

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

Oblate Spirit

June 2022



Celebrate

Three cheers

You could call him the priest who *stole* the show.

Fr. Susai Jesu was in Rome as part of the delegation meeting with Pope Francis when the Pope issued an apology to the First Nations of Canada for the church's role in residential schools. As the session ended, and Pope Francis began his departure from the room, Fr. Susai broke protocol and boldly approached the Pope to present him with a beautifully crafted stole.

Fr. Susai, the pastor at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton, relates his most memorable story on the following pages. It is a story that will continue, because Pope Francis will be in Edmonton and is scheduled to attend Fr. Susai's church on July 25.

But this was just one of a few reasons to celebrate recently.

The Oblate mission in Kenya marked its 25th anniversary in late May, and at the same time commissioned the new church in Kionyo. Fr. Ken Thorson, below, cuts the celebratory cake.

We also celebrate you, our Oblate and MAMI members, who so graciously stepped forward to assist the Oblates in Ukraine. We hoped to raise \$20,000 to send to the Oblate missionaries

who stayed in Ukraine to assist those affected by the attacking Russians. That you have donated more than \$300,000 is so beyond what could have been expected.

We are humbled, and most thankful for you, for your support of Ukraine and the Oblate mission in Kenya, and for the Oblate who dared to be bold.



John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators

Meeting Pope Francis

BY SUSAI JESU, OMI

O what a beginning and what an end? Thanks be to God.

EDMONTON – Despite working closely with Archbishop Richard Smith at various levels of meetings and planning with the Indigenous peoples, I never thought of going to Rome as a secondary representative of the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples.



Fr. Susai presents a stole to the Pope





It all began in late January 2022, when the dates were announced for the end-of-March visit. A few of my parishioners started asking me, “Who is going to represent our Indigenous National Parish?” I said that we do have one primary representative, Garry Gagnon, who was chosen by the Bishops of Canada along with the Indigenous representatives.

People kept saying they needed me to represent them because I had been hearing their stories. When I discussed this with Fr. Mark Blom, OMI, he immediately responded that, “You should go so that our parishioners can hear the first-hand experience from you.”

While I was very happy with his support and encouragement, I made it clear to everyone that I do not want the parish funds to support my trip; rather, I would prefer that the people finance me. Out of joyful hope, I asked Archbishop Richard if he would allow me to represent our parish as a secondary delegate, to which he quickly made an extraordinary effort to enrol my name and make the trip to Rome possible.

I had to seek our Provincial Fr. Ken Thorson’s kind permission to leave Edmonton to attend this gathering in Rome.

Fr. Ken not only granted permission but also made necessary arrangements for my stay and lodging at our General House in Rome, which brought my expenses down.

Once I knew I was going to Rome to represent our church, I asked Veronica Kennedy to make a stole for me to wear while in Rome. She made one for me and another for Archbishop Emeritus Sylvain Lavoie, OMI, whose journey was made possible by a good friend, former Chief Blaine Favel of Calgary.

One of the primary reasons to go to Rome was to represent the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton. A second reason was to support the primary and secondary delegates spiritually and physically in Rome. A third was to carry my own personal experiences with Indigenous peoples' sharing of their both hurtful stories and good stories that I had heard over 14 years in Canada. A fourth reason was to represent all the Oblates who ever worked among the Indigenous Peoples, and particularly in the residential schools.

In Rome, we had morning prayer followed by daily mass. We had a pipe ceremony twice organized by Francois Paradis, OMI, and Lisa Raven, who were invited by Archbishop Albert Legat of Winnipeg. I was able to participate in the pipe ceremony for the success of the meeting with Pope Francis.





Oblates Susai Jesu
and Sylvain Lavoie

After each Indigenous group met with Pope Francis, there was a media briefing where we listened to their sharing and aspirations. I had ample opportunity to meet with a few primary delegates to listen to their stories and their own expectation of their coming to Rome.

One of the highlights for me was to witness the importance of the media coverage in that room from across the country and North America. Another important milestone was a meal for the Métis and the First Nations representatives along with a few bishops at the Oblate General House hosted by the Superior General Louis Lougen, OMI.

After the delicious meal, each one shared their personal experiences and expressed their gratitude for the Oblates who have been accompanying the Indigenous for hundreds of years in Canada. They also made a few requests to our Superior General. There was a separate meeting with the Inuit representatives organized by the Superior General. While I was not part of this gathering, the Superior General told us that it was a very good and productive meeting.

Drummers at the Vatican



During one of the break days, Bishop Sylvain and I were scheduled to tour the Vatican Museum with our group, only to realize the schedule had changed, so we did so on our own. It is an array of 13 galleries full of amazing art, sculpture and tapestries. That tour ended in the Sistine Chapel where we could appreciate the beauty of art that has been expertly restored.

A final touch was a private tour of St. Peter's Basilica by a friend, Fr. Michael Santiago, who works in the dicastery of inter-religious dialogue. He was able to show us some corners, paintings, and the original foundation stones of the first basilica built by Constantine that neither of us had seen before. That was amazing.

MEETING WITH POPE FRANCIS

April 1 was a historical day for all the Indigenous Peoples of Canada and for the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton. After our morning prayer and mass, we began our journey to the Papal Palace to meet Pope Francis.

Oblate General
House in Rome





Sistine Chapel ceiling

What an experience it was to go through security and finally reach the veranda of the magnificent hall for our final encounter with Pope Francis. Since we had more than an hour, I tried my best to approach other dignitaries, including CCCB President Bishop Poisson, to find a way to give this meaningful hand-made orange stole to Pope Francis.

Everyone said that it was not possible as security is an issue and one had to be on a list. I was fine with their answers because I know it is not so easy to do anything without prior arrangements. When I saw so many secondary representatives, I knew Pope Francis would not go for a handshake with everybody. I almost lost hope, yet there was something telling me it may be possible.

When the time came to enter, I was among the last to be seated.

