

# Oblate Spirit

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI



*September 2020*



*All Souls' Day*

# The 100-per-cent promise

How do you take something that is very good and make it much better?



That is a question with which we at MAMI (Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate) have been wrestling for several months. And now we can proudly say, the best is yet to come!

AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI is the primary fund-raising organization of the Oblate mission works and ministries of the OMI Lacombe Canada Province. Our MAMI supporters will be familiar with the many projects funded, from water projects in Kenya to basic homes in Peru; from prison ministry for men and women, to beds and blankets for those most in need; from soup kitchens to Christmas dinners; the list could go on and on.

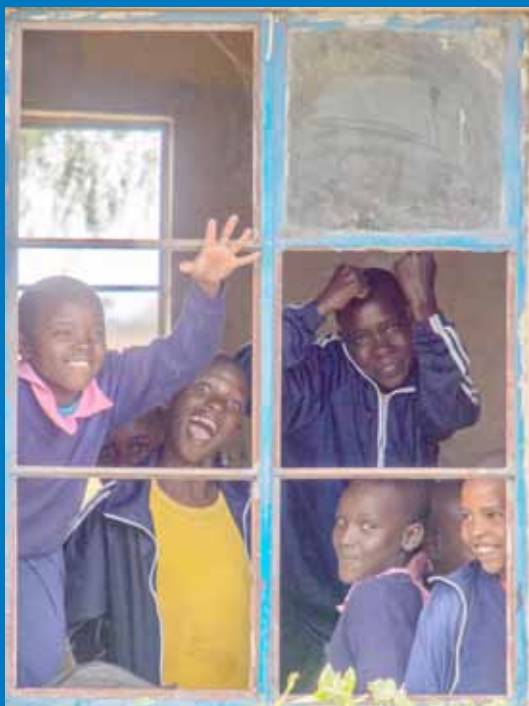
The Oblate missions in Canada and especially those we support around the world rely heavily on the generous donations of MAMI members. These donations change the lives and empower so many of the poor in developing countries.

The Province of OMI Lacombe Canada depends greatly on MAMI to help provide as much as possible in order to respond to the many needs of the poor. That is the missionary spirit at its best.

In an effort to maximize the assistance to those most in need, OMI Lacombe Canada Province has decided to fund all of MAMI's operating expenses so that every last penny of every dollar you give will go entirely to the mission works and ministries of the Oblates.

In past years, the costs that included printing and mailing of *Oblate Spirit*, administration fees, accounting, rent, bank

*Every cent  
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charges, equipment, communication, office supplies and more were factored into MAMI donations. Last year, for example, \$1,548,048.71 was donated to MAMI. The cost of fund-raising was \$295,690.98, or 19.06 per cent of the total.

Going back to Jan. 1 of this year, that has dramatically changed. Every penny that passed (passes) through MAMI this year and going forward will find its way to those you, our donors, choose to support, be it here in Canada or elsewhere in the world.

It is our hope that you will respond generously to help improve the spiritual, emotional and physical lives of the poor that we support.

Yes, it is our hope that the best is yet to come ... for all of us!

*John and Emily Cherneski*  
*Communications Coordinators*

# All Souls' Day

The picture we chose for our cover is of Marcos Guerra, the long-time faithful assistant of Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI, (pictured below). Marcos recently died from complications of COVID-19 in Peru. We will pray for Marcos on All Souls' Day (Nov. 2). We invite you to send us the names of your deceased loved ones on the prayer card enclosed in this mailing for a special mass that will be said for them by Fr. Ken Forster.





David and Karen Sax, along with their daughter Marieka, visited Marcos and Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI

# The loss of a good friend

**BY DAVID SAX, OBLATE ASSOCIATE**

Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI, our friend and long-standing Oblate missionary in Chincha Alta, Peru, informed us that Marcos Guerra, his close friend and assistant in the mission with the poor, died of complications from COVID-19 at the age of 61. The death of Marcos is a great loss to Teresa, his wife of 36 years, their six children and nine grandchildren.

Brother Blaise deeply misses this dear man who was both a great friend and an assistant in service to the poor. He had introduced my family to Marcos when we came to Chincha Alta for a short visit. Blaise told us several stories of his friend who had a big heart, strong hands and warm smile.

