

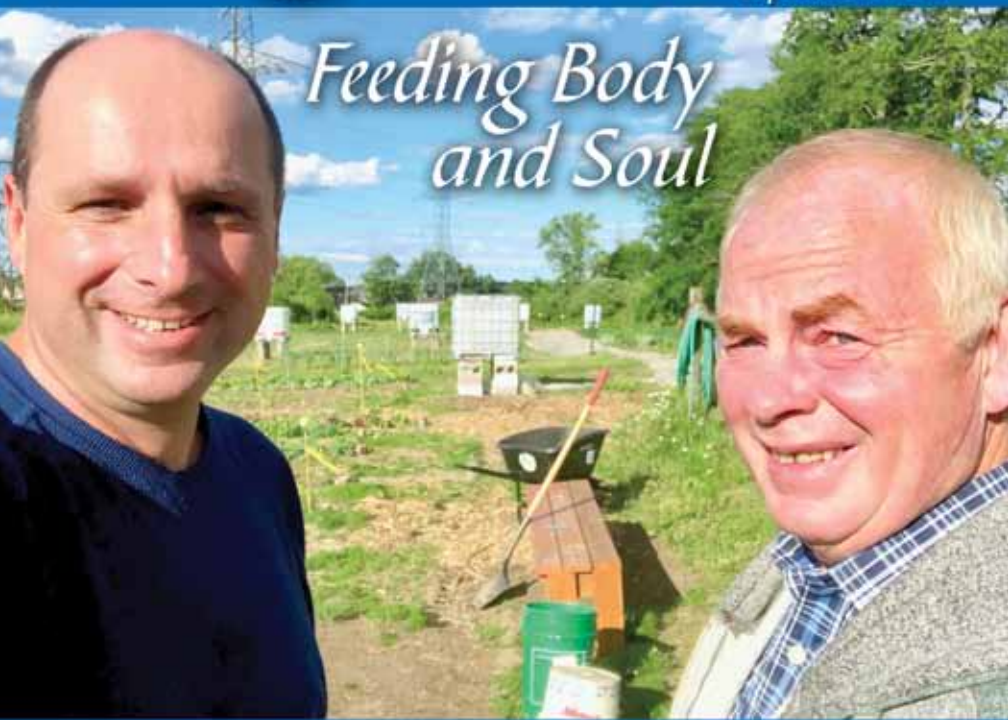
# Oblate Spirit

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI



September 2021

*Feeding Body  
and Soul*



# Responding to need



It has been a difficult few months. The global pandemic continues to exert demands and sorrow on all humanity, whether one is pro- or anti-vaccination. We have drought, fires and heat bombs. There is the ongoing news from the Indian Residential Schools.

Our world is changing!

But something that doesn't change is the need for help from those on the fringes of society, those sitting or sleeping on a bench as the world seems to pass them by without a concern.

We can dwell on the negative, but choose to focus on the positive. One of the most uplifting stories of the summer is the progress on the De Mazenod Farm that is helping feed the hungry in Hamilton, ON.

Pictured on the cover are Jarek Pachocki, OMI, and Tony O'Dell, OMI, at the De Mazenod Farm, which is growing and fulfilling physical and spiritual needs.

There is Blaise MacQuarrie in Peru, whose attempts to build a chapel are on hold because of the pandemic so he reverted to his Plan B ... build houses for the poor.

There is Sr. Corrine Gignac, SNJM, a long since retired teacher who collects beer bottles and sells African violets to support Oblate missions.

And there are the youth in Nairobi, trying to provide necessities for a destitute school in the slums.

You can read about these in this issue. They are meeting some needs in an ever-demanding world. They are outstanding examples of *Oblate Spirit*.

*John and Emily Cherneski*  
*Communications Coordinators*



Volunteers working on the farm

# Nurturing the body and soul

BY DIANE DOWNEY

HAMILTON, ON – Here we grow again!

De Mazenod Door Outreach continues to expand its ministry and has grown in leaps and bounds since opening in 2016.

From its humble beginnings, the De Mazenod Door meal program for the poor and marginalized of our community has been providing meals seven days a week, serving in excess of 117,000 meals during 2020 amidst a global pandemic.

A bountiful crop





De Mazenod Housing provides shelter and accommodation for a number of our homeless and precariously housed individuals at a congregate living house called Eugene's Place, as well as for an immigrant family at Eugene's Pad 1 and for another individual who had been struggling with addiction, in and out of prison with no housing for more than 20 years, at Eugene's Pad 2.

