...”*

That was familiar only in a song, but changed for me in June when I accompanied Fr. Daquin, OMI, for a mass at the home of Florence Kanario Kiambi. Florence was suffering from cancer, her feet were swollen, she struggled to walk and her speech was fading even though she appeared strong. After mass she said, *“Father, the evil one has been overwhelmed by the power of mass.”*

A few days later Fr. Daquin left for Congo for his home leave and Fr. Faustin, OMI, came to act on his behalf.

One Sunday morning Christine, a close friend to Florence and a member of our Irinda Parish, stopped to see Florence on her way to mass. Florence’s house is just a few metres from the church. She found Florence’s health was deteriorating. The only thing she could do was to pray for her and, on her arrival at church, asked Fr. Faustin to remember Florence at mass, a request Fr. Faustin granted faithfully and joyfully.

On Monday morning, Fr. Faustin asked me to accompany him to visit Florence in her house and possibly anoint and give her the Body of Christ. *“Oh Yes Father!”* I said.

I called Christine to inform her and ask her to let Florence know that we were visiting her later in the day. On our arrival we found her seated, her swollen legs held on another chair, her friend

Phelix renews his vows



Christine there with her. Fr. Faustin initiated conversation with Florence and after about half an hour Fr. Faustin asked Florence if she was ready to receive the sacraments of the Anointing of the Sick and the Holy Eucharist.

"Yes!" she said.

Fr. Faustin continued, "Florence, do you know in the olden days and even now there are people who believe that if one receives the sacrament of the anointing of the sick that person is likely to die?"

*"I know that Father, I believe and trust in the will of God. He is the master of all, He is able to heal me or take me to be with him, I am ready I am ready. May his will be done."* After a joyful conversation, Florence received the two sacraments and you could easily see the joy in her face.

I was touched the following Sunday when Christine presented Florence's contribution of 9,000 Kenyan shillings (about \$100) towards the completion of the parish church. Florence's faith challenged me, that even on her deathbed she still gave herself for Christ and the church.

How many times do I find baseless excuses to try to avoid my Christian responsibility? Florence's experience is an example of the true witness we are called to live as Christians sharing in the salvific mission of Christ. A Christian should not find any excuse not to partake in the mission of Christ for that is what we, as Christians, are called to do.

Florence succumbed to cancer at Kiirua Mission Hospital. I was moved to tears on seeing her remains, especially having journeyed with her during her last days. We laid her to rest with Fr. Cosmas, OMI, celebrating his first funeral mass.



Phelix Johya, OMI

# A lesson in perseverance

BY ELIAS MWANGI KIMANI

NAIROBI – As the day drew near, my heart grew weary because I thought I had really waited for too long. I kept on asking myself, “what if something bad happens to me before the long-awaited day!” Thanks be to God, the day finally dawned and I was on my way to Méru, Kenya, to begin my discernment journey with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Feb. 1, 2016, was the most special day in my life indeed!

As a young boy, I’m not sure if I really wanted to be a religious or rather a priest. In fact, I don’t remember at any time saying to my teacher that: “I want to be a priest when I grow up.” As usual and very common to children, especially here in Kenya, I wanted to be a pilot, doctor, engineer, etc. However, at one point in my life, I think my dream came true as I became an “engineer.” Hold on, I will explain this later!

When I attained school age, I was enrolled at a local primary school. Most of our classrooms had neither doors nor windows and, therefore, we had to get used to the morning cold as early as age five. The floors were not cemented so we had to carry water to school every day to pour to reduce dust inside the classrooms. Within no time, one would get used to this life, and after all we had no other option.

My Dad was working as a “matatu” driver [small minivans] and so he played his part well as a



Elias 1988



bread winner. The worst happened when he lost his job due to gambling, as he would confess later after his “conversion”.

Mothers are always caring, and so my mother took up the responsibility of taking care of the family which was not easy. I have two brothers and two sisters and I am the third born. After primary school, my younger sister and I (who was one year behind me), were admitted to a local secondary school. Another misfortune befell my family when my mother cut her hand as she was cutting grass for the cows. It was so serious that she remained under treatment for six months. This was 2004, and to date, one of her fingers is still curved. Proceeding with my studies became a struggle. Even the poor people in the village would identify us as “the poor family!” I would sneak into the classroom having paid not a penny. I suffered humiliations!