Marcos Guerra Avalos was the lone son of a poor family of



six and grew up helping his parents make ends meet by assisting them in the market. At the age of 17 he began volunteering and eventually joining the Peruvian Air Force, becoming a mechanic in the air force for 35 years.

He was also a stalwart servant in his local Catholic parish where he prepared children for first communion and catechism for 27 years, including helping three young men studying for the priesthood and a young woman who entered religious life. Marcos was, according to Blaise, "loved by many and had all the spiritual qualities that a Catholic should have."

While working in the air force, Marcos met Brother Blaise in 1981. He volunteered to look after the parish vehicles and eventually the mission truck used by Blaise to move materials to various building sites.

Once retired, Marcos volunteered to assist Blaise to organize work crews and the transportation of gravel and building materials. The gravel was hand dug and loaded on the truck in the immense gravel pit that has been the source of making cement bricks for building homes for the poor.

Marcos and crew deliver mattresses



Marcos's daughter Janet Guerra wrote that Brother Blaise would come many weekends to their home for breakfast and a time of sharing faith with Marcos, often at a day's end of work.

"My father identified with him (Blaise) and with Oblates here in Peru and he worked with Christ's uniform, helping poor people," said Janet.

Blaise titled his memories "More a Son Than a Friend" and summed up by saying, "I miss him so!"

Marcos Guerra was a man close to his family, close to the poor and close to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. His legacy of Oblate spirit lives on in his family and the willingness of his son, Santiago, who has taken up his father's mission service with Brother Blaise.

# 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)**



Marcos Guerra and crew at work in the gravel pit

# A blessed 42 years in Peru

**BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI**

CHINCHA ALTA, Peru – It has been an amazing 42 years for us in Peru.

Since 1978, your generosity has helped us build 1,500 small houses. We constructed four large rooms for teaching Catechism and 12 good-sized chapels.

Many schools have benefited from your support, with better classrooms, toilets, concrete floors, and improved facilities for sports and physical exercise for the children.

There are now two large parish halls, 123 metres by 30 metres in size. You have helped build our parish church, all the offices and extra rooms for different groups like the Legion of Mary, the choir groups, a room for the altar girls and boys, coffee shops, and four large rooms for meetings of parish activities.

Civic institutions have also been improved. Local firefighters now have sleeping quarters, the police building has a barracks for young officers, there is a home for the elderly, while



school groups and university students have been helped with different projects.

Many in need have been helped with 740 beds and mattresses, and we visited 20 schools where we shared 5,000 warm blankets with the children.

Over this time we were able to build 22 clean running-water projects for thousands of families, gave work to many men in the gravel pit, helped two groups of drug addicts in the construction of their centre and helped to educate some girls and boys who today are professionals in their fields.

We built most of the new parish retreat centre and a sports complex for soccer, volleyball and basketball.

During these years we hand-made close to 5,000,000 bricks, both adobe and concrete-oven. The adobe bricks weigh a little over nine kilos (20 pounds) while the concrete ones weigh a little over five kilos. A truck load of adobe weighs 4,617 kilos while a truck load of concrete bricks weighs 5,252 kilos.

The truck that we still use is a flat-bottom box and ideal for the work that we do (with thanks to the Peruvian government for their vital donation toward our works). The Nissan truck

Preparing a sports surface





Sports surface ready for blessing

has been used for more than 30 years and is still in good running order because we take good care of it.

We Oblates have a gravel pit that we consider a gold mine, because it provides us with an abundance of materials for our building projects. Because of this pit we are also able to sell some of the material and the money goes back into the building projects.

In 2005, a man donated four cement mixers to our works and these machines are still operating today. Two of the mixers are used in actual construction while the other two are used for the making of bricks.

Because of COVID-19, our works have come to a stop. Once this is over, I hope to go to some of the poor schools in the area where there are many needs. I personally like to work in the schools because one is close to the teacher, the parents and, of course, the students, which is just great for evangelization!

So my dear friends, this is some of what your Oblate missionary is doing, and all of this because of YOU! Thank you and God bless.

# Families in distress

BY DAQUIN IYO IYAN, OMI

MÉRU, Kenya – While adhering to the government's strict measures against the spread of the pandemic, we remain close to, and journey with, the people entrusted to our pastoral care. What we physically experience, see and hear from families around us is that COVID-19 has caused serious livelihood vulnerabilities, especially food insecurity. Here we share some echoes from three families.