Our Hygiene and Rest station, opened during the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic, is open five days a week for the homeless to be able to come into the church for respite, a few hours of peace, some sleep, a bite to eat, and use the facilities to refresh, both physically and spiritually.

Our poorest brothers and sisters in Christ are being fed and nurtured, in body and soul. We are housing individuals who are homeless and assisting those with addictions and those who suffer with debilitating mental health. And now we are pleased to be able to provide these same individuals with farm-fresh sustenance, straight from the earth.

The De Mazenod Farm is a 19-acre piece of land leased from the Diocese of Hamilton. It is a place of growth, peace





and tranquillity, celebrating God's green earth. It is a special space which includes a prayer garden, where we gather to work outside, and to work on the inside, through compassion, contemplation and healing.

It is a place of hard work and heart work, where volunteers from every walk of life can give back to the community in a meaningful way. It is a place where guests of the Door are welcomed, respected and empowered to contribute to the mission, growing and gathering food, growing as disciples of Jesus Christ, and growing as a community of love and compassion.

The farm is growing beautiful produce and raising egg-laying chickens and honeybees to provide food for Hamilton's hungry who visit De Mazenod Door, 365 days a year. It is already giving back.

The Farm is also benefitting its many volunteers from every walk of life, including:

- Guests of the De Mazenod Door who are eager to contribute to the Ministry that feeds them, so they too can give back;
- Frontline workers who suffer with PTSD who seek a place of tranquility and healing;
- Individuals from the Alternative Justice Program who are re-entering society and are seeking a chance to rebuild their lives through community involvement;
- Students from local schools who can learn about farming, as well as love and compassion;
- Members of all local parishes, organizations and the community who seek an active opportunity to put their faith into action.

Year one farm production is expected to yield approximately 6,000 pounds of fresh produce, 12,000 eggs, and 60 pounds of honey, wax and jelly that is being used to make meals to feed guests of the Door. Food is offered to guests to take with them, and the excess is shared with local students and families in need, and with community partners and social service agencies that also assist Hamilton's poor.

We continue to seek funding through groups and organizations who want to assist and those who are hoping to partner with community organizations, philanthropists and funders.

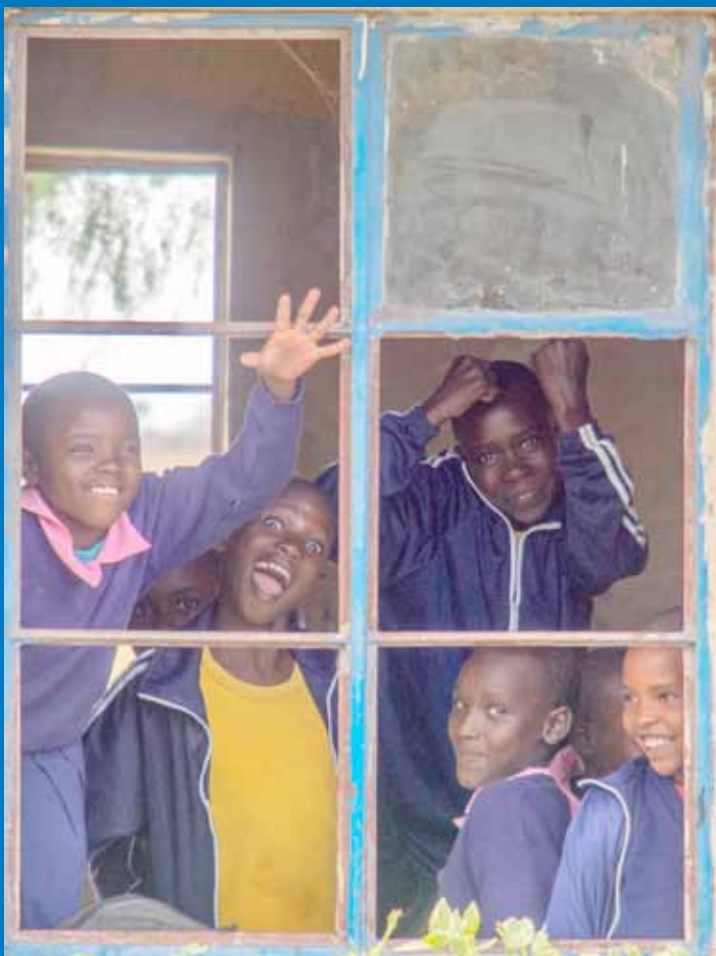


Harvesting garlic



There is so much to be done in this inner-city setting. Like the seeds sown in the fall and early spring, we continue to grow this ministry because there is so much that can be done if we all work together for the good of one another.

