


AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

Oblate Spirit



June 2021



Annual
Report

A Reason to Smile



It has been said that laughter is the best medicine, and that has likely never been needed more than during this global pandemic. That is why, for the introduction to the annual report issue, we chose the accompanying picture of Fr. Gerry Conlan accompanied by St. Eugene de Mazenod, wearing the headphones, on a recent trip around the missions in Kenya. This dynamic duo brought many a smile to those fortunate enough to have witnessed the journey.

It has been a strange and difficult 18 months at home and around the world. Isolation, shutdown, vaccination, death, variants, loneliness are just some of the words we have heard too many times. The bleak days of last summer were followed by even bleaker days of winter and wildly high counts of disease and death.

Yet, on a higher and most encouraging note, we are delighted to say our MAMI family has not forgotten the poor and disenfranchised. You continued to respond to those most in need in a year when we believed we might be forgotten or set aside waiting for better times.

In 2020, 1,679 MAMI members donated \$1,422,332.27, of which every penny will find its way to those in need, thanks to a decision by OMI Lacombe Canada to absorb the administrative costs of this charity in order to maximize the effectiveness of your donations. Last year (2019) our total of more than \$1.5 million also included a large multi-year bequest that came to an end. Taking that into account makes your support even more impressive.

So, we all have cause to smile because of the joy you have brought to so many, to the families of Peru that have a safe



St. Eugene on inspection tour with Fr. Gerry Conlan, OMI

place they can call home, to those needing hospital care in the Napo Valley (St. Clotilde Hospital), to the young and old (and in-between) in Kenya, to Haiti, India, Pakistan and beyond, and to the marginalized people in places like Edmonton and Hamilton who are provided with physical and spiritual nourishment.

Fr. Gerry loyally provides us with weekly updates from Kenya, from which we glean our Kenya update. He always starts with a joke that brightens the day and often ends with:

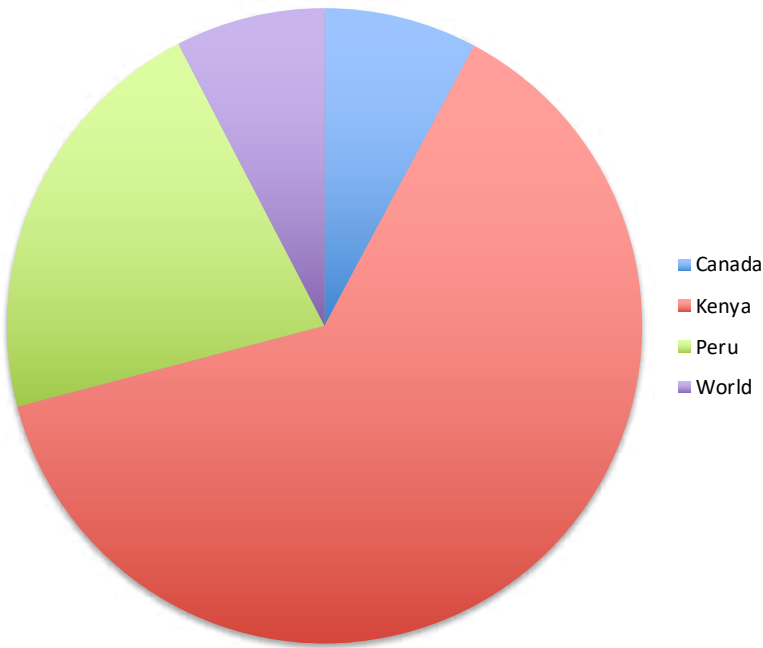
"I hope you've had a great week. Try to be good and keep smiling! Thanks for the prayers."

Yes, a huge thanks to all of you for staying with us all these years, for your encouragement, your prayers and your phenomenal support. God bless you all.

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators

2020 Projects Funded

\$962,265.02



Canada	\$75,150.11
Kenya	\$607,100.00
Peru	\$206,765.79
World	\$73,249.12

Kenya continues to be the major focus of fund-raising for MAMI, as directed by the Oblate General Administration in Rome. While the ultimate goal is for the Kenya mission to be self-sustaining, the need for support continues, particularly in these difficult times.



New toilets for St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish

ST. EUGENE DE MAZENOD PARISH

St. Eugene De Mazenod is a new parish located in Méru. The parish includes a slum and many low-income people. The main church building has been completed but the church faced serious challenges concerning toilets. Two buildings, one for women and girls and another for men and boys, were completed to ensure proper hygiene in an effort to prevent disease. A septic tank was also built. An additional benefit is that the toilets will be available to the poor people living in the slums. MAMI also provided funds for pews.

RONGAI WATER PROJECT

Rongai is a property the Oblates own in a low socio-economic area at the edge of Nairobi. The ultimate goal is to build



A small enclosure for the pump controller for the Rongai water project

low-income housing that would be beneficial for students and poorer people. A borehole was built to provide a source of clean water for the property and for local people struggling to find good water. They often had to carry water from some distance at a considerable expense. Storage tanks, equipment and power connections were also funded by MAMI.

CARE OF THE MISSION

The call to vocation continues to be strong among the young men in Kenya. MAMI contributes to tuition and personal costs during the formation process.

SACRED HEART CHURCH OF THE FIRST PEOPLES

A full Christmas Day meal was provided to 700 homeless and poor people in Edmonton. Without this ministry, these people would not have had a hot meal that day.



Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples provided takeout hot meals

ST. KATERI TEKAKWITHA ABORIGINAL CATHOLIC PARISH

St. Kateri Church was founded to serve the Aboriginal/ First Nations People of Winnipeg. The spirit of the community was to be open, compassionate and non-judgmental. It serves families living in both Winnipeg and St. Boniface Archdioceses. Many people come to Winnipeg for health reasons, educational purposes, or to search for work. St. Kateri exists to meet their spiritual needs.

Ministry includes visiting families, blessing homes, taking

communion to the sick, preparing young people for the sacraments, baptism preparation, visits to the sick and dying and presiding at wakes and funerals. MAMI contributed to the transportation costs for the parish.

MAMI also contributed to the tuition costs for the training of catechists.

RECONCILIATION

Our lady of Guadalupe Circle in Ontario is a Catholic coalition of Indigenous people, bishops, lay movements, clergy and institutes of consecrated life, engaged in renewing and fostering relationships between the Catholic Church and Indigenous Peoples in Canada. In conjunction with Centre Oblate and other faith-based and reconciliation focused organizations, educational materials were produced to aid faith communities wanting to understand and engage in the process of reconciliation.

WAY OF THE CROSS BOOKLETS

The booklet “Meditations on the Way of the Cross”, by Blessed Mario Borzaga, OMI, Oblate martyr of Laos, was previously translated into English and Inuktitut for use in the Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay. The booklet has now been reprinted with a larger font size, making it more reader friendly.

OLIVE BRANCH

Olive Branch, in Saskatoon, provides a service for people who have arrived at the decision to get a divorce. This mediation ministry responding to couples who are separating and divorcing ensures that the church is involved in the life of the married couple from beginning to end. Having the church presence during a difficult and isolating time in a couple’s life assists the couple in achieving an amicable divorce. MAMI contributed to wages, training and operating expenses.





COVID-19 vaccines arrive at Santa Clotilde Hospital

MEDICAL FRIENDS OF PERU/ SANTA CLOTILDE HOSPITAL

COVID-19 knows no bounds. It spread into the Amazon and down the Napo River to Santa Clotilde Hospital where there was an urgent need for medical supplies such as masks and gowns to keep the hospital employees and patients safe. MAMI rose to the challenge and provided funds for these purchases. Santa Clotilde Hospital remains open while some other hospitals are closing.

MAMI also provided funds for the tertiary care home in Lima, where patients are referred for specialised treatment. MAMI contributed to the expenses for food, transportation, medicines, house maintenance and salaries of workers.

BR. BLAISE MACQUARRIE

From the ongoing building of houses for poor people and

those living in slums, Br. Blaise has branched out into retreat houses and chapels. MAMI continues to cover the costs of labour, administration, transportation, education, construction materials and COVID needs.



A chapel in Peru

AUCAYACU PARISH

The parish is not self-sustaining and had more critical needs as a result of COVID. For vulnerable families and those affected by COVID, MAMI provided funds for food, social support, counselling and pastoral visits, as well as covering the cost of basic services for the parish such as electricity and phone.

PERU FOSTER PARENTS

This is an ongoing project. The San José parish school has 562 students. The cost per student per month is 187 Peruvian Soles, approximately \$50 Canadian. MAMI is able to assist in providing the students with a chance at future opportunities.

Students at San José parish school



SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MAMI provided funds to support the poorest people in the Oblate communities with food and medicine. Without this intervention many would become victims of diseases and deficiencies.

DELEGATION EXPENSES

The Oblates in Peru have four missions, including a Centre House that requires assistance with administration costs. The Centre House covers most of its costs such as legal matters, travel of the Superior and lodging for the missionaries.

MAMI contributed to the formation of Oblates by covering the cost of studies for students in philosophy and theology.

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

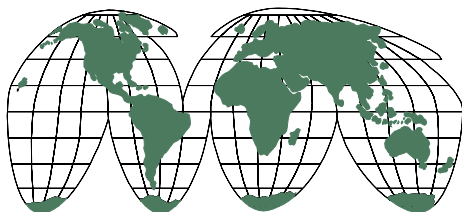




Basic supplies for poor people

BOLIVIA

MAMI provided funds for St. Eugene Parish to purchase computers and Internet service to assist students with on-line learning. Funds for basic supplies (food, medicine, soap and masks) for poor families in the parish were also provided. Assistance was also provided to a young man who suffered a serious traffic accident requiring hospitalization, intensive care, neurosurgery and physiotherapy.



INDIA

Since 1968, when the Oblates first entered India, they have been true to St. Eugene's charism by working in the poorest missions and parishes. They also built low-budget schools in missionary areas. These schools were severely affected by COVID; schools were closed and income from fees ceased. MAMI supplied funds to pay salaries for the teachers and staff for three months. Funds were also provided for employability training for 1,000 unemployed youth.



Praying at a shrine in India

INDONESIA

Oblate schools in Indonesia have also been affected by COVID resulting in no income from fees. MAMI contributed to salaries for approximately 200 teachers and staff.

NIGERIA

COVID also affected school fee income at the College de Mazenod Jos in Nigeria. MAMI contributed to financial assistance for 28 employees.

PARAGUAY

The parish of Saint Eugenio of Mazenod is one of the poorest parishes in Paraguay. It is located in a dry region with salty water, frequent droughts and poor-quality soils. There is no running water so people use rainwater when available. The parish consists of mostly local indigenous people with a small number of non-indigenous. MAMI contributed to the construction and equipping of a bakery. The bakery will create employment and feed bread to more than 1,500 people, especially the students at the schools in the area.