In 2007, I was lucky to be registered for the national exam. The registration is done at the beginning of the year. One day I was helping my mother in the garden because I had not gone

Elias as a mechanic





Elias talking to students

to school for an obvious reason: school fees! I remember we were happily talking when suddenly our joy turned to tears. She slipped, fell on the ground, and broke her leg. I can't explain the feeling. I cried like a small baby.

I had missed many classes but I was lucky to do the National Exam. By this time, I had strongly felt the inner desire to serve God. However, I had this one condition that if I don't pass my exams, then I would know that God is not calling me. After all, my priest had said God does not call fools and illiterates. And truly speaking, "God cannot call you and fail to give you the necessary requirements!"

When the results were announced, I was now sure that I am not called. I had scored below average (a better term to use than the word poor!). I had to think on what to do next because life had to continue.

One Thursday afternoon in 2008, after Easter celebrations, I went to our neighbour and borrowed a travelling bag. I had decided this was the best opportunity to leave because I was alone at home. I left a written note because I had no phone and went to start a new life in Thika town, about 30 kilometres away.

I joined my brother who had become a successful motor vehicle mechanic, though I did not live in his house. He was shocked to see me. I started working with him as I learned some skills in mechanics, or more commonly referred to as engineering (a more pleasing term!). My dream to be an engineer came true. I can't explain the amount of struggles I went through. However, I chose to stay and persevere.

After five years of struggle and hard work, I was able to save some money. I went home with surprising news.

"Dad!" I called, "I have good news to..." but before I could finish, he quickly interrupted, "Are you getting married?" It was a typical African man's question indeed!

"I want to go back to school," said I. He just left me and went to sleep after asking me my age as if he did not know I was 24 years. The following day, he told me that it was up to me. His words sounded kind for I had received tough words from him before, especially every time I would talk of my aspirations.

Elias's parents solemnize their marriage



I had saved 70,000 Kenyan Shillings (approximately \$700). I knew this would be enough to buy the required items for school and pay some school fees. I was ready to take a risk. I had chosen a boarding school because I wanted a serene place where I would be able to concentrate on my studies. I used all the money I had to buy the required items, which were extremely expensive, and I managed to pay half of the money required for school fees per term. I was sure that I would be sent back home for school fees, even before the term ended. In the Kenyan system of education, one

academic year begins in January and ends in November, and has three terms in the primary and secondary levels.

The new life at school was not easy in the beginning. Besides being advanced in age compared to my classmates, I had stayed for too long outside formal education, and worse still, the syllabus had changed. I had decided to go back for two years to give myself enough time to make up my mind.

In Kenya, teachers' and students' strikes are very common. The year 2013, when I went back to school, was no exception. We spent the better part of our time in the first term at home because the teachers went on strike for five weeks. The second term was the same and the students protested in the third term, burning down some of the school facilities.

This led to some changes at school. First, the school had to close earlier than usual, and second the student council had to change. I was chosen as the student leader (school president) and the chairperson of the Association of Catholic Students. It was not easy to reconcile the two: studies and leadership.



Elias in school in 2013



Fortunately, after realizing how determined and firm I was in the decision I had made, my family chipped in and helped me in my studies by paying school fees and, therefore, my final year was not as big a challenge.

In 2014 I sat my National Exam, just like seven years previously. After the release of the results in 2015, I could not hide my joy knowing that my hard work and perseverance had paid off! My family members joined me in thanking God for granting me success.

My father was delighted. When I successfully went back to school in 2013, my dad went back to church. I had not seen him go to church since I was a child, so Apr. 21, 2013, was a special day for us all to see him at church.

In 2015, after the release of the exam results, my parents solemnized their marriage in a colourful wedding. That same year I received a reply letter from the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Méru formation house, confirming my admission to the postulancy the following year. I have now started my novitiate program at Our Lady of Peace in South Africa.

I would like to offer a big thank you to God and to those who continue to support us here.



## 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/](http://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.



# Oblate

## NOTEBOOK



### A GOOD NEWS STORY

*From Br. Harley Mapes:*

I lost my wallet while walking in downtown Ottawa one evening ... my credit card, health card, licence, cash. I realized it was missing and went back to the store where I had been but they hadn't seen it.

It was depressing walking home, thinking about how much it was going to take to get everything replaced.