*(Diane Downey provides program support for De Mazenod Door Outreach at St. Patrick's Parish in Hamilton, Ont.)*



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



# From the Heart

EDMONTON, AB – Sacred Heart Church has long been a house of prayer for all nations. Since 1913 the parish nourished the faith of Catholics in central Edmonton through many tough times: the First World War, the pandemic of 1918, the financial crash of 1929, and the 10-year drought that turned the prairies into a dust bowl.

The austerity of the Second World War affected everyone in the parish. Through all these years Sacred Heart was a place where people turned to God and supported each other. During this time the parish served waves of immigrants from Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spanish speaking countries, Croatia and most recently Eritrea.

As these groups moved elsewhere, membership began to decline; at the same time the neighborhood became home to a large number of transient and needy people, many of whom were Indigenous. Sacred Heart began to meet the social and pastoral needs of these people.

In 1978 the Oblates of Mary Immaculate formed the Native Pastoral Centre to minister to the growing number of Indigenous people moving into central Edmonton. Fr. Gilles Gautier, OMI, and Monique Piché led the ministry, and since Indigenous people were already making a spiritual home at Sacred Heart

Fr. Susai at Lac Ste. Anne





Lunch delivery  
from Sacred  
Heart Church of  
the First Peoples





The church before the fire

it was decided to merge the Native Pastoral Centre with the parish.

In 1991 Archbishop Joseph McNeil designated Sacred Heart as a “Native-Métis” parish, which was the first time in Canada that a Catholic parish had been designated as a “Native-Métis” national parish. From that time to now the parish has been known as Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples.

The community is fundamentally Catholic, but the way faith is celebrated includes elements of Indigenous spirituality, forms of prayer and works of art that express Christian belief in Native ways.

Since 1989 the pastors of Sacred Heart have all been Oblates. The Oblates are committed to ministering with the Indigenous, Métis and Inuit peoples of Canada and are eager to bring to fulfillment the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that advance the healing and growth of Indigenous persons and communities. Currently two Oblate priests serve the Parish: Fr. Susai Jesu, OMI, as pastor, assisted by Fr. Mark Blom, OMI.

As Canada comes to terms with the ways the original inhabitants of the country have been marginalized, dispossessed, and impoverished while the settlers who have come

here from around the world have prospered, Sacred Heart Parish has a special position for promoting reconciliation and respect between all the peoples who call Canada home.

The Christian faith can hold the joy and sorrow of all people and enables everyone to find their true stature in Christ. By honouring and promoting one another we acknowledge and grieve the bitter truths of the past and seek to atone for them. Forgiveness of past sins relieves people who have been wounded of resentment and hostility.

Our outreach lunch bag program has grown from giving out 30 lunches per day to now exceeding 100 lunches per day. With summer heat temperatures reaching 30 to 40 degrees, two to three bottles of water were required to be handed out with each bagged lunch.

In order to accomplish 100 bagged lunches per day, a team of up to five volunteers are required to slice the deli meats and bread, prepare sandwiches, carry water, package the lunches and respond to the door.

Grocery shopping also occurs two or three times per week where complete rolls of ham, chicken, turkey, bologna, mustard and mayonnaise are purchased in bulk quantities.

The outreach hamper program has seen such an increase in demand that it virtually exceeds our capabilities. So many people have informed us that they



Fr. Susai in the church construction zone

have exhausted their monthly use of our other food banks and still require assistance. Several bags of groceries are distributed on a daily basis. This work is completely done through volunteers to the church.

We are in the process of rebuilding the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton. A fire on Aug. 30, 2020, has become the opportunity to enhance this National Indigenous Catholic parish that now serves the growing Indigenous population of about 85,000 in the Edmonton area.

We have begun a campaign to raise two million dollars to make improvements to the church not covered by insurance, such as a new elevator, safer stairs, and an efficient heating system as well as modifications to the sanctuary, including a symbolic tipi of four poles over the altar.

Our greatest hope is that our parish can be a “Galilee of the Nations,” a place where the good news can be explored, healing promoted, and reconciliation fostered between all the nations that have found a home in this land. Our vision is that Sacred Heart Parish will be a meeting place where people who hold in common the Christian faith can encounter each other and learn how our neighbours experience the world we share.