TANZANIA

The Catholic Archdiocese of Arusha in the Northern part of Tanzania consists of approximately 500,000 Catholics, 55 parishes and 245 missions administered by 62 diocesan priest and 58 priests from religious orders. Priests are at high risk of contracting COVID because of the pastoral and counseling services they provide. MAMI contributed to the purchase of medical supplies, protective equipment, hand sanitizer, and other tools as needed.

UKRAINE

Since 1993 the Oblates have workers in a parish in Tyvriv. Many families live in the area and have their lives enriched by the presence of the Oblates. Formative work with families, children and youth has been hampered by the lack of meeting space. MAMI contributed to finishing construction of three halls. This additional space will contribute greatly to building community in a safe way during COVID restrictions.

Farm grows food for Hamilton's poor

HAMILTON, ON – The De Mazenod Door Outreach program announced the launch of the De Mazenod Farm,

yet another initiative to help the poor and marginalized in inner-city Hamilton. The farm will grow produce and raise egg-laying chickens to provide food for Hamilton's hungry who visit the De Mazenod Door 365 days a year.

“Our goal is to create a sustainable source of healthy, locally-grown

food for our guests,” said Fr. Tony O'Dell. “With the help of many dedicated volunteers, we will produce a whole bounty of goodness and cultivate a community of love and compassion.”

The De Mazenod Farm, a 19-acre property owned by the Diocese of Hamilton, is located in rural Ancaster, ON. The land had been sitting idle when Fr. Tony suggested to the diocese that it can be put to use to support the De Mazenod programs and contribute back to the community. Bishop Douglas Crosby of Hamilton expressed his enthusiasm. “I am so

Fr. Tony O'Dell, OMI

Fr. Jarek Pachocki, OMI





'Eggs in a basket'
coming up soon

delighted with this most recent development at De Mazenod Door Outreach which will provide fresh food for the poor and marginalized in downtown Hamilton."

Work on the farm began in summer 2020, tilling the soil to prepare for the land's first harvest. The first seeds were planted on March 4, and the first egg-laying chickens arrived on March 30.

More than 40 types of vegetables and herbs including beans, peppers, potatoes, beets, cabbage, carrots and cauliflower are hoped to be grown on the farm. Once

harvested, the produce will be sent to the De Mazenod Door kitchen, where it will be used to create homemade meals for the Door guests including hearty soups, stews and casseroles. Any excess produce will be shared. "We look forward to sharing the bounty and blessings from this farm with other community partners, such as the Good Shepherd Centre and Hamilton Food Share," said Fr. Tony. "Together, we can make a difference."

The 36 laying chickens will provide eggs for every Tuesday's breakfast: an egg baked in a golden toast nest, among other meals. Guests already eagerly look forward to their 'eggs in a basket' and will soon find it even tastier when it is made with farm-fresh eggs.

There are also other projects the ministry hopes to establish at the farm to serve even more members of the community. A special garden will grow flowers that will decorate the church for special feast days and Sundays during the summer and fall. Prayer spaces on the farm, where people can 'get away' and relax in nature, will also be created. Finally, in an effort to

engage, educate and empower all who visit the farm and wish to lend a helping hand, the farm will welcome volunteers from every walk of life. This includes frontline workers who suffer with PTSD and guests of the De Mazenod Door Outreach who are eager to contribute in any way they can. The farm will offer meaningful, hands-on work for those in alternative justice, as well as engaging and educational field trips for students.

With homelessness and hunger on the rise in Hamilton, the De Mazenod Door Outreach program is committed to continually evolving and growing to meet this need in new and innovative ways. In October 2020, the program announced its housing initiative, which has since grown to include three homes, offering affordable housing and support to move people safely off the streets.

"The Door is the symbol of openness, welcome and hospitality," said Fr. Tony, "and now with our farm, it is also a place of new growth, sustenance and abundance."



Fr. Tony



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.

Conversations!

Over the past four months, MAMI has been engaged in an across-Canada calling effort to connect personally with our supporters and donors. Of utmost importance was the opportunity to speak with so many of you and to express our gratitude for your faithfulness and commitment to the poor and the missionary works of the Oblates.

We have heard back from all those volunteers who have embraced this awesome task – calling more than 4,000 individuals just like yourselves. Today we express a thank you to our 59 volunteers who staffed the phones. Because you receive the *Oblate Spirit*, we hope that you were able to speak with one of our MAMI volunteers. However, if we missed you, please contact the MAMI office to update your information: Diane Lepage at 306-653-6453 or Toll Free 1-866-432-6264 / lacombemami@sasktel.net

In many of our conversations, we heard of the impact of the Oblates in your lives – from a Parish setting, to being a relative of an Oblate, to volunteering as a Frontier Apostle yourself. It is our fervent desire to rekindle YOUR connections to the Missionary work of the Oblate Fathers and Brothers. Thank you for your continued loyalty.

Blessings to you
and your families
Your MAMI Team

Volunteer Crystal Hampson



Medical Friends of Peru

BY BARRY ADAMS, HOMI, MD

OTTAWA – Many individuals, groups, organizations and businesses have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the difficult times, I was pleased and thankful for the generous support of the Medical Friends of Peru.

Through your generosity in 2020, that difficult year, you supported the Santa Clotilde Hospital, the remote clinics along the Napo River and the patient house in Lima to the tune of \$18,483. The needy in Peru and myself thank you all very much.

You are probably aware the hardship of COVID-19 on everyone has caused a significant decrease in charitable donations. I am very pleased that the Medical Friends of Peru has done as well as we did. Fund-raising has suffered, but I am so pleased that your continued support has certainly benefitted the needs of the remote indigenous Peruvians. Please remember that 100% of every dollar you contribute goes directly to the needs of the facilities and people we are helping. OMI Lacombe Canada is covering all fund-raising costs.