The impact of COVID-19 on people within Irinda-Gachanka community is real, felt and it is demanding us to be ever visible by way of expressing our closeness to the people we serve who are affected by the pandemic, especially the poor, the weakest and the most vulnerable.

Annicleta, a mother of two girls, is a widow who lives on a small piece of land with her two daughters. They are our parishioners, members of Gachanka Prayer House. Before the

Fr. Daquin has breakfast with Annicleta and her daughters



## KENYA COVID-19 UPDATE

coronavirus outbreak, she did casual work to sustain her family, but movement restrictions due to the spread of COVID-19 have immobilized her.

"I am fixed and breathless," she said, her face expressing helplessness and desperation. Our breakfast with her and her children, and our listening to their story, was an opportunity for the community to not only discover how much they are struggling, but to share in their vulnerability.

Annicleta, a widow and orphan, was already struggling before the outbreak of COVID-19 to care for her children, but the virus has covered them with a shadow of uncertainty. They appreciated our outstretched hand through the sharing of Sunday breakfast and some little money for food.

Catechist Frank Mwenda and I visited Sarah, an 82-year-

Fr. Daquin and catechist Frank Mwenda visit Sarah and her family





old who is the guardian of two boys and a little girl, her orphan grandchildren. She lives about one kilometre from our community.

Sarah was full of excitement when she saw us standing in front of her small, simple wooden house. We discovered how difficult this pandemic time is for her. She can't move outside of her home because of the information she has that aged people are the most vulnerable to COVID-19.

In addition, she has limitations imposed by old age that reduce her ability to cater for the daily upkeep of her grandchildren, and she becomes engulfed in worries when she cannot control their movements to ensure their safety.

Sarah thanked us for visiting and bringing filled shopping bags to somewhat relieve the suffering.

Kathambi and M'Mbijiwe are an advanced aged couple, members of our Gachanka Prayer House. They lost their land that was grabbed by someone else, and the case is still in court awaiting trial. They live in a small wooden house provided by a good Samaritan, but their situation is appalling.

Both are faced with health issues and a lack of food, and are no longer receiving assistance frequently given by their neighbours because of the challenges the neighbours are also now facing.

Our visit was a response to their lack of food during this painful time. Kathambi, who was left behind while her husband was taken to hospital for treatment, thanked and blessed us for the food we offered and wished us well.



Fr. Daquin and catechist  
Frank Mwenda visit  
Kathambi and her family



# The impact of coronavirus

BY FAUSTIN LITANDA, OMI

NAAKURU, Kenya – We have many vulnerable and poor people among our Christians who have been seriously affected by this pandemic in Larmudiac Parish. Following are five cases in the parish and how we are trying to handle them.

Mzee Patrick Koros and his wife Pauline Njoki are elderly farmers. Their only son and his wife died in a road accident and left behind two children that they care for. Travel has been restricted because of COVID-19, so he cannot sell his farm produce to provide for the children. The parish assists the family as much as possible. The two girls are expected to go back to school next year and present future financial difficulties for the family.

Pamela Wambui is a mother of two. The father of the children has disappeared, making it difficult for her to provide for the children and send them to school. Before the pandemic she was washing peoples' clothes, but now nobody is accepting outsiders to enter their homes, so she has no work. Pamela is 35 years old but looks older because of the stress in her life and inability to sustain herself and the children. They only trust and believe in God.

Angela Wanjiru Kariuki and Lucia Nduta are orphans and live like birds since they don't have parents who can take care of them. They eat thanks to good Samaritans. One of our parishioners is giving them shelter for sleep. Angela and Lucia depend on God's providence and generous people to survive. The reality of school is just a faraway dream.

Rose became pregnant when she was still in school, and

the young man's family declined responsibility for the child. Rose's dreams cannot be fulfilled, but she is still hoping for a better life. Because the baby is only three months old, Rose cannot do any job until the baby will be strong enough to stay at home while she looks for work. We pray God opens doors for Rose and her baby.

There is an elderly couple without children, so they have no family to care for them. Because of the pandemic, those who helped the couple have stopped doing so because they are also facing challenges. Many have lost work. As a parish we are trying our best to assist them, though we are also facing challenges due to the pandemic.

We are seeing many more cases like these because of the pandemic. We pray that God help protect them and touch the hearts of those that can help the poor and marginalized.