Respectfully yours in Christ,

*Fr. Susai Jesu, OMI, and Fr. Mark Blom, OMI*



Volunteers Anna Beaulieu and Vernie Libiran preparing lunches





# For the children!

**BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI**

CHINCHA ALTA, Peru – The need for help doesn't end.

We are still working and just got two classrooms built in a most poor area that was once the city dump. At this writing the parents and the teachers are putting in the doors and the windows. Once they finish, we will put down the concrete floors. We delivered 2,000 kits of school items for the poor children and they were so happy to receive them.

This school has 300 children and no toilets. There is no clean running-water system in the whole area and God only knows when such a system will be installed. So, I have plans to build toilets. I hope to build a water-holding tank so that the dear children can at least wash their hands.

Our parish churches are still closed to the public and we can only allow 20 per cent attendance at mass. Of course the collections are way down, and this does cause problems. When I make up a list of things to do for future projects, there are changes in what we can and can't do. For example, I bought all the iron rods for the building of another chapel and all was ready for the start of the construction when the Town Hall

closed its doors to the public due to the pandemic and therefore the land papers could not be signed by the authorities.

So, I always have a back-up plan, and started work on building eight small houses for the homeless. Of course, the homeless families must participate in the actual work, because with me there is no Santa Claus, only the great donations from Canada, the United States and Ireland.

It has been two years since I've seen my family and friends in Canada and God only knows when I can get home once more. But there are so many people living in such awful conditions, and I have nothing to complain about.

Thank you all in Canada for your great service. I do appreciate all that you help me get done for us here so far away from your home.

Take care. In Christ and Mary.

*Blaise*

## 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. To view an excellent instructive tutorial on how you can increase the value of your donation of securities and earn a tax credit at the same time: <https://omilacombe.ca/powerful-way-leave-legacy-2/>

# Reconciliation is a task for us all

Centre Oblat   
A Voice For Justice

BY JOE GUNN

OTTAWA – Beginning in late May 2021, ground-penetrating radar allowed several First Nations to confirm the location of graves near former residential schools. How are Catholics to respond?

Catholics administered almost 70 per cent of the schools. The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate ran 48 schools, including several where the location of graves were identified, such as in Kamloops and Cranbrook, BC, and Cowessess, SK.

The discoveries are not new – they confirm memories of survivors. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) 266-page "Missing Children and Unmarked Burials" report initially identified 3,200 souls. More graves of children will surely be found.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Oblate apology which is still a very relevant and important guide for our reconciliation efforts today. The Oblates apologized not only for their role in administering residential schools, but also for "the part we played in the cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious imperialism" of the

Canada Day in Ottawa



time. Further, Oblates apologized for *“the existence of the schools themselves.”* Updates on current Oblate responses can be found at <https://omilacombe.ca/>.

Our task today is to “live into” the apology in concrete ways.

Call to Action #58 of the TRC called for the pope to come to Canada and apologize. Not only has the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) not invited the pope to Canada to do this, but the Conference itself has not issued an apology. This has led tens of thousands of Canadians to communicate with the CCCC, highlighting the need for these apologies to be made. The Oblates have said it would be a great grace for the church in Canada were Pope Francis to come and offer such an apology.

Friends of the Oblates may be inclined to respond with defensiveness, impatience, resentment or even denial. Media reports can become easy targets of our ire. Some leaders even suggest it is the church that is being persecuted. Rather, let’s recognize that, in the first place, this is not primarily about *our* feelings! We all were and are complicit in Canada’s sinful colonial history. Christians are invited to minister through developing a “preferential option for the poor.”

In 2013, Pope Francis stated, *“This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the sensus fidei, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church’s pilgrim way.”* (Evangelii Gaudium, #198.)

In the context of residential schools in Canada, Catholics are challenged to find Christ in the suffering of Indigenous peoples today. By listening, embracing their wisdom, and once again becoming their colleagues in changing colonial structures of oppression, this moment of crisis could become a moment of grace for us all.