I didn't get a place where I could take a good picture because in front there were a few chiefs wearing their head-dresses, making it difficult to take pictures. After 20 minutes of the meeting, I followed my instinct to move forward and stood with a few others to take good pictures.

Then I realized that my orange stole still was on my chair. I went back, collected the stole and slowly was able to advance to a point near the door where Pope Francis would exit.

After his final blessing in English, he said “bye bye” to us all and was coming towards the exit door where I stood and spread the orange stole. Seeing the orange stole, he came directly toward me, and I was able to place the stole on him.

I quickly explained to him the meaning of the orange colour and its significance. I told him that this symbolizes the residential school survivors’ hurt, reconciliation and peace. He said “thank you” to me and I told him that I would like a picture with him.

He held my hands as if he knew me well.

At this time, I cannot express how I felt to be with him. I owe my gratitude to Almighty God for leading to this encounter and for the people who prayed for my good and meaningful trip.

I was overwhelmed that I was able to explain the meaning of the orange stole, and that he received it so gracefully. That brought immense joy and happiness.

Many people, including the archbishops who were there, congratulated and appreciated me for my courage in offering this beautiful and meaningful orange stole.

I witnessed the joy of both the primary and secondary representatives about the Pope’s apology, a joy and contentment that continued with their drumming and singing in front of St. Peter’s Basilica Square.

What made this experience even more outstanding was to represent Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in a meaningful way by offering this orange stole. On behalf of the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples, I gave a letter to Pope Francis inviting him to come to Edmonton to bless our Sacred Heart Church as a symbol of healing and reconciliation.

Thanks be to God!

Celebrating 25 years

BY HARLEY MAPES, OMI

KIONYO, Kenya – “The Oblates are different. We never had priests and brothers like this before! They help us grow as a Christian community and have better lives. They don’t walk ahead of us; they walk with us.”

That sentiment, expressed in various ways by the people of numerous parishes and missions during a recent visit to Kenya, reached its culmination in Kionyo on May 22. There, thousands of people gathered to celebrate both the anniversary of Canadian Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate arriving in Kionyo and the inauguration of a new parish church.

New Kionyo church





Food preparation for the celebration

Anniversary day dawned with a clear blue sky arching over fog-filled valleys tinged red and orange by the rising sun – immutable Mount Kenya overlooking it all from a distance. Hours earlier, people had already gathered in the pre-dawn to prepare for the many visitors; smoke rose from cooking fires over which sat enormous, bubbling pots of arrowroot and sweet potatoes.

Coming from the arid plains surrounding Kisaju, the people of St. Paul Parish and its surrounding missions joined those of St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Larmudiac, located amidst the dramatic scenery of the Rift Valley in travelling northeast to the heartland of the Méru people where Frs. Harold Kaufmann, Joachim Singarajah, Ken Forster and Bill Stang arrived 25 years earlier at the invitation of the local bishop.

What they found at the time is now unrecognizable. Where sat the stone St. Stephen's Parish church, housing a few hundred people, is now occupied by a soaring edifice seating up to 1,800 people; boarding schools have been replaced by a network of day schools; roads that were a white-knuckled adventure are paved (although, Kenyan traffic and driving habits mean that road trips are still a life-and-death adventure!) The amazing changes in the Kionyo parish are mirrored by the



Ceremonial opening of
the church door by
Bishop Salesius Mugambi

growth of the Oblate mission. The original four founders have grown to a Kenyan mission of 15 Oblates and several in formation. Invited by local bishops, the community has spread to distant parts of the country.

What has not changed with the passage of time is the importance of faith and Kenyan's ability to celebrate it with joyous enthusiasm. After breakfast was provided to the many who arrived on overnight buses, people moved to the front of the church where the principal architect gave a history of its construction. Then, dramatically, Bishop Salesius Mugambi pounded on the church doors with his crozier, beginning a five-hour inaugural mass and blessing. The ceremony was a colourful swirl of energetic dancing, astounding harmonies, piercing ululations, and solemn ritual.

In closing remarks, Kiraitu Murungi, Méru governor, stood and spoke movingly to the assembled faithful, clergy, religious and politicians of how the Oblates had come and worked with people in a way they had never experienced before. The phrase,

Church was packed for the celebration





Traditional dancers

“they walk with us”, heard in so many other parishes and missions during the preceding weeks, was used to describe Ken Forster initiating the Mount Kenya East Water Project and Bill Stang “the walking priest” travelling from mission to mission on foot, greeting people by name and inspiring young men to join the Oblate community.

Umojah (togetherness) ... close to the people we serve ... continues to be foundational to Oblate ministry in Kenya. We were sent to evangelize and, together, Oblates and laity, have worked to encourage both human potential and the Spirit of God among His people. May the following 25 years be as fruitful as the first.

K E N Y A

reflections



Moved to tears

BY HARLEY MAPES, OMI

(Br. Harley Mapes was in the Kenya mission in 2003)

OTTAWA – We have become accustomed to living in a thoroughly secularized society in Canada. We feel somewhat embarrassed about sharing our faith – wondering how others will view us. Secularism has permeated society to such a degree that we hesitate to ask, and people are reluctant to support faith projects such as building a church.



Students dancing

FAITH

It's a totally different reality in Kenya! Faith permeates society and is freely expressed. It's assumed that public gatherings will open with prayer; no one sees that as a conflict. As Canadians, we come with the idea that to help means development projects; however, in Kenya, I heard people's heartfelt pleas for assistance with building their church. For them, it is a place where the community gathers, draws hope, and expresses together their joyful trust in God.



Students dancing

JOY

I was always struck by how we have such material wealth in Canada, yet our suicide rate keeps climbing; many people find life meaningless. In Kenya, I saw and experienced crushing poverty beyond anything I could imagine, and yet, people were joyful; they had a reason to live. Often, I was left wondering where

we, as a society, have gone wrong. Somehow, all our efforts miss the secret that Kenya still holds; happiness consists in our relationships with our neighbours and faith that God cares about us.