I got to the house and there was a police cruiser outside.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Harley"

"I have your wallet."

I told him that things like that only happen in movies.

Someone found it, gave it to him; he found my address in the wallet and drove over to the house.

God is good! And so was the unknown woman who found it and the Ottawa policeman who drove to the house with it.

Harley Mapes, OMI



## MAMI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MAMI's new board of directors is comprised of Oblates Ken Thorson, OMI, Richard Beaudette, OMI, and Harley Mapes, OMI.



Ken Thorson, OMI



Richard Beaudette, OMI



Harley Mapes, OMI

## OBLATE YOUTH ENCOUNTER

If you know a young person, aged 15 – 35, who would be interested in a five-day encounter with youth from Canada and the United States, have them contact Justyna for more information at [Oblateyouthcanada@gmail.com](mailto:Oblateyouthcanada@gmail.com). The encounter takes place July 13 – 17, 2020, at the national shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois.

Highlights include powerful speakers; moving praise and worship; spiritual growth and new friendships.

## 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)**



# Kenya

## NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

### OCT. 12

NAIROBI – My challenge from God this week was a “boy” at the gate. Apparently Fr. Alfred assisted him in 2011 with a mattress and helped him get through high school. He was begging for assistance for exam fees to complete his tertiary technical training.

On the first day, Fr. Faustin met with him for some time and eventually gave him \$10. The next day he was back but no one attended to him. The following next day it was my turn as I returned from morning masses. I arranged for Br. Magambo to take some breakfast to him.

He did not have identification and his school papers had been through the wash. Eventually, after I became a little annoyed with him, he went off to dry his official papers and obtain a police abstract for his lost ID. Later, I asked Raymond to leave a little food at the gate for his return after lunch.



Gerry Conlan, OMI



Postulant Matthew  
gardening at Kisaju



Fr. Greg Oszust at the Kisaju tank stand

When Boniface reported the boy had returned several hours later, I asked Boniface to give the lad the necessary \$20, and tell him the mission had exhausted its school support funds, but that the students all chipped in from pocket money. I didn't want word to get out that a "white" man was helping at the gate.

The boy started insisting for another \$10, but Boniface was able to talk to him and eventually he said thanks and moved on. It's very difficult to work out who is genuine and who is not. But he was a good example of "persistence in prayer," which was one of our gospels this week.

Sadly, Gerard, our pre-novice, decided to leave this week, feeling that he was not strong enough in academics. He was certainly not pushed, but I was surprised he left before finishing studies in December. Still, it is also a healthy sign to the others that it is no disgrace to decide to leave. This is the fruit of discernment and prayer. We now have six pre-novices, but

three are preparing to enter novitiate should they get approved by our leadership in Canada.

On Monday, I took Fr. Greg Oszust recently arrived from Canada, to the Kisaju postulancy community where he led mass and I preached. Greg and I later returned to Karen and I took him to the bank to set up a petty cash account so he doesn't have to carry much cash.

## OCT. 17

Fr. Gideon and I met about the purchase of Korompoi land for the new prayer centre at Kisaju. We thank God for the support from Canada because this will be an important centre for the parish. Many parishioners were going to Kitengela instead of Kisaju, and the area is developing with lots of new middle-class housing.

## OCT. 31

With great excitement we saw the water pumping out of the new borehole at Kisaju Parish. This has been a bit of a marathon finding the funds, finding a reliable borehole hydrogeologist, getting co-operation from Kenya Power and Lighting (they made us wait two months to be served, then another six-month wait after paying the connection fees). We thank God it is a big borehole – 20,000 litres per hour. Not that we will use that, but it is good for the future.

Locals collect water during the 24-hour pump test for the Kisaju bore hole





At Kiirua farm, Fr. Daquin and manager Euticus arranged for 2,500 tree seedlings (eucalyptus) to be planted where many died in 2018 when the rains suddenly stopped for two weeks. We also purchased and planted 3,000 tree seedlings (oak, pine and grevillea) to start a new section of two acres. We have almost 10 acres planted with trees since 2015. Hopefully they will help the environment and start giving us a nice annual bonus from 2023.