*(Joe Gunn is the Executive Director/Directeur general  
of Centre Oblate – A Voice for Justice)*



# Oblate apology, 1991

On July 24, 1991, in the presence of media representatives and up to 20,000 Indigenous People gathered at Lac Ste Anne (Alberta) for their annual pilgrimage, the Oblate superiors of the Canadian Region, through their president, the Reverend Douglas Crosby, OMI, voiced an apology to the Native Peoples for certain aspects of their missionary presence and ministry among Native peoples. In part, it said:

*"In sympathy with recent criticisms of Native Residential Schools, we wish to apologize for the part we played in the setting up and the maintaining of those schools. We apologize for the existence of the schools themselves, recognizing that the biggest abuse was not what happened in the schools, but that the schools themselves happened, that the primal bond inherent within families was violated as a matter of policy, that children were usurped from their natural communities, and that, implicitly and explicitly, these schools operated out of the premise that European languages, traditions, and religious practices were superior to native languages, traditions, and religious practices. The residential schools were an attempt to assimilate aboriginal peoples and we played an important role in the unfolding of this design. For this we sincerely apologize."*

## LAC STE. ANNE

The Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage grounds have been sacred for generations of people and are widely known as a place of healing. The annual pilgrimage in honor of Saint Anne is one of the most unique and memorable spiritual gatherings in North America.

# In Prayer

*We offer you our sorrow* for the wrongs committed against the people of this land, our First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Canada's Indian Residential Schools.

*We offer you our contrition* for what was allowed to happen, and for what will never be.

*We offer you our repentance* for the injustices borne of arrogance and the harm done through indifference.

*We pray for comfort* for the families and communities whose children, siblings, family, and friends were taken from home but did not return.

*We pray for consolation* of hearts wounded through separation and trauma.

*We pray for healing* of bodies, minds, and spirits wounded through abuse and oppression.

*We ask for clear eyes*, that we may face the story of our nation and our Church with honesty.

*We ask for open hearts*, that we may hear the stories of Indigenous Peoples with humility.

*We ask for courage*, that we may once again ask our brothers and sisters for forgiveness.

*We declare our desire* to be a people who pursue peace.

*We declare our resolve* to be a people who remember.

*We declare our commitment* to be a people of truth and reconciliation.

*(An excerpt from a prayer by Darcie Lich, Oblate Associate)*

# A marriage of cultures

**BY LES KWIATKOWSKI, OMI**

LAC STE. ANNE, AB – We had wonderful celebration of a wedding ceremony in early August on the pilgrimage grounds at Wakamne (God's Lake).

Weddings are joyful and happy celebrations in Indigenous communities. It is a celebration of a new family, a family that enriches community life and brings children.

The wedding was a blend of Christian liturgy and Native traditional rituals and prayers. I was presiding over the Christian ceremony and our Elder and Spiritual Leader Charles Letendre led the traditional ceremony.

The teepee was set up by a few young men under the experienced eye of a spiritual leader.

The mother of the bride prepared all the decoration. A buffalo hide, which is a symbol of abundance, was used to cover the chairs where the couple sat.

Fr. Les Kwiatkowski, OMI, (left) and Elder Charles Letendre, of the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation



When everything was ready, the groom arrived, followed by his best man. Drummers sang a song as the bride walked down the aisle and joined her husband. Both were invited to sit on chairs prepared for them by Charles Letendre.

Smudging took place as part of the purification and cleansing ceremony before I welcomed everyone, read the Gospel and said a few words.

Before the exchange of wedding vows, two eagle fathers were tied to the hair of the bride and groom as a sign of prayer and spiritual life. Charles explained the meaning of eagle fathers and asked them to make prayer life part of their married life.

The couple then exchanged the wedding vows, holding hands as the rings were blessed and placed on their fingers.

The next ritual involved Charles linking their hands with a rope as a sign of union that shouldn't be separated.

At that moment, we both prayed over them, asking Wake (God) to bless them and to make them strong in their married life. All prayed The Lord's Prayer to conclude the service.

After the blessing, they were presented as a new family, as husband and wife. The drummers then took over and the newlywed couple walked away.

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## Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters

Orange Shirt Day is held on September 30 each year. It encourages awareness of the history of residential schools and their continuing effects on Indigenous people and communities.





# Fr. Schroeder celebrated

CALGARY, AB – Dr. Maurice (Moe) Schroeder, who is an ordained Oblate priest as well as a physician, received the Alumnus of Distinction for Service Award from the Cumming School of Medicine at the University of Calgary.

Fr. Schroeder lived and worked in Peru from 1978 to 2017. His first five years in Peru were spent at a rural mobile clinic in the high Amazon on the Huallaga River. He left Peru briefly to study at the Prince Leopold School of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, Belgium, and then worked in the Hansen's Disease program in Haiti for three years.