GENEROSITY

What encapsulates my experience of Kenyan generosity is being in the slums and visiting a very elderly woman. Her little shack was too small for four of us to sit together, so we had to go outside. She had one stool, but she borrowed from her neighbours rather than have us stand.

As a good host, she wanted to feed us, so she shared what she had. Never will I forget the sun glinting off the peel as she cut her single orange in four and handed each of us a section, a broad grin on her face, her eyes sparkling. The image that came to mind was the widow's mite. Here was a living example of someone who shared with joy and gratitude what she had, secure in the knowledge that God would provide for her next meal, although she had no idea how it would happen.

Mathare slums



CHALLENGES

I lived as a minority in Indigenous communities for most of my life, including growing up in a Métis community; however, Kenya was total immersion. Having such a strong sense of not blending into the crowd and not knowing what was culturally appropriate was a new experience.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

Surviving Kenyan roads in the rainy season.

ADVICE

To a Canadian missionary going to Kenya, I would offer the same advice I used to give first-year teachers in northern Saskatchewan: Be respectful of the people. They were here long before you came and will be here long after you're gone. They haven't been waiting all their lives for your brilliant insights. Go with the attitude that you have as much – and maybe more – to learn from them as they do from you. If you have never had to deal with being a member of a minority group, be prepared for a shock; it's a humbling experience.

St. Eugene school





Br. Harley gets a ride

CHERISHED MEMORIES

Undoubtedly, it was the time we (the pre-novices and I) spent in the slums. We went knowing nothing and learned so much. Faced with poverty that even the Kenyan pre-novices were unfamiliar with, our immediate reaction was to do something. “These people don’t even have pots to cook with. We have to help!”

Alice, who worked at the small school with a dirt floor, roughly cut boards for walls and a rusty, tin roof, listened to our anguished conversation and said to us with passionate certainty, “Brothers, how do you think these people lived before you came? Do you think they had nothing to cook with? Do you think they had nothing to eat? Do you think that is why you are here and what they need from you? No! That’s not what you have to give them. What they need from you is to know that God loves them, that He cares for them. They need to know you care about them. They don’t need you to bring cooking pots and food.”

Her words took us completely aback, but they set the tone for our ministry. As we went about the slums, visiting homes, listening to people's sorrows and joys, we were, at first, often approached for money. Our answer was always that we were there to be with people, to listen, and pray with them. At the time, and even as I sit here writing this years later, our response sounds useless. Surely, they needed us to organize a donation drive in Canada?

As the months went by, however, people stopped asking for money but instead asked us to come and spend time with them in their little shacks. Eventually, they expressed their surprise that we would come into their places and share their food; they were not unaware of their surrounding and situation. Their experience of visitors was that they came, handed things out, and quickly disappeared. Our approach led, on their part, to the desire to share with us.

When the tiny, one-room school closed for the holidays, we had to find a new place to have our lunch. The residents quickly organized themselves and insisted they would take care of us; five or six families contributed whatever food they could. They stood around us as we ate, their faces filled with pride and joy at their ability to share in return. The meal ended with, "Don't worry about next week, Brothers; other people already said they want to take care of giving you something to eat."

Never have I been so touched by someone's generosity. We had been in their shacks; we knew they had nothing, but when given the opportunity, they shared with us what little they had.

The memory of it still brings tears.

K E N Y A *reflections*



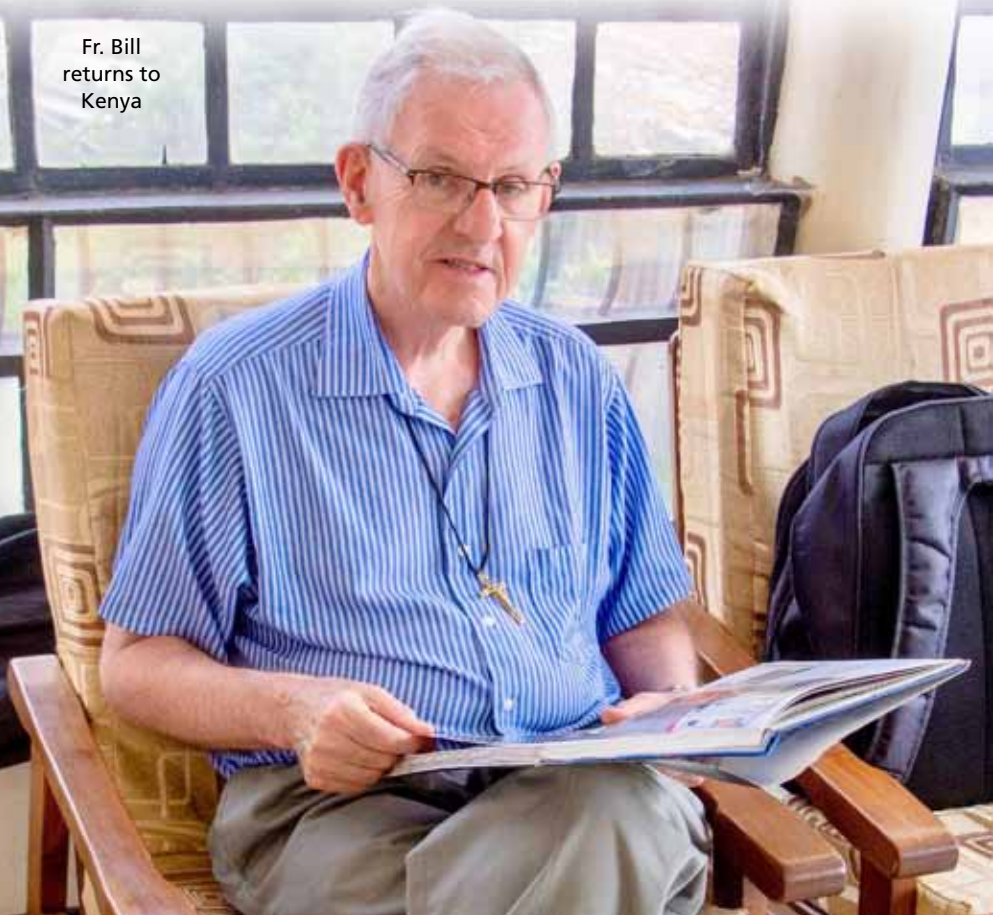
Touched to the heart

BY BILL STANG, OMI

(Fr. Stang was one of four Canadian Oblates assigned to start the Kenya mission)

SASKATOON – I left for Kenya in August 1997 and stayed until Feb. 4, 2004, when I returned home due to health issues.