Peru, like the rest of the world, has had major problems because of COVID-19. I spoke with Fr. Moe Schroeder, OMI, and he said the hospital has been quite busy and beds are often completely full, many with COVID-19, but they have been lucky and had no fatalities. The staffing at the hospital has continued to be a problem as the Peruvian doctors, when they finish their compulsory time in Santa Clotilde, return south. Presently there is a Spanish physician on contract whose income is supplemented by PANGO (Peru Associates Non-Governmental Organization).



New
generator
for Santa
Clotilde
Hospital

The generator, source of electric power for the hospital, gave up its ghost. A new generator has been purchased by donations from nuns of two different orders. A recent problem at the hospital has been a leaky roof. Fr. Schroeder says our support could allow them to repair or replace the roof of the hospital. As you see the needs of the indigenous people and the hospital and clinics continue. Do you think we can all pull together and provide for the repair or replacement of the roof?

By early July we should know how this pandemic is panning out, waning or continuing. We will decide then about a celebration to welcome the end of this pandemic and meet each other face to face. In the meantime I wish you all good health and continued safety until you are able to be immunized and receive some personal protection.

Thanks to everyone for your past support. Thank you for continuing to support the Medical Friends of Peru either through your donations or your prayers. Please reach out to your friends, especially those who may be alone, and pray for this pandemic to end soon. Eventually we will be able to get together again in person.

Helping poor farmers in Haiti

BY MIKE DECHANT, OMI, AND TOM SARETSKY

SASKATOON, SK – For the past number of years, Holy Cross High School in Saskatoon has been an active and generous participant in Development and Peace.

Each year the students and staff actively campaign to respond to the requests for funds to support the many projects and social needs of the world. In recognition of its support, the school also flies the flag of Development and Peace under the Canadian flag.

This past Lent, the decision was made to purchase manual hydraulic pumps to help the impoverished farmers of Haiti grow their crops. These pumps are a technologically advanced form of irrigation for the smaller farm co-operatives who are

Tom Saretsky, Holy Cross chaplain, and Fr. Mike Dechant, OMI



unable to afford the irrigation systems that first world farm corporations utilize in their vast production of food.

These pumps will help farmers grow crops to help sustain their families and carve out a living. It's a modest way of sustaining a livelihood in an area that has been decimated by catastrophic earthquakes, other natural disasters and simply the poverty that has been systemic for decades.

Each pump was priced at \$200. In their generous response to the project, the students and staff of Holy Cross High School collected enough money to purchase more than 30 pumps.

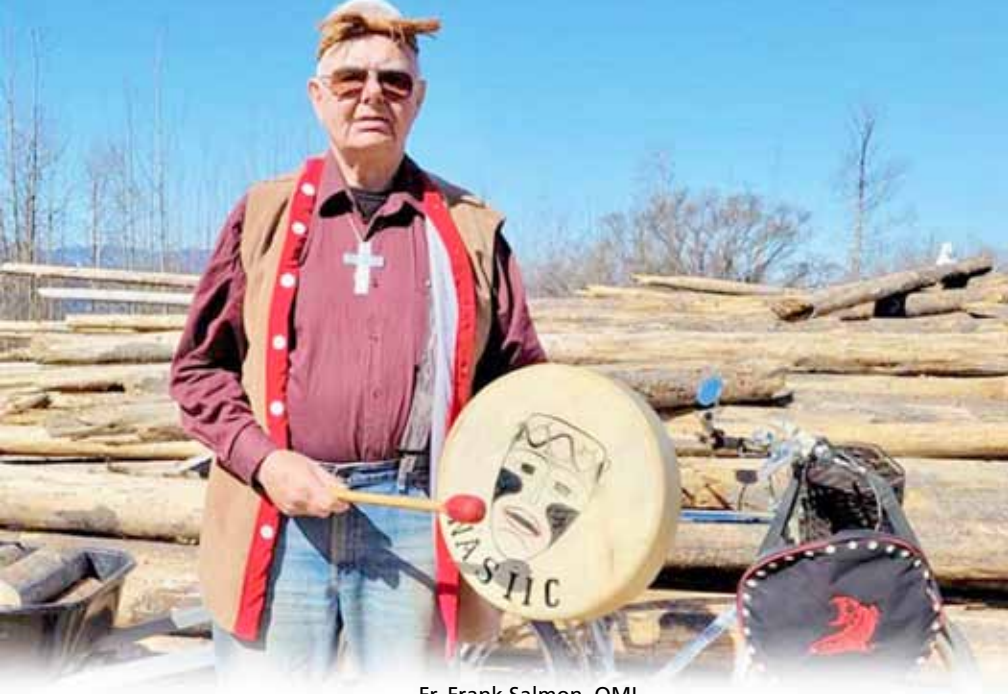
The Jewish Talmud declares: "He who saves one life, saves the world entire." That was the goal: to help one family, one pump at a time, because one heart with courage and conviction and compassion is a majority.

God is good ... all the time.

(Tom Saretsky is the teacher chaplain and Fr. Mike Dechant is the priest chaplain at Holy Cross High School)

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





Fr. Frank Salmon, OMI

Fr. Salmon celebrated

BY RICHARD BEAUDETTE, OMI

OTTAWA – Fr. Frank Salmon, OMI, received the St. Joseph's Award at the Catholic Missions in Canada Gala in April.

Established in 1990 by Catholic Missions in Canada, the St. Joseph's Award recognizes and honours missionaries whose dedication is a light for the world and serves as an example for the church and the wider Canadian society today.