### 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.



# Kenya

## NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

### MAY 23

NAIROBI – We are all well and somehow trying to be productive. In a conversation with Br. Frank (Christian Bros.) in the Kwa Ruben slum area, their school and medical centre are trying to provide food for 300,000 people in the slum area. They are not yet receiving any food from the government to assist. However, a kind wealthy man from a Hindu temple in Westlands is providing a big chunk of help to them. We thank God.



Gerry Conlan, OMI

Br. Frank also mentioned the government is doing a lot of development work in the slum area, which is good and bad. The roads are improving, but some houses are being destroyed. The man in charge is ex-air force, a no-nonsense helicopter pilot. But he is impressed with the Ruben centre and set up his office there with Br. Frank. Hopefully that helps avoid any damage to the Ruben Centre.

I called up Sr. Julie at Nyumbani Children's Home and they are all doing well, but their village outside Nairobi has a challenge: most people are not working and need help with



Collins maintaining guard dog kennel



Catholic mens' association from Méru parish gathers at a local farm

food (just a mere 1,500 families). Thank God they have a good support network around the world. On our side we employed our former cook's sons for a bit of manual labour to let them put food on the table.

## MAY 30

Kenya is slowly increasing in the number of confirmed cases – like 100 per day for the last week. Tanzania has opened up and declared the pandemic is under control and we must get the economy moving again.

During the week we celebrated the Feast of Blessed Joseph Gerard, a French Oblate sent to South Africa in 1853 as a deacon and who never returned home before his death in 1914. The Oblates try to promote our internationality wherever we are, as a way of showing the local community that many cultures can live in harmony if we are united by the love of God.

So, it struck me that we created a new definition of internationality: celebrating mass for an African Oblate saint (the Apostle of Lesotho) who was born in France, at a mass led



Fr. Vông and Fr. Kambanda  
celebrate Feast of Blessed  
Joseph Gerard

by a Vietnamese Oblate (Fr. Nguyen Vông) and preached by a new Oblate priest from Namibia (Fr. Petrus Kambanda), while celebrating with Oblate missionaries from Kenya, DR Congo, Chad, Namibia and Australia!

## JUNE 6

I was pleasantly surprised to receive a refund of \$20 this week from a youth member who asked for a travel loan last week. He had promised to repay, but often they don't! But one day they will, I'm sure. I call this seed money for growing MAMI in Kenya.

## JUNE 13

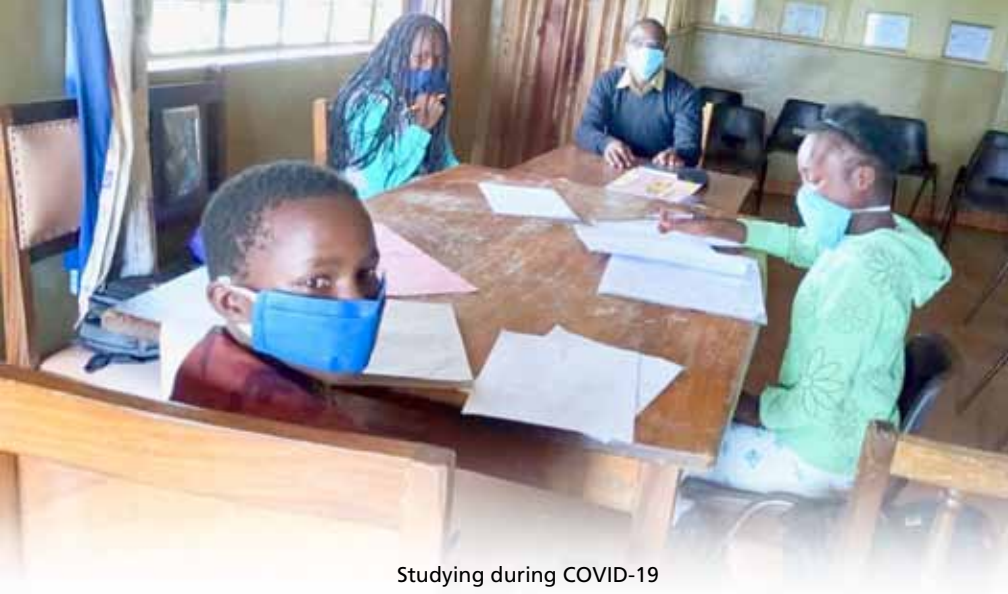
We've been following the news around Africa with some concern for the people in poorer countries. Around Kenya the cases are also increasing, but deaths are very few so far.