He returned to Peru in 1986 with his colleague Dr. Jack MacCarthy to work in the Centro de Salud Santa Clotilde and the Micro-Red Napo, a jurisdiction of about 100 villages on 400 kilometres of the Napo River in the tropical rain forest of the low Amazon. Dr. Schroeder performed a wide spectrum of clinical medicine and surgery, both at the rural hospital and the riparian out-lying clinics while focusing on the education and development of local village health workers.

Prior to leaving Peru in 2017, Dr. Schroeder co-founded two not-for-profit organizations for the continuing sustainability of health care programs – the Civil Association “Pango” program and the Santa Clotilde Hospital Endowment Fund (SCHEF).

Fr. Schroeder is retired from practicing medicine and now resides in Battleford, SK, where he is involved in the First Nations dialogue with Nakoda and Cree reserves as part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

Fr. Moe Schroeder and his award



# *In your words*

BY CORRINE GIGNAC, SNJM

WINDSOR, ON – I was introduced to the Oblates in 1954 when I entered the novitiate of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary in Outremont, PQ. I learned that Eulalie Durocher, together with two companions, founded our community in 1843. I also learned that their first spiritual director was Fr. Telmon, OMI. He was followed by Fr. Allard, OMI, who became their novice master, professor of pedagogy and chaplain.

In 1984, when I took a sabbatical after teaching for 28 years, I spent 10 months in Arnprior, ON, where I was re-introduced to the Oblates.

I did pastoral work in the French parish St. Jérôme in Windsor for 15 years.

In 2006, because of declining numbers, our convent was sold and 18 of us sisters moved to Devonshire Seniors' Retirement Residence. This is where I began another Apostolate – making money for the needy. I grow plants, especially violets, which I 'give away' for a donation. I sew (less now), make minor repairs, and lengthen or shorten pants/trousers for a donation. The largest amount I receive is from collecting empties – wine, beer, alcohol bottles. One of my friends helps me take these to the beer story (luckily, I still drive).

I don't recall how I found out about your particular mission, but I must say I decided upon it quickly when I discovered it was an Oblate one.



# The gift of the Masaai

BY JEAN PIERRE FAYE, OMI

*"As we evangelize the poor, we allow the poor to evangelize us."*

*(OMI Charism)*



Fr. Jean Pierre with the Maasai

KISAJU, Kenya – On the first Sunday after Pentecost, I had an opportunity to celebrate Mass in Masaai land, my first exposure to a Masaai community.

After the mass in Kisaju Parish, Fr. Gideon Rimberia, the parish priest, and I went to the Masaai community, many miles away from the parish. I was excited by the scenery and various

Fr. Jean Pierre taking a selfie with the children



wild animals such as zebra and ostrich, which I'd never seen in person.

Fr. Gideon dropped me at a small community, about 15 people, dressed in their traditional clothes. Being my first time to meet the Masaai face-to-face, I was very impressed! I admired and felt uplifted by their active and energetic participation during the liturgy. Their offertories were mostly fresh milk, like the shepherd's presents to infant Jesus in Bethlehem.

I'd only known these people through West African TV documentaries. But there are similar ethnic people in Senegal, my country, called the Alupular and, in central Africa, a nomadic people called the Mbororo.

I never thought I would ever be in their midst and offer the Holy Sacrament.

Even as I offered them the Holy Mass, I learned from them humility and the sense of welcoming. Their faces were shining in joy; it was as if to express the mystery of the Holy Trinity – one God in three persons that we celebrated that day.

Their joy challenged me a lot. It was an unforgettable experience for me.

*(Fr. Faye is from Senegal and has joined the Kenya Mission)*



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# Kenya

## NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

### MAY 15

It has been a wet, and at times cold week in Nairobi and Kenya. Many parts of the country had floods. Sadly, a number of people drowned – mainly in the slums.

I was happy to meet with the youth in town and they looked a bit hungry so I made sure they took a decent meal as they left. I wasn't expecting it to cost so much, but it's a good reminder to people like me the cost of running a family.



Gerry Conlan, OMI



Nairobi youth group meeting

Christine, our vice-chair of *St Stephen's on the Move*, sent us pictures of her Government Primary School in *Tharaka Nithi*, a poor part of Méru about 100 kilometres east of Kionyo. It



Tharaka Nithi primary school

shocked even me when I saw the pictures. After school reopened, only 15 of the expected 35 children had returned: When asked about the factors causing absenteeism, she said: *drunkenness of the parents, rape cases, poverty (lack of exam fees, uniforms, stationery, as well as food), no one to mentor them or motivate them at home, early marriages, domestic violence, babysitting younger siblings, going for daily work to earn money.*

Let's pray for them all.