Fr. Bill
returns to
Kenya



What impressed me the most was the deep faith of the Kenyan people. They were so faithful in coming to church.

They were well set up with a catechist for each of the 12 prayer houses we served at that time. If the priest could not come for mass on Sundays, the people did gather and the catechist would lead them in prayer.

I found it was so good to pray with the people, who were so musical. I so much enjoyed going to the prayer houses for mass on weekends. At first we would try to serve two places each on a Sunday. But this meant we could not spend much time with the people after mass, so the people agreed to have each of us serve just one prayer house each weekend. I enjoyed this because it gave me time to get to know the people in each place.

My greatest challenge was trying to learn the Kimeru language. I was not able to do this. We did have Fr. Salasio Kiranthia to help us with the language and we tried to do this for at least one year. Then it was time to move on and get more involved with the people.

What was good was that the people did speak some English and we could work together. I did learn to read the Kimeru language fluently, which allowed me to say mass in their language. I did take the time to translate the funeral and marriage rituals into the Kimeru language, allowing us to celebrate funerals and weddings in Kimeru.



Fr. Bill offers a blessing

My biggest accomplishment was to get to know the young people. I would walk to all the prayer houses and many would walk with me. Before long the young men would ask what they needed to do if they wanted to join the Oblates. Soon I had 14 young men wanting to join our Oblate community.

I then set up a time where we would deal with discernment of the vocation. I had about four sessions with them, going through what a vocation was all about.

Of the 14, four came back to me and said they would like to join the Oblates. This meant that we needed to begin a vocation program. We needed to find a place where we could live and work with these young men as they learned to be Oblates.

We found a good location in the city of Méru, where we set up the vocation pre-novitiate. At the start Br. Roman Zapatka,



Oblates Bill Stang and Ken Thorson

Fr. Bill is warmly greeting by a parishioner





Fr. Bill at St. Joseph the Worker parish

Fr. Joe Jacek and I began this work. Soon afterward Br. Harley Mapes replaced Br. Roman.

We started the pre-novitiate program in 2002 with eight enthusiastic young men. After a good year together, all eight pre-novices were ready to go to noviciate. We took four to Namibia and the other four went to Johannesburg in South Africa. All eight made their first vows and we then sent them

to Cedara for their studies. Of the eight, we still have two Oblate priests Fr. Gideon Mberia and Fr. Dionisius Ananua, and one Oblate brother, Joseph Kiruja Magambo.

I would encourage a new missionary to go to Kenya with an open heart and first try to learn the language and get to know the people. I would encourage them to listen to the people, to how they pronounce the words they use, what their needs seem to be. Listen, listen, listen!

I cherish the friendships and the relationships I had with many of the people. I still stay in touch with some of them. I must say that my experience in the Mission of Kenya was really what I as an Oblate was called to do. I was touched to the heart. Being a missionary to Kenya was very good for me.

I feel that we started this mission and I feel it was done well. I cherish this very much.

Solidarity vs war in Ukraine

Centre Oblat 
A Voice For Justice

BY JOE GUNN

OTTAWA – Images we’ve all seen on TV from the devastating war in Ukraine horrify us. Amnesty International’s evidence of war crimes committed by Russian forces (unlawful airstrikes that target residential buildings, as well as extrajudicial executions) move Christians to renew our prayers and action for peace.



Joe Gunn

Here in Ottawa, my next-door neighbour worries about the safety of his relatives in Odessa. A sign in his window reads, “Stop the War. Stop Putin.” My friend grew up in Saskatoon, the location of the MAMI office. Many Canadians might have fond memories of his father, former Governor General Ray Hnatyshyn.

As we search for ways to help, some actions might create negative implications over the longer term.

Most of us likely support Canada’s decision to send military aid, including lethal armaments like artillery pieces, to Ukrainian defenders. While Russian President Putin’s aggression must be confronted, there is legitimate worry over his threat to use nuclear weapons to destroy the shipments’ route or avoid a stalemate in the conflict. Targeted sanctions against the Russian oligarchs and blockading the country’s imports of high-tech elements needed to rebuild military assets, could prove effective in limiting this war.

Over the longer term, I’m torn by our federal government’s decision to increase defence spending by \$8 billion over the

next five years. One shudders at the “opportunity costs” of this commitment – the crying shame that our country will not use these resources to address so many other pressing priorities.

Some politicians and business leaders want to increase Canadian fossil fuel sales to diminish the 60 per cent of Russia’s export earnings that come from the sale of hydrocarbons. Creating that infrastructure would take years. It would also lock Canada into long term denial of what parliament has defined as “a national climate emergency.” Throwing more gas on this fire won’t put it out. As the Ukrainian contributor to the UN’s most recent climate science report suggested, “Human induced climate change and the war on Ukraine have the same roots – fossil fuels, and our dependence on them.” A better solution lies in lowering our energy use and building renewable energy sources for what we need. (Some environmentalists counter-propose “lend-lease programs” to export massive numbers of heat pumps to European homes dependent on Russian gas.)

Another friend of mine is raising money for the Red Cross’s humanitarian efforts. I remember Sophie, 12, when she was a pre-schooler. Sophie would visit my office to share a chat, gift some of her art, and eventually retreat after choosing a sweet. (I still have her handcrafted ornament that we hang on our Christmas tree every December.) Listening to CBC Radio one morning, I discovered that Sophie and her brothers Sam, 10, Ben, 8 and Ollie, 6, have been creating pins of Ukraine’s blue-and-yellow flag and selling them at school. In a thank you note for my donation, Sophie reported that they have raised almost \$10,000!