Ordained in 1973, Frank began his ministry in the Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island, and then spent almost 30 years on the west coast of the Island serving the Ahousat, where he learned to be a missionary in a very different way, becoming integrated into the lives and families of the communities he served.

Frank's simplicity, generosity, compassion and openness to learning are his ways of teaching and preaching. He tells the story of visiting one village on the west coast after a few days paddling his kayak. He stayed in the village and found one elderly woman whose yard was quite neglected, and she wanted a garden.

Frank took it upon himself to dig the garden soil, preparing it for planting. Seeing this, her son recognized his neglect and began to take over, with no words being exchanged. At gatherings, such as the potlatch, Frank would join the elders in singing traditional songs. It encouraged young men to take an interest in learning the songs to sing with the elders.

Phil Little, Frank's classmate and friend of many years, tells this story: "One summer we (Phil and wife Anne Marie) visited Frank and saw that his wardrobe was rather sparse. We bought him two new pairs of jeans and left them in his room in the trailer in Tofino. Visiting again the next summer, we discovered the same two pairs of jeans unused. Frank assured us he would use them when needed."

Frank has served the communities around Stuart Lake in the Diocese of Prince George for the past 18 years, continuing the generous, compassionate, enculturated ministry that has been the hallmark of his many years of ministry among First Nations of British Columbia.

We congratulate Frank on receiving the St. Joseph Award, an acknowledgment of his lifelong dedication to the First Nations peoples, and we express our gratitude for his missionary presence among us as a member of OMI Lacombe Canada, and for the witness he gives to living out the Oblate charism in such a radical way.

May God continue to bless your ministry Frank, and may you continue to share the gift of yourself with all whom you meet!

*(Fr Beaudette is Vicar of OMI Lacombe Canada and
a member of the MAMI Board of Directors)*

Why we support the Oblates

BY ELAINE AND PAT HAUCK

PRINCE GEORGE, BC – With COVID still on the rampage, we felt it was important to help those in the struggling areas that the Oblates serve.

All of our lives we have been influenced by the Oblates.

Pat grew up in Denzil, SK, and Elaine in Wilkie, SK, in the 1950s and 1960s and all of the priests that we remember were Oblates.

Pat's family attended Sacred Heart Parish in Denzil and remembers Fr. J. Sluga, OMI, Fr. F. Wandler, OMI and Fr. Loran, OMI.

In Wilkie our family attended St. John the Baptist Parish, later renamed St. James Parish, named I believe after Fr. James

Herman, OMI, who was instrumental in building a new church. His brother Fr. Ben Herman, OMI, would often be in Wilkie as well. Fr. Nick Feist, OMI, and his brother Fr. Paul Feist, OMI, (who were cousins to Elaine's maternal grandfather) both served as the parish priest at St. James.



Pat and Elaine Hauck

As a youngster I used to help Fr. Herman's mother who lived at the rectory in Wilkie. She was blind and I would do household chores for her. I was always amazed at how much she could do – like reading the time on her clock and cutting vegetables without hurting herself. Fr. Nick Feist's housekeeper, Mrs. Antoni, would have me write letters to her children. I always enjoyed the time I spent helping these women.

We did not have any black people living in our town and we were quite fascinated when Fr. A. Munnik, OMI, a black priest from South Africa, came to Saskatchewan on a speaking tour to raise funds for the missions. I wrote to him for many years and still have some of the correspondence I received from him.

After moving to British Columbia, we first lived in Kamloops and moved to Prince George in the mid 1960s, where we still reside. There were many Oblates in our lives again. Some of the most noted Oblates were Bishop Fergus O'Grady, OMI, Bishop Gerry Wiesner, OMI, and Fr. Nicholas Forde, OMI. Fr. Forde, shortly after his ordination, spent many years as a missionary in Africa. In 1977 Fr. Forde came to Prince George at the invitation of Bishop O'Grady, who he respected and admired.

Bishop O'Grady started the Frontier Apostolate program. Many volunteers came from all over the world to volunteer in the diocese for two years. They were given a stipend and room and board. They worked as nurses, teachers, bus drivers, cooks and at various other jobs as needed. Many of these volunteers remained in the Prince George Diocese. Many married and others followed their religious vocations. We are blessed to have these people in our lives.

Our donation is in honour of these Oblate men who served their communities so well and were a big part in our faith journeys. We cannot thank them enough.

So, you're the Chili Lady!

BY JACKLYNNE GUIMOND

FORT FRANCIS, ON – It was early March, a rather pleasant day, not overly cold, and my husband Gerry and I were en route to the cemetery for our daily two-mile walk among the saints.

Stopped at the traffic light, we watched a woman cross the street ahead of us going to a vacant green space. She was wearing a long skirt with a blanket over her shoulders and seemed laden with several bags. The light changed and we proceeded, watching her out the side window, so we returned home before the walk.

Jacklynne and Gerry Guimond



Providentially, we had leftover chilli from supper the night before. I heated it up, Gerry buttered some homemade bread and along with a bottle of water we had created a meal for a homeless person.

Off we went to bring **Matthew 25** to life.

When we returned, the woman was sitting on her blanket on the grass with a large drum in front of her. A woman was standing nearby visiting with her.

When I approached with the lunch bag she smiled widely and said: "I'm not homeless. I live just across the street. I come here to drum. It is part of my spirituality!"

"Oh, cool," I replied. "But you can have this chilli anyway. It's nice and warm!"

She graciously declined and suggested that I give it to someone in need.

When I returned the chili to the van, I remembered that we still had two Tim Horton's gift cards from Christmas. I went back to the two women and said:

"Well, here is something you can share or pass on to others."