Fr. Fidele went to Larmudiac Parish in Nakuru Diocese and reported the Oblates there are doing well, but the wider community is really struggling due to the lockdown just ended.

We heard comments that although people were not allowed to come to the parish for mass, they had no problem going to the markets. It's a delicate balance: when to help and when to hold back to avoid dependency?



Tharaka Nithi primary school staff room

Tharaka Nithi primary school kitchen



## MAY 22

We finished the week with a great celebration for St. Eugene de Mazenod. It was nice to have the pre-novices, postulants and ourselves at the House of Hospitality in the new residence at Karen. Fr. Fidele led and preached the mass, and our students led the singing very well.



Students are happy to receive Crocs

Fr. Fidele headed to Kionyo the next day and celebrated the St. Eugene's mass with the community and lay associates, there. Along the way he kindly delivered a sack of Crocs, the plastic slip-on footwear, to Christine, our youth member. George, in Nairobi, had bought 40 pair at a good rate. They are for the children in the small school at Tharaka Nithi. Our youth are planning a fund-raiser to get more things for the kids. Christine wants me to come soon and visit because the kids have not seen a white man.



Happiness is a pair of Crocs

Dancan, our cook, is doing a good job and is very patient with the live-in rule. He rarely goes out and always asks for permission, knowing how sensitive we are to the risks of COVID.

## MAY 29

Sunday was a day of rejoicing and the conclusion of two years hard work by the Oblates and the parishioners in Méru, especially the parish leaders. Congratulations to Fr. Daquin and the team there: we are quite proud of them.

It was the opening of the newly expanded church, and the Canonical Erection of the parish of St. Eugene de Mazenod in Irinda, Méru. It was a long day, starting at 11 a.m. and



Gathering before the official opening mass in Irinda parish

ending at 4 p.m. Bishop Salesius Mugambi was very, very happy with all the developments and plans for water and a presbytery. So, we are now official and the parish is given to the Oblates in perpetuity.

Our new youth member (now teacher) Christine took great delight in distributing the Crocs to the children at Tharaka Nithi. She said it was amazing because most

of them had never received a gift before. Some of the children already have some form of footwear. They sometimes steal their mom's or dad's slippers, so the parents will also appreciate the gift of Crocs for the kids.

## JUNE 5

Life seems to be kind of normal, at least for me. The 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. curfew is still in place around Kenya. But life is not very normal for most of the workforce. The economy is down and the national debt increasing.

## JUNE 12

COVID is not the top story in Kenya this week. It's the very large national budget presented to parliament. I listened to the local TV one night for an hour and gave up. It's another debt for the children of Kenya. Let's hope all the infrastructure attracts more businesses here to generate GDP revenue.

Last week was a special day at Nyumbani children's home. The Feast of Corpus Christi is the feast day for the nuns who look after the children. So, after mass, we did a procession around the cottages for the children, blessing each one with





Dancan's first attempt  
at biscuit making

the Blessed Sacrament, followed by coffee and a homemade cake!

## JUNE 19

We think winter is coming early – although the Canadians will laugh at that – but the 5 a.m. starts are now down to 12 degrees! The days were low 20s and over-cast with occasional bursts of sunshine, so the hot-water boosters were turned on. This grumpy treasurer is counting the cost and praying for sunshine! Ha, ha.

On a more exciting level, Dancan, our cook, can now make biscuits a lot quicker than mandazzi (a kind of donut), so I'm hoping he will make regular batches each week.

Fr. Daquin and Br. Moses successfully organized and ran a child protection seminar in Méru Parish this week. Child abuse in Kenya is a huge problem, and we hope it will start to make people more aware of the damage, pain and suffering of victims. Corruption and poverty drive a lot of out-of-court settlements that rarely provide assistance to the victim(s).

Some government employees in the courts and children's departments are open to corruption. Even family members are often more interested in money from the perpetrators than anything else. Perhaps, because it is never talked about openly, people are ignorant of the emotional suffering it causes, and the long-lasting psychological effects.

Pre-novices Ferstinus  
and Peter on a  
pastoral visit





COVID-19 vaccines dispensed at Mutuini Hospital

Thankfully, the seminar attendees included senior government employees, politicians, school leaders, teachers and parish leaders. Please pray for it to have lasting positive effects and transformative changes in people's attitudes. We will continue this work.