On a happier note, we prayed for Fr. Dionisius as he defended his master's thesis in youth studies. He happily reported that he had passed. Now, we look forward to some super-duper youth ministry in Kisaju Parish and beyond!

Fr. Daquin maintaining the banana plantation he started a few years ago







Studying during COVID-19

## JUNE 20

Well, the weather is getting a little colder – but nothing like Canada in winter! Sadly, COVID-19 cases are increasing every day, mainly because we suddenly have test kits. But, we thank God the number of deaths is very, very low.

The lockdown continues and all our parishes and Oblates appear to be doing well. Of more concern is the plight of poor people in the slum areas of Nairobi and even Méru. We are happy that Fr. Daquin is being active in organizing a support package for about 100 families in Méru slum.

We happily remembered Fr. Greg Oszust's 25th anniversary. He's still in Arusha, Tanzania, learning Kiswahili. He is staying with the Christian Brothers in Arusha, practising mass in Kiswahili and dialoguing with their students.



## JUNE 27

The Oblates, our parishioners and youth seem to be OK, with no negative reports

Celebrating a small mass  
in Larmudiac parish

so far. A big support package for each of our four parishes is really taking the stress off the pastoral teams and the people. They are still very attentive to make sure some food donations are made to their Oblates each week.

The youth are doing a fantastic job helping the families in Mathare slums, here in Nairobi. One of the young fellows was lost for words when he tried to describe the situation in the slums. He had to take a deep breath. I guess it shows they have good hearts. Rather than wait for donations to arrive, I advanced them the value of \$500. They distributed food to almost 50 families and gave emergency rent assistance to 10 of the single mothers with kids. Two have HIV, so they struggle more than most.

Fr. Daquin has been busy in Méru, distributing the parish support aid to families in the Méru slums. He's helping 200 families.

## JULY 4

We're still alive and kicking over here. All Oblates and parishioners are well, at least that is what we hear! As usual during the lockdown, I dropped off a homily and sweets to three convents on Sunday before ploughing through some administration work for the rest of the day.

I was able to help



George giving "ugali" flour and cooking oil to a single mother in the Mathare slum



Collins and George distribute food to a single mother in the Mathare slum



Kiirua farm manager Euticus checks the recently planted pine trees

out a few of the Nairobi youth who needed a boost. Three months without work hurts.

## JULY 11

We have thrived during this last week with various activities and encounters. Thankfully, the lockdown ended for Nairobi metropolitan area and people can move out and in from around the country. After three weeks the situation will be reviewed to see if the lockdown should return. So many people are doing what they need to before that happens.

I was touched this week when Euticus, our farm manager, sent me US\$10 as a donation saying he knows I'm helping others and wanted to "help" as well.

I don't want to embarrass a lovely woman in Canada who is battling cancer, but I want her to know she is much appreciated over here in Kenya, especially by the children at Marimba with Mama Rita. So please know we are thinking of, and praying, for you.

## JULY 18

My blood pressure is up (never had this before), and I'm trying to sleep more and be less busy. I'm not sure whether



Farm manager Euticus and a contractor trim the gum trees and thin out the plantation to improve tree yield

God is trying to slow me down to smell the roses or if it's the normal aging process. It's a good excuse to try and sleep earlier and take more breaks. My blood sodium level is low, so I hope that means I can resume eating my favourite snacks (chips). The Doctor said 50 per cent of men over 50 take

blood pressure pills, but I'd rather not. I have trouble remembering to turn on my brain, let alone take a tablet every day.

The Oblates are doing well, but the youth are still trying to find work. The lockdown has ended and businesses are trying to open. Unfortunately, the number of COVID-19 cases has jumped dramatically.

Fr. Cosmas (centre) celebrates his 1st anniversary of priesthood







Waiting for food in the Mathare slum

## JULY 25

I hope you will be happy, like me, that the blood pressure has reduced a lot and I'm almost back to normal. I guess a bit of extra sleep was the answer!

Br. Zachary has settled at our parish in Nakuru while Fr. Fidel headed to Méru for a visit to our men there, then on to Kionyo, Méru and the Kiirua farm. He passed by the new Irembene Church in Njogune, Kionyo, and was very impressed as it nears completion.