Both women were delightedly grateful and said that is exactly what they would do.

We proceeded to our walk, laughing at how God is full of surprises.

About two weeks later we had haircuts scheduled. We have come to know Denise, who cuts our hair, fairly well and often share spiritual issues in the course of the haircuts. She and I talked about the drug situation, poverty, the homelessness in our town. She shared with me that her cousin and partner and baby were presently homeless.

To break the gloom, I told her I had a story about helping the homeless and proceeded to relate our encounter with the woman in the park.

When I got to the word 'chili' she flailed her scissors and said, "so YOU'RE the chili lady!"

Taken aback I asked what she meant by that. "It was on Facebook. Jolee put it on Facebook!"

I was totally surprised. "What exactly did she say?"

Denise sent me the post, which included the following excerpt.

*"We are so lucky to have wonderful humans in our community. I am posting a rave. Dear sweet l'il lady is driving around in a black car handing out chilli and Tim Horton's cards to people. Thank you so much for doing these kind-hearted acts of compassion!!! I feel guilty taking the Tim's card as I am not less fortunate, and the Creator provides for me in many ways. So I will pay it forward to someone who does need it. I really want to say from my heart to your heart. **Chii chii chii meegwiich.** It is absolutely a blessing to receive this unconditional love."*

For some of us, mission is at our own back door. We are grateful for opportunities to share, and we are grateful that, for whatever reason, Jolee identified our white van as a black car!



**Check out
our Facebook
page**



Lacombe Canada MAMI

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



YouTube Lacombe MAMI Oblate Missions

Oblates and the reconciliation journey

Centre Oblat 
A Voice For Justice

BY JOE GUNN



Joe Gunn

OTTAWA – Since Oblates first arrived in Canada in 1841, they have served First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. This deeply embedded presence has been witness to several prophetic manifestations as these communities were evangelized, defended and promoted.

More recently, as the implications of the practices of colonization and particularly the influence of Indian residential schools have been revealed from the point of view of Indigenous peoples, the narrative has shifted. In 1991, Oblates were among the earliest church organizations to apologize formally for the negative impact of residential schools, and to commit to building a new covenant based on even more demanding interpretations of Gospel values.

This is a call to conversion of the entire Canadian population. It is likely the most demanding, and the most revealing, challenge for our country – as well as for our Christian communities – today.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 2015 final report, especially its 94 Calls to Action, remain the guideposts to rebuilding honest and just relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. Several of the Calls to Action were specifically directed to Christian churches. For example, No. 48 asked the churches "to formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms, and standards

of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as a framework for reconciliation.”

UNDRIP was passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2007, initially opposed by Canada and three other countries, but finally adopted by our government in 2016. That same year, a Private Member’s Bill (from Romeo Saganash, a Cree NDP MP from northern Quebec) was presented to the House of Commons. Bill C-262 was designed to move Canada to implement the UNDRIP in Canadian law. It passed the House, but unfortunately died due to opposition in the Senate. On Dec. 3, 2020, a similar Bill, now called C-15 (“The UNDRIP Act”) was tabled in parliament by the Hon. David Lametti, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

For years now, Oblates in Canada have worked in coalition with other Canadian church organizations to get this bill introduced and passed into law. The leadership of the three Oblate provinces have signed open letters, prepared briefs, supported educational webinars on the issue, and even engaged the minister directly in an on-line forum. Thanks to this effort, the Canadian Religious Conference decided in April to endorse Bill C-15 and encouraged the more than 70 different Catholic congregations in Canada to also express their support.

While there is no unanimous consensus on support for Bill C-15 either among Indigenous communities or political parties, the legislation is a necessary and overdue step. It provides the country with three years to develop an “action plan” for bringing laws and practices here into compliance with the Declaration. Debates on these actions will determine the next steps in Canada’s reconciliation journey – with Oblates continuing to travel that road.

For more information, consult the website of the churches working on reconciliation: [About | Declaration \(faithin-thedeclaration.ca\)](http://About | Declaration (faithin-thedeclaration.ca))

(Joe Gunn is the Executive Director/Directeur général of Centre Oblat)



Kenya

NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

MARCH 13

NAIROBI – It's 6 a.m. and I've just finished my usual five-lap run around the property (about 3.5 km). That's the first time in three weeks I've managed five laps, because of the lingering effects of the flu/bronchitis that attacked me. So, we thank God for healing, because Kenya is experiencing a third wave of infections. A stronger version of C-19 has arrived from Nigeria, so we need to keep up our immune system.

Of some concern around the country is that the rain is not starting as usual. Rain usually starts mid-March. But I recall in about 2012, it started early April on Palm Sunday – the Protestants were impressed with the Catholic prayers! So let's pray, otherwise there will be a great shortage of food later in the year.

Last Sunday, some of our youth gathered at Kahawa West in Nairobi to support the Umbrella Children's Home. Several



Gerry Conlan, OMI

Visiting the Umbrella Children's Home



others who could not attend sent financial contributions to help buy food and some necessary school materials. I'm always impressed by their generosity when times are still very tough.

Children are brought to the home by the police, by government children's services, the local chief, etc. There are about 40 kids and, though they struggle to survive, the children seem happy. The couple who run the home have a small baby themselves. We had a small mass with them because many kids are Catholic but those in charge are not. I'm not sure whether this is for spiritual care or the hope of ongoing financial support. Well, God works in mysterious ways: we shall see what happens.

An energetic dancer group from a local Protestant church came along and gave their time for free to cheer up the kids. The kids themselves put on some nice entertainment, which was a great opportunity for us to applaud them.