Planting trees at Kiirua farm

Because I went shopping several times, I was able to give my usual friends a lift at 6 a.m. along the southern bypass. They always enjoy a candy as they get out. Speaking of which, it's been a heavy week on the sweets front with almost two large packets handed out as tokens of appreciation to gate guards, bank tellers, shop attendants, etc.

New parish St. Joseph the Worker Larmudiac in Nakuru County



## NOV. 17

There was much excitement as Fr. Faustin left Karen to start a temporary six-month ministry at the new parish of St. Joseph the Worker Larmudiac Parish in Nakuru County.

I was very happy to hear about celebrations in Indonesia last week. Fr. Charlie Burrows, OMI, celebrated 50 years of priesthood and about 45 years working in the mission there. There were amazing tributes given to him by the local leaders (Muslim) and several joined in the mass as a sign of inter-faith religious tolerance and respect. We thank God for the good harmonious relations in that country.

I am happy Fr. Greg Oszust is here as he seems to have been injected with the handyman virus.

The lonely life of a treasurer: I keep asking for money from our parishes but nobody is responding. It's been a tough week with the Tropical Mint sweets. I've exhausted my stockpile and must find a shop that sells them for a fair price.



Fr. Vong enjoys special Asian vegetables grown in Kenya

## NOV. 24

We were happy to welcome home Deacon Joseph Nzioka, OMI, from South Africa where he completed his studies and took final vows in August.

One of the highlights of the week was the Don Bosco Boystown Graduation. After two years, our



Stephen Muthomi graduates from Don Bosco Boystown

young friend Stephen graduated in electrical and solar installations. Three mini-vans came from Kionyo parish to witness and celebrate for Stephen. He expressed his gratitude to the Oblates for assisting him. We thank God and now start praying he gets a job!

Fr. Faustin is enjoying his time at Nakuru, where he celebrates two or three masses every day. But we are missing his presence here in Karen. Still, St. Eugene would say we have too many priests at Karen!

## NOV. 30

I was happy to collect our newest mission member from the airport: Fr. Jean-Pierre, OMI, from Senegal. He was ordained in 2018 and his obedience is to Kenya. We thank God for more manpower. Unfortunately he needs to go to Tanzania with Fr. Greg for five months to learn Kiswahili, so we need to wait six months for the extra 'horsepower' to kick in.

I've been in 'crises' for two weeks without my supply of tropical mints. I was waiting for Br. Phelix to bring some from Méru, but the prices there also jumped. This week I was happy to find a wholesaler and picked up a carton of 12 packets for an excellent price.

## DEC. 7

I've escaped the floods and fairly constant rain in Nairobi this week to attend a finance meeting in Rome. The good thing about the heavy rains is the testing of our building. We



Fr. Gerry in a shirt  
he received as a gift



Fr. Greg enjoys cake during the feast of the Immaculate Conception

discovered a few small issues with electrical conduits feeding water into the walls and floors.

The Karen Community joined Kisaju Community to celebrate the Immaculate Conception Feast, and some of our Nairobi Youth teamed up with another group and visited a children's home to encourage them.

## DEC. 14

I arrived safely in Rome for a finance meeting and spent a few days catching up on work from Kenya. The Kenyan scholastics, Moses and Charles, took me shopping around the Vatican. We had a great time spending money for the new chapel in Karen, buying figures for a crib, thurible and boat, Stations of the Cross, and so on.

St. Stephens youth group visits a children's home





## DEC. 21

As we started a new week in Kenya, I was sad to read about all the fires throughout Australia. And they seem to have become worse. Our prayers and thoughts are with all those affected and we thank God for the brave fire-fighters doing their best to protect properties.



Tires placed in the septic soak pit for the Karen residence

## DEC. 28

In the mission I heard that all went well over Christmas in our parishes. Frs. Pascal and Eugene (DR Congo) spent Christmas in our new parish in Nakuru – Larmudiac. Fr. Joachim spent Christmas in our Méru Irinda Parish. Fr. Jean-Pierre spent Christmas in Kionyo at St Stephen's parish. In Karen, Frs. Greg, Cosmas, Fidel and myself were busy helping out at the sisters, the Nyumbani Children's Home and the prison.

On Boxing Day, Fr. Fidel and I went shopping for fridges, cookers and washing machines. There were some good value Christmas sales, so we were happy with good quality and good prices.



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**Communications  
Coordinators:**

John and Emily Cherneski  
lacombemissions@yahoo.ca

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