## AUGUST 1

Fr. Greg is still stuck in Tanzania and getting him back may prove difficult. We are monitoring the problem and pray the restrictions might ease over the next few weeks.

We have an abundance of bananas at the moment, so I've been stealing a few for the borehole drill crew at Rongai and contract workers at Karen Residence – a bite for breakfast. Many of them probably don't have much, if anything, for breakfast. They seem to appreciate them.



## AUGUST 8

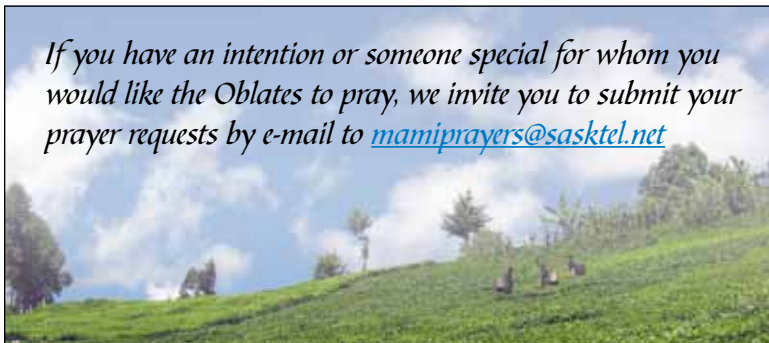
The Oblates are doing OK. We have no reported cases yet, and parishes opened three weeks ago.

Our youth are still struggling, but still thinking of others. Kenrod, our former chairman, is organizing a fund-raiser for a small orphanage north of Nairobi centre.

Duncan, our young cook, finished his two weeks in isolation at our new house, so I took him to our doctor for a medical check and she said if he had coronavirus, and no symptoms after 14 days, then it has come and gone.

We were able to help out one of the congregations of nuns who were incorporated here in Kenya in 1929 (amazing!) and are now getting hassled by the tax office about their Trust Deed, because it doesn't have a clause stating what happens if they close down. We shared our Trust Deed as a sample for the missing clause. Sister was very happy.

*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 by e-mail to [mamiprayers@sasktel.net](mailto:mamiprayers@sasktel.net)*



### 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.

# Blue Pilgrimage Rosary

This beautiful rosary combines fine quality materials with a special design, providing an opportunity to spiritually visit and reflect on five international Marian shrines. A sturdy chain joins sparkling aurora-borealis beads with a silver-plated crucifix, decade markers and an Our Lady of the Snow centerpiece. Each decade marker is a medal depicting a famous Marian Shrine: Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Guadalupe and our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.



Please indicate on the enclosed gift form if you wish to receive the pilgrimage rosary.



Joe Gunn (yellow mask) from the Centre Oblat OMI and the MAMI board of directors: Oblates Richard Beaudette, Harley Mapes and Ken Thorson join the Black Lives Matter rally in Ottawa

# *In your words*

*I am 93 years old and have been retired for 33 years, and will continue to send my periodic donations to MAMI. Quite honestly, I have no idea when I started donating to your organization, or why, although I am a Catholic.*

*I can also understand why you are concerned, since your donors are diminishing and younger people are no longer showing much interest in donating to any charities.*

*When you no longer receive any donations from me, it will either mean I am dead or no longer capable of signing any cheques.*

*However, where God is concerned, miracles are not impossible and therefore I wish your Oblate charity every success in the future.*

*May God bless you.*

*Sincerely,  
Kenneth*

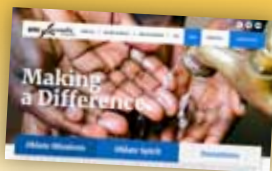


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AMMI Lacombe Canada  
MAMI is pleased to  
support our Missionary  
Oblates serving the poor  
around the world through  
spiritual and humanitarian  
works – feeding the  
hungry, caring for the sick,  
clothing the naked and  
bringing the love of God  
to those most in need.

*We support Oblate  
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*Your gift to  
AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI  
would ensure that the good  
ministry and mission works of the  
Oblates continues in Canada and  
throughout the world. You could  
even specify an Oblate mission  
that is dear to your heart.*



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

 Lacombe Canada MAMI

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*A publication of the  
Oblate Mission office.*

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