We all need to deepen solidarity with Ukraine ... by building a lasting peace.

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



Kenya

NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

MARCH 12

NAIROBI – Dionisius Ananua, OMI, conducted a seminar for widows. Widowed life is not an easy situation because many find themselves in a precarious condition in life. Mostly, they face rejection when the husband dies and their properties can be taken by force. Those who are left in peace face other challenges of raising and educating the children alone. The parish has organized a platform to listen, understand and empower the widows and bring them together to share their experiences and give each other support.

Felister, Daniel and Solomon are among the aged Christians of St. Joseph's The Worker Larmudiac Parish. They want to attend church services but can't because of their health and age. The church makes every effort to visit them at their homes and ensure they are spiritually nourished and physically cared for by their families.



Gerry Conlan, OMI

Fr. Dionisius conducted a seminar for widows



MARCH 19

Let's keep praying for Ukraine and our mission in Kenya. In Ukraine, please pray for the 25 Oblates who refused to leave and are busy helping the local people there. If the Russians take over, there is a strong possibility they will be killed.



Kionyo youth help the elderly by repairing homes and cleaning grounds

APRIL 2

Br. David at Kionyo organized the youth to help some elderly people with garden trimming and small repairs. Someone took along a cabbage to share. It is nice to see this generosity to the elders, and surely the youth involved also felt good about themselves.

Sadly, Kisaju Postulancy ran out of water this week. We are working to equip the new borehole and provide some relief.

APRIL 9

Our Nairobi Oblate youth group continued collecting money from members to buy food and children's needs for an orphanage they support. Almost all orphanages in Kenya get minimal support from the government.



Nairobi Oblate youth visit an orphanage



Pre-novitiates perform at the Waumini radio station

During the week, Fr. Cosmas took the pre-novices to *Radio Waumini*, a Catholic station, where they sang some religious songs on air. About one-third of the Kenya population is Catholic, and many listen to *Radio Waumini* each day. *Waumini* loosely means believers.

In Méru, Fr. Daquin and Br. Stephen Mose organized and ran a special child protection workshop with children six to 13 years old. It was animated by a team of professional lay people trained in this ministry. Knowledge equals power, and now the children know where to ask for help. Child abuse is widespread. Many children probably don't know it is abuse. The workshops are long overdue, and we hope these will now spread through all our parishes and start to make a difference. The challenge will be dealing with cases that get reported because the police and courts are already overloaded with many criminal activities.

As a note of interest, during the week, Fr. John Mbinda was appointed bishop of Lodwar Diocese, a difficult mission in the

hot, central north of Kenya where there is much poverty and not much infrastructure. It is well known in Kenya that the Catholic Church was, and still is, the institution that develops schools and medical clinics for the locals in the remote areas long before the government finally arrives.

APRIL 16

Fr. Fidele celebrated Holy Thursday Mass at Langata Maximum Women's Prison and the prisoners had their feet washed. I'm sure it was a touching moment. Fr. Fidele regularly helps the prisoners inside and more so when they leave. The Oblates often provide seed capital to help the women set up a small business so they can look after themselves, empowering people instead of just feeding them.

Once again, our Nairobi Oblate youth group stepped up to the plate and took food and other gifts to help children in a struggling orphanage in Nairobi.

Fr. Fidele washes prisoners' feet during Holy Thursday mass





Br. Moses shares food
with a shepherd boy

APRIL 30

Finally made it back to Kenya from the Australia vacation, a trip that took 40 hours from Sydney before a quick unpack and bed for a long sleep. I managed three big bags full of goodies for the mission. Fr. Fidele was happy to see me back to help ease the pressure.

Fr. Nzioka, Fr. Daquin and Br. Phelix were around for

most of this week to complete visa applications for Canada where five of us are attending the convocation, a meeting of OMI Lacombe Canada Oblates held every three years. We'll be celebrating mass and spreading the Kenya mission story at parishes while there.

MAY 8

Fr. Leon Niyonkuru, OMI, joined us this week. Fr. Leon is from the Oblates in Namibia, where he joined the Oblates after escaping from Burundi during the terrible civil war there in the 1990s. He will stay with us and study Canon Law for three years. Fr. Betuel Kinangeni, OMI, from the Congo, joined the community at Karen in April. He has come here to learn the German language before being sent to Germany as a missionary.



New postulants
Charles and Brian



Tharaka Nithi school loses its roof in a storm

Our Nairobi Oblate Youth elected our budding lawyer, Fabian, as the new Chairperson. They are busy organizing a visit to youth member Christine and her poor school in Tharaka Nithi.

MAY 15

The Mission is busy preparing for the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Oblates in Kenya, 25 years of life for Kionyo Parish, and the opening and dedication of a new church.

The drought in Kenya is terrible. Between Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan, they are talking about 20 million people starving to death. The UN has been trying to get attention to this disaster, but everyone is focused on Ukraine. I understand several groups of religious sisters in the U.S. are donating \$1,000,000 to assist Ukraine refugees. Very good. But I hope they can find some extra for the starving people in East Africa.

Meanwhile, the Nairobi youth are still plugging away helping the poor people in Mathare Slums. Andrew and George



Andrew and George continue to distribute food in the Mathare slum

distributed food to help about 36 families last week. They have enough to do the same for the next four weeks.

Br. Harley Mapes, Fr. Ken Forster and Fr. Bill Stang joined us this week from Canada for the 25th anniversary celebrations.

MAY 21

Fr. Ken Thorson, Br. Harley Mapes and I flew to Malindi on the coast to look at a property we think would be a good investment for self-reliance. We had a good inspection and also visited the small Oblate plot at Watamu, meeting with our neighbours who are busy trying to get title deeds for all of us on the mother title. It sounds encouraging.