Our youth member Christine shared how her school in Tharaka Nithi called for a parents' meeting. Only six came. Then she shared that a Class 6 boy was circumcised the traditional way, but had complications so he had to go for medical care. Sadly, they don't return to primary school after circumcision. He was probably age 14. It's a remote area, and culture still often trumps the law. It is very sad. But we pray the next generation will be more educated and changes will come.

## **JUNE 26**

Some of our brothers in training at Cedara, in South Africa, have caught the COVID-19 bug, so please keep them in your prayers. Meanwhile, parts of Western Kenya are in lockdown.

## **JULY 3**

Fr. Fidele is doing good work at the prisons. Our mission assisted a woman leaving prison and returning to Tanzania after many years, but she had no money. The funds we gave



Mashirika is bid farewell as she is released from prison

her were gratefully received. Fidele noted that many of the other inmates were genuinely sad to see her go and they all prayed for her.

## **JULY 10**

Daniel, our youth chairman, is busy organizing the youth to visit a small, impoverished orphanage somewhere in Nairobi. We will go and take some food and sanitary materials for the 30 kids. It's always inspiring how our youth dig deep for the kids even as they themselves struggle.

## **JULY 17**

The cold weather relented a little, but the COVID-19 cases continue, especially in Western Kenya. Economic necessities to keep the country moving, and people getting work to live, forces

Kenya to keep moving normally: everyone just uses masks. For ourselves, although a bit tiring, we try to pick and drop our members to schools, etc., to reduce the risk of COVID-19 coming into the community. Life is too busy to worry much.

The son of our former cook came to see me because he needed exam fees to be paid at Don Bosco Boystown. He also requested help with daily transport and breakfast because his mother has no work and no money. With Fr. Fidele's approval, we agreed he do one day's work per week around the house to pay for his weekly needs. We then sent him home with a box of flour and fruit to help the family for a few days.

## JULY 24

Politics is just starting to heat up again in Kenya as we prepare for the 2022 presidential election. I've been advised to completely avoid night travel and carry little money around during the day.

The big excitement for the week here in Karen was our first vocations workshop for 2021. Nine candidates came and stayed at the pre-novitiate for four days.

## JULY 31

Warnings are flying around on social media here that there are no more ICU beds available in Nairobi. If you get seriously sick, it could be very bad as resources are now stretched to the max. Another five religious died this week – two priests from Nakuru, and three nuns from Consolata. Thankfully the

Mass is celebrated at Jamii Bora in Kisaju parish







Fr. Gerry celebrates a baptism

Oblates are doing well. I'm happy we have a medical oxygen cylinder and mask in the house in case we need to rush it to one of our parishes.

## AUGUST 7: COVID HITS MISSION

This week Coronavirus came to visit our Karen community – courtesy of our parish team at Larmudiac, Nakuru. It seems that Br. Collins carried the Delta variant from his holidays.

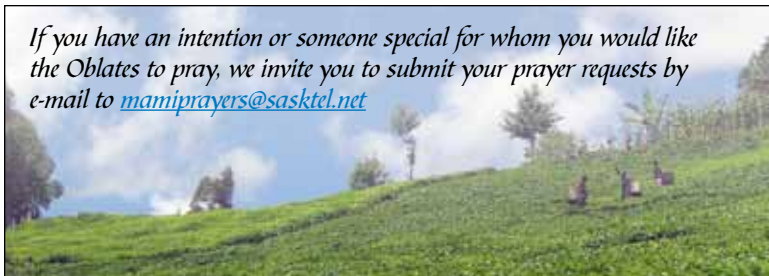
Br. Mandume from Karen was also there and got infected and the two of them failed to say anything to Fr. Faustin. Over the next week, everyone was infected.

On Wednesday I took Fr. Faustin for a COVID-19 test because he was not feeling well enough to drive. By Thursday evening we had received confirmation that he was positive. Then, Friday morning, I took Br. Zachary, Br. Mandume and Fr. Eugene, and the four of us were tested. Happily, Fr. Eugene and I were negative, but Br. Mandume and Br. Zachary were positive.

I can't finish the week without saying something about the wonderful work of Dancan our cook. The last few days he has been like a caterer with so many in quarantine needing individual service. We try to help, but he does a lot.

Take care and God Bless. For those in Canada, know that we are praying for you daily. Just remember, God is in charge!

*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)*



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