A group of visiting dancers perform for the orphans





Br. Zachary with youth at Larmudiac Parish where he does some teaching

MARCH 20

Several Counties in Kenya are now crying out for food support. Thankfully, the affected areas have low populations, and we hope the 1.4 million people can be assisted by our government.

Leo and Maria are Italians living next to our Kisaju House, who have established a low-fee medical centre with support from Italy. They even take medical care to places inland and help the Maasai people especially. They are finding it a bit hard these days due to the lack of money in people's pockets, but folks still come for medical care hoping for charity. What else can they do? They employ nearly 10 staff with various responsibilities and qualifications.

I was at the Medical Clinic when Maria shared a story about a medical "emergency" with which the public hospital at Kajiado was not co-operating.

Maria had called her daughter to help her take an ailing woman to the hospital, which refused to accept her with her child. The woman's family had abandoned her after she had her leg amputated below the knee. By the grace of God, Maria and Leo found money somewhere and paid for her initial operation (US\$3,500).

However, after only a few weeks, the lady fell over at her home, and the wound completely opened again, across the whole stump. The poor woman lives alone. Her nine-year-old

Fr. Fidele offers
mass for MAMI
benefactors
during the
Novena of Prayer



child has cerebral palsy. Maria's daughter helps the woman with donations from her friends.

This probably sounds unbelievable to most of you, but this happens quite often here in Kenya, and probably elsewhere in poorer countries of Africa: if someone becomes a burden, they are frequently abandoned.

By chance, I heard from one of our MAMI families that a similar thing had happened. The reason for falling over was that he thought his foot felt okay, even though it was no longer there. I shared this with Maria, who began looking for a wheelchair to assist the woman.

Fr. Greg and I were travelling back to Amboseli to arrange to buy a small parcel of land for the future when the Isuzu pickup broke down. I left Greg with the car and flagged down a passing traveller, who by miracle was going to Kimana Village



The altar and
sanctuary are
installed at
Irinda Prayer
House

where I needed to go. It turns out he sells seeds for a large company, and is a Catholic.

We spent the next two hours doing marriage counselling. He was convinced that God had brought us together at that moment, because he really needed to talk. I joked and said: "You mean God made me break down so we can talk?" He said, "yes!" I should have given him the towing bill!

MARCH 27

A lockdown was issued because Nairobi and a few neighbouring counties have been declared a disease zone. Unfortunately, we are not allowed to travel between the counties. Thank God we had decided to place one of our Oblate youth at Naivasha to supervise the work there. I upgraded Andrew's phone with my old phone so he could send us pictures and help in directing the work. God is good.



Fr. Daquin checks on a Méru Oak seedling. It grows only in Kenya and is threatened by habitat loss. It is a magnificent tree when mature, being one of the largest trees that are native to Kenya.

As I write this, they have received rain in Naivasha. It was dry, dry and more dry, very tough for the locals. Many of them are very thin and struggling to survive. We are happy to be providing a little work for some of them.

APRIL 3

Happy to report that rain is falling in Naivasha, Méru and other parts of the country, but not yet in Nairobi. We expect it next week – there have been spits and spurts but nothing serious for the last three weeks.



Solar hot water heaters are installed at Kisaju House

The mission has had a busy week. Our parish men in Kisaju and Nakuru were thrown into confusion by the suspension of masses, but were busy doing outreach to people on a smaller scale. The men in Kionyo and Méru were busy providing reconciliation around their parishes.

Technically, masses are cancelled, but religious communities are exempted. Nuns can have a visiting priest with all the ceremony.

During the week we received a car for the Kionyo parish from Mombasa. It had been caught up in the lockdown last year and cost the parish an extra US\$3,500 in fees. It's a RAV4 in almost new condition – 2012 and only 64,000 kilometres. It feels like a new car.

APRIL 10

We are still alive and kicking, but every day we hear of people passing away. It sounds bad, but compared to the wealthy countries, we have very few deaths in the country. People are getting the available vaccines and so far they are free.

Our parishes in Larmudiac, Kisaju and all of Nairobi are shut down for public masses, but I was able to celebrate Easter



An outdoor Easter mass was celebrated at Nyumbani Children's Home

Sunday at the children's home and also offered a home mass for a few elderly people.

Thankfully, rains have been steady and welcome – mostly at night. Unfortunately, I only managed one run this week.

APRIL 17

Fr. Fidele shared that the Red Cross has identified at least one million people around Kenya who are desperate for food due to the drought, and that probably excludes another million struggling in the Nairobi slums due to the lockdown. Let's pray the government wakes up soon enough. We heard a senior minister saying the lockdown may continue to May 29.

We thank God the rain kept failing in many parts of Kenya during the week. Euticus sent some pics from the Kiirua Farm and the trees are doing well, although one cow is struggling (the recent mother of a calf). After the vet came things improved. Hopefully the milk supply improves.

Fr. Fidele continues to make the grounds around the house look better each week – the grass planting is continuing and we are looking for some nice quality avocado tree seedlings. I was insisting that whatever we plant should produce something useful to help the mission.

APRIL 24

We are still labelled as the Diseased Zone and cases keep increasing. Deaths are also increasing, especially as the public hospitals are full, and the private hospitals demanding deposits of between US\$3,000 and US\$6,000 before admission. Those of us who come from countries with public health systems realize how lucky we are.

MAY 1

Newsflash! The lockdown is over for the five counties in and around Nairobi. Curfew was relaxed a bit and is now 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. Everywhere I go I hear people are really struggling to feed their families, so this news is a welcome relief to allow the economy to kick into gear again.