Oblates Harley Mapes and Ken Thorson visit the Oblate plot at Watamu

A year in review

To say 2021 was a difficult year would be an understatement. To say the supporters of MAMI are an amazing group of people would be an even bigger understatement!

The year 2021 was the first full calendar year of COVID and the difficulties it brought with it around the world. The year 2020 was pockmarked by fear. As the year progressed gatherings became non-existent. Hoarding and empty shelves (toilet paper, antiseptic wipes, flour) became a temporary norm. Face masks and vaccine passports were required as the pandemic (and panic) spread around the globe. Zoom, which used to mean speeding down the highway, became a means of communication. Weddings, funerals, baptisms and other celebrations were postponed, or extremely limited in scope. Church services were relegated to the Internet.

Still, as the conditions became so limiting going into 2021, your hearts grew, and kindness and generosity overflowed during the year.

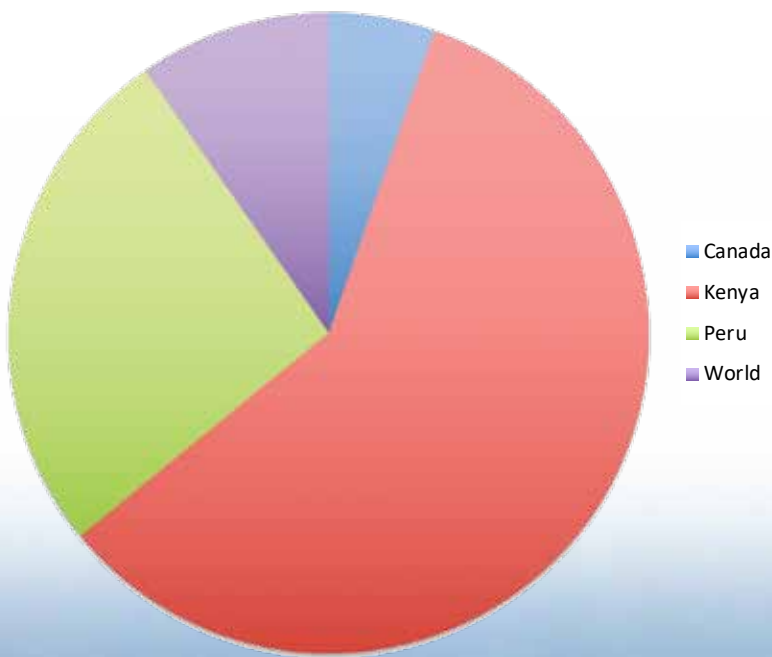
We are, in reality, a small group of people with huge hearts. MAMI members number almost 5,000, yet we still received an amazing \$1,213,402.66 in donations. The end result is that \$1,016,587.07 was provided to poor and struggling people in 13 countries around the world, including Canada, Peru and Kenya, the primary missions supported by MAMI. The following pages provide details of assistance to these people and countries.

Numbers provide a measuring stick, and these numbers can be shaped to provide whatever message one chooses. But what they can't describe is the beauty and love we feel as you help us support the Oblates as they minister to the poor and those in most need.

You were the answers to so many prayers. May you bathe in God's blessing!

2021 Projects Funded

\$1,016,587.07



Canada	\$54,675.72
Kenya	\$596,994.00
Peru	\$265,958.25
World	\$98,959.10

KENYA MISSION

MAMI assists the Kenya Mission with the costs associated with formation, vocations and administration.

HIV AIDS ASSISTANCE – KITUI

This project helps children infected and affected by HIV AIDS. Many of the children are orphans and malnourished. Along with the Ursuline Sisters, the Kenyan Mission helps with food, clothes, some workshops and transportation.

EDUCATION

Many poor children have no access to education. Education is one of the best gifts to give poor children in an effort to improve their lives; it is empowering and a key to progress for them, their families and their communities. It can also assist them in achieving their dreams. Funds from MAMI are used to assist the families by paying the school fees for their children.

Fr. Ken Thorson visits students



Langata Prison, Nairobi

Langata women's prison is the major women's prison in Kenya. Many of the prisoners have children at home who are struggling to pursue their education. Without

education their future is dim, leading to criminal behaviour that would also take them to prison.



Langata prison ministry

St. Stephen's, Kionyo

Kionyo parish is in a rural area of the Méru Diocese. Many parents struggle to pay for fees to educate their children. COVID-19 has accentuated the misery of these people because they have lost jobs.

St. Eugene's, Irinda

St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish is in a poor area of Méru surrounded by three slums. Most of the people are low-income hawkers and casual workers, and their children have no access to education.

Kenya school children



St. Joseph the Worker, Larmudiac

St. Joseph the Worker is a new parish in Nakuru Diocese, located in a rural area. The parents are poor and struggling to pay school fees for their children.

St. Paul's, Kisaju

The parish is mainly in Maasai land where education is not the priority for some parents because of their nomadic life. Many children are willing to go to school but cannot access education because their parents are poor and some children have been neglected. Young girls are not allowed to go to school and are given in marriage at an early age.

Post-secondary education

Some students are also assisted if they choose to pursue additional education.



I am Kanyiva Ann Maluki,
and you supported me financially
in my university studies at
Méru University of Science and
Technology. I graduated with a
second-class honors (upper division)
degree in Business and Information
Technology on Feb. 26, 2021.

I am currently job-hunting and
expanding my skills in my area of
study. Again, I cannot thank you
enough for your financial support in
my higher education studies. May
God bless you abundantly.

Regards,

Kanyiva-Ann Maluki

CHURCH CONSTRUCTION – ST. STEPHEN’S, KIONYO

Assistance was provided to complete the construction of the main church at Kionyo Parish.

GACHANKA SCHOOL, IRINDA

Gachanka Day Secondary School is a government public school sponsored by the Catholic diocese of Méru. It was started by the local community in 2009 to provide an education opportunity for the children of the many underprivileged and poor families within the community who could not afford to take their children to boarding schools. The school is located next to the Oblate community at Our Lady of Assumption Gachanka Prayer House, where Fr. Daquin is parish priest. With a population of 163 boys and 163 girls, the school was in need of toilets. Assistance was provided to build toilet blocks. This will help students avoid contracting diseases due to lack of proper hygiene facilities.

SHELTER FOR ELDERLY AND VULNERABLE

Funds were provided to assist destitute and vulnerable elders in Irinda and Gachanka in Méru.

Saharah

Saharah is an 85-year-old woman, guardian of two abandoned grandchildren. She is a widow living in a wooden house with a poor leaky roof and is exposed to



Ministry to the elderly

cold and rain. The muddy floor, especially during the dry and rainy seasons, exposed her to serious risks such as respiratory and parasitic diseases. Assistance was provided to replace the roof and floor, and install new wooden walls.

Zipporah

Zipporah is a 53-year-old woman who is physically challenged. She struggles to walk and does not have potential to work. She is faithful to weekly and Sunday masses and devotes herself to offer volunteer work in the church. She comes from a poor family background and lives in an unfit little house that is in bad shape. The local community helps her with a little money to cater to her basic needs. Assistance was provided to improve her house.

Joseph

Joseph, 80, is deaf and has been immobilized in his house due to his age and health issues. His wife has had a stroke and is mentally challenged. Joseph is a devout Christian who devoted himself to maintaining the Irinda Church compound and fence for many years until his age and health forced him to remain indoors. Assistance was provided to refurbish his house, fixing broken wooden walls, doors and windows, as well as creating a cement floor. A good pit latrine was part of the refurbishment project.

MÉRU CLEAN WATER BOREHOLE

This project provides clean water for sanitation and domestic use for the primary and secondary schools attached to Irinda Parish. It also provides water to washing stations established in the two slum areas. Water is provided to many more people because of the installation of a solar-powered pump.



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

SACRED HEART CHURCH OF THE FIRST PEOPLES - EDMONTON

With the presence of COVID-19, 2021 was very challenging. A daily outreach lunch program was started where those in need could come to the door of the office to receive a healthy bagged lunch. More people began to come because many other sheltered places stopped giving food to

those in need. This program was extended to those in need of clothing, with shirts, pants, socks, sweaters, dresses and shoes available. Some blankets and quilts are also provided. These programs are in addition to the ongoing “mini-hamper” food bank program. Outreach also includes the annual children’s Christmas party, where gifts are provided for 600 to 800 children who would not otherwise receive a present at Christmas. Also, the Christmas hamper program provided a Christmas-day meal including a turkey, potatoes, tea, coffee and canned goods. A total of nearly 600 hampers were given out and Christmas Day dinner was served to 30 people who came to the door individually.



Christmas gifts for Sacred Heart
Church of the First People's
children's Christmas party



De Mazenod Door outreach

ST. PATRICK'S PARISH – HAMILTON

Church happens every day and prayers are put into action in many different ways through De Mazenod Door Outreach. Begun in 2016, it has grown from a meal program for the poor and marginalized, to a housing project (Eugene's Place) for those in need, to a 19-acre farm (De Mazenod Farm). From sporadically giving out brown-bag lunches at the rectory office, to special sit-down dinners at Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, the De Mazenod Door outreach program grew to providing regular hot nutritious meals prepared by a veritable army of volunteers ranging from high school students to retired parishioners. Guests coming to the De Mazenod Door are treated with dignity and respect; every visitor walks away with a true sense of community.

Oblate Frs. Tony O'Dell and Jarek Pachocki can be found working side-by-side in the parish and on the farm with volunteers from all walks of life. The addition of the farm provides food to supplement the meal program and ongoing outreach. Fresh produce and eggs from the farm are used to make meals to feed guests of the Door. Excess is shared with local students and families in need.

In addition to funds for the outreach programs, funds were provided to help set up a commercial kitchen within the newly built St. Patrick School.

OLIVE BRANCH – SASKATOON

Funding was provided to continue a mediation ministry for couples who are separating and divorcing. The program is designed to ensure the church's presence in a difficult and isolating time in a couple's life.

RECONCILIATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES – ONTARIO

Working with Centre Oblat and other faith-based and reconciliation focused organizations, the project developed educational materials to aid faith communities to understand and engage in the process of reconciliation and in the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

The project was spearheaded by the Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle, a Catholic coalition of Indigenous people, bishops, lay movements, clergy and institutes of consecrated life, with a goal of renewing and fostering relationships between the Catholic Church and Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

OBLATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY – SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Scholarships were provided for seniors in financial need to participate in the Forest Dwelling Program: Spirituality for Our Wisdom Years. The two-year program is designed for more mature seekers who desire to mindfully embrace the challenges and opportunities of aging and diminishment by accessing the deep wisdom embedded in the world's great mystical and contemplative traditions. Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, is a co-founder and core faculty member for the program.

BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

House building and classrooms

To assist Br. Blaise's building projects, funds were provided for labour, truck and tool repairs, construction materials, gas, roofing materials, licensing, cement mixers, molds for bricks, educational materials such as bibles and exercise books, and administration costs.



Br. Blaise supplies computers
to assist in education

Charitable deeds

Donations were made to Oblate parishes and a treadmill was purchased for Oblate students.

AUCAYACU, PARISH OF JESUS SALVADOR

Funds were provided to supplement the parish budget for:

- Pastoral visits to the Christian communities of Alto Huallaga
- Food assistance for vulnerable people
- Maintenance of parish infrastructure and utilities

COMAS/LA PAZ

Funds were provided to assist with parish expenses at Our Lady of La Paz Comas.



EDUCATION

The parish school of San José has 450 students; the cost per student per month is approximately \$80.00 Canadian. Funds were provided to support some children in their educational studies.



Children
received
educational
support

OMI PERU

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate of the Delegation of Peru have four missions. The Oblate Centre House generates expenses in legal matters, travel of the Superior and lodging

for the missionaries. Funds were provided to assist with the expenses of the Centre House and administration.

SANTA CLOTILDE HOSPITAL

Hospital maintenance

The Santa Clotilde Centro de Salud in the Peruvian Amazon functions as the primary hospital for the population of Santa Clotilde and the approximately 100 riparian villages on some 400 kilometres of the Napo River. The steep access from the river port to the hospital above needed repairs to facilitate motor vehicles (motor tricycles) for transportation of patients. Also, the roof gutters of the Vanderham Wing required replacement to prevent leakage of rainwater onto the ceiling of the patient pavilion.

Milk for the malnourished

Many malnourished babies and children in the hospital's care require supplementary milk. Funds were provided to purchase milk supplements.

SOUP KITCHEN

Financial assistance was provided to purchase food, meat, chicken, and vegetables, and for the salaries of the cooks.

An active soup kitchen





Br. Blaise provides food for the poor

A heap of helping

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

CHINCHA ALTA, Peru – I came from a praying family and lived in a small coal-mining town on the east coast of Canada where everybody knew each other. We did pray the rosary as a family of one sister and two brothers. My father died at the age of 36. I did not know him well. As a child I prayed to be a brother and not a priest, even though many priests came from the area.

Never did I realize how God was preparing me to work hard at a tender age along with my sister and two brothers.

My toys were the pick, shovel and wheelbarrow. My younger years were spent working on a farm, in a factory, and in the sawmill.

Every day my brother and sister and I would go to the coal mine and pick coal that fell on the ground when the boxcar was being loaded. We carried the coal, which we needed to store for winter, in bags on our backs, or in buckets.

I did poorly at school and never got out of Grade 8. I left school and went to work at the coal mine until it had to close because of a lack of sales. We had to sell the house and moved to Montreal, where I quickly got a job.

Not liking city life, I joined the Canadian army ... the Black Watch. After serving my time with them, I entered the novitiate for brothers.

At this age, early 20s, I was physically strong because of the hard work I was doing. God was really at my side during these hard years of work, because my body was in good shape

A new home site is blessed





Many blankets and beds have made for a comfortable sleep

for something that I did not see coming ... my Superior sending me to the Peruvian jungle to clear a piece of land for the planting of food stuffs! I enjoyed the hard work.

So, my dear friends, after 60 years as an Oblate brother, I am happy that God in His goodness guided me along as a tender father does with his child.

And how do the Peruvians see your Canadian missionary?



Br. Blaise takes time to relax and read the bible

I was asked twice to swear in two mayors here in the city of Chinchá Alta; I was named 'man of the year' twice in the same city; I was given two citations from two mayors for the work that was done in the area and a plaque from the city's radio and tv communications networks.

I was honored by the schools for the building of classrooms and recently donating 10,000 scribblers to poor children. We installed 22 clean, running-water systems that helped thousands of families; we've built 1,500 small houses for the homeless.

For the jail where there are more than 2,000 inmates, male and female, we delivered two huge water tanks and provided 1,200 blankets, tables, chairs, materials for making shoes, 2,000 rosaries, 80 bibles and 90 musical instruments.

We constructed 16 chapels and started work on our parish church, built four large halls, 80 per cent of the parish offices and rooms, and provided 750 books of catechism for students receiving the sacrament of confirmation.

Br. Blaise's gravel pit



In our parish Cristo Rey, we built about 80 per cent of the retreat centre.

We were involved in the building of three sports floors, sleeping quarters for male and female officers in the Peruvian national police barracks; helped a group of doctors and nurses repair their medical clinic; helped a large group of drug addicts with their living quarters; helped a few young people to become teachers; helped build toilets in some of the schools; gave work to many men in our gravel pit; helped the firemen put a roof over their sleeping quarters and provided them with beds and mattresses.

We gave children and elderly some 5,000 blankets plus 850 beds. And we issued many bags of food to the poor.

Because of the COVID-19 scourge, some of our parishes in the jungle and the high Andes were having a tough time and their Sunday collection faded away. We donated part of your funds to them.

This is what your support has allowed me to get done through these 55 years here in Peru.

I do not want to give you the impression that I am boasting, because it is really you who deserve the praise for what was made possible. I am your missionary and you should feel good because I am only a link between you and the people whom we gladly serve.

On behalf of the poor we serve, a 'heap of love!' Each day I pray the rosary for all of you that have helped and are still helping to make our noble apostolate the jewel that it is.

Check out our Facebook page:



Lacombe Canada MAMI

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



YouTube Lacombe MAMI Oblate Missions

ANGOLA

St. Andre Parish (population of 134,130, mostly war refugees) is in an increasingly unstable area north of Luanda, with spiking levels of crime and delinquency. Many already-disadvantaged women are increasingly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and addiction. Funds were provided for a four-week training course in bread and cake making, basic accounting, and literacy, with a view to allowing these women to be self-sufficient in the future. Mentoring after the course will also be provided and the women will support the project from their earnings.

BANGLADESH

Assistance was provided to renovate the St. Eugene's Pre-School in Sylhet.

CONGO

Funds were provided for a pilot project that included the preparation of material and training for religious and laity on the topic of Training and Sensitization for the Protection of Children. The materials developed can be adapted for other Oblate units.

A workshop for the protection of children in the Congo



GUATEMALA

The Centro de Formación Integral San Eugenio de Mazenod is an initiative designed to reach economically and socially marginalized families in the area of the Colonia of San Ignacio (Guatemala City) with a holistic health program. Funds were provided to purchase chairs and tables for the St. Eugene Health Clinic.



A village in Guatemala



A meeting in the Guatemala St. Eugene Health Clinic



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.

INDIA

Funds were provided to assist with food, medicines, masks, sanitizers, etc., as India was overwhelmed and devastated by COVID-19. Funds were also provided for medicines and health care for Oblates who contracted COVID-19.



Food distribution in India

Food distribution in India



INDONESIA

The economic conditions of the people surrounding the Provincial House is poor. Their farms depend on artificial fertilizer and can only be cultivated during the rainy season since no