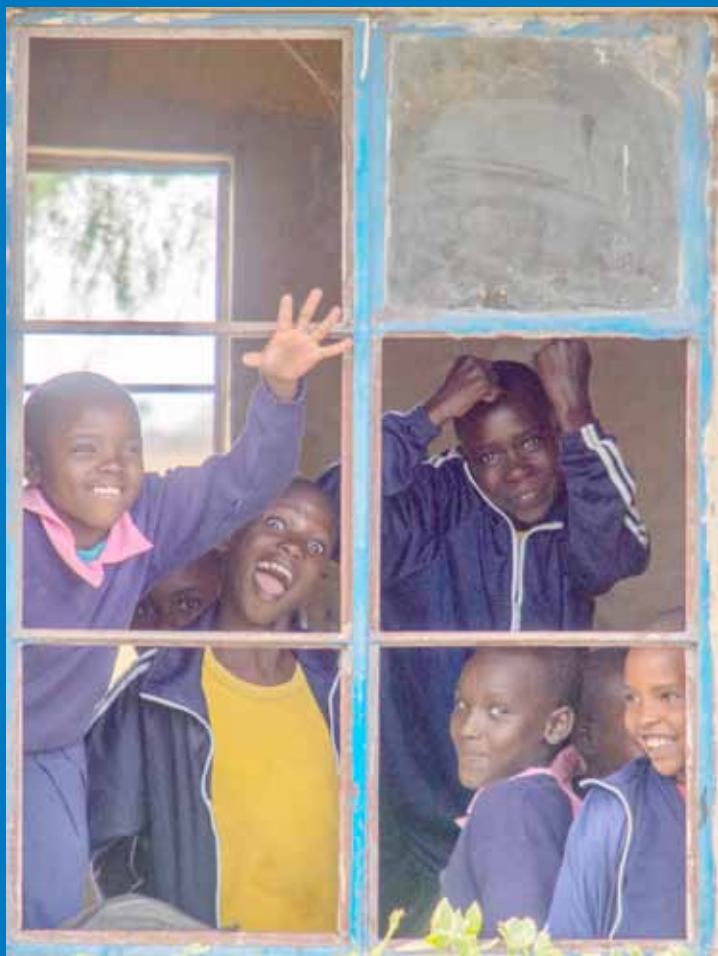
The weather this week has been less rain – so that is also a worry. We need the rain to continue past the end of wet season, because it started a month late.

MAY 9

Because the lockdown has been lifted, our mission council decided to reschedule the annual mission gathering. Instead of January, it was moved to early May, but the lockdown also cancelled that date. Now we will gather on June 1. We hope lockdowns don't happen again.

Fr. Gerry receives his
COVID-19 vaccination





Every cent of every dollar
you give will go ***entirely***
to the mission works
and ministries of the Oblates.

Farewell Fr. Al

Our MAMI readers will remember Fr. Al Hubenig, OMI, from the many missions he and Br. Louis Andreas, OMI, delivered. We were saddened to hear of Fr. Al's death in April at the age of 89. Fr. Al was buried beside his co-worker on the Oblate Mission Team, Bro. Louis, in the Oblate cemetery on the hill by the Star of the North Retreat House in St. Albert, AB.

Following are excerpts from the homily Fr. Alfred Groleau, OMI, superior of Foyer Lacombe, gave at the funeral mass:

"Al lived the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. He had that infinite horizon of faith into which he placed all that happened in his life, allowing him to live in hope and love more deeply, truly caring for others and willing to help anyone in any way he could."

"Al was an evangelizer, a missionary, drawing people closer to God, especially by crafting powerful homilies that touched people's hearts."

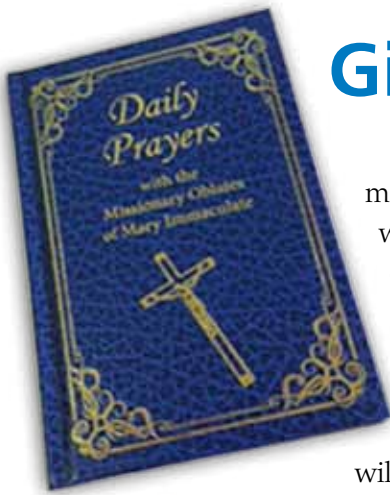
"Al saw the beauty of God in everyone and everything, and delighted in sharing it in ways such as photography, collecting recipes, cooking, creating mosaics out of tiles, and designing a church featured on the cover of a magazine on architecture."

"If imitation is the best form of flattery, let us resolve to imitate him in the way he lived, and died. Al – we love you; we

will miss you, but we also look forward to living your legacy, even as we celebrate your entrance into eternal life. Go with God, and may your rest now be eternally sweet."

Fr. Al Hubenig during a 2014 parish mission on the shores of Lac la Martre in the Northwest Territories





Gift offering

Prayer is the foundation of the mission work of the Oblates and we would like to share with you a complimentary copy of our Daily Prayers with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

The prayers found in this blue, hard covered, 264-page book will provide you with a year's worth of daily prayers as well as special prayers for holidays and feast days to inspire you as you deepen and strengthen your relationship with God. One copy per household as quantities are limited.

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Remembering

We remember the following Oblates who died in 2020:

February 2	Adélard Gervais (1932)
February 19	Stanislaus Racich (1929)
March 21	Bernie McCosham (1931)
April 5	René Bélanger (1932)
June 7	Oliver Mohan (1922)
August 14	Larry Mackey (1929)
October 23	John Zunti (1933)
October 30	Jan Rademaker (1924)
December 1	Aloysius Kedl (1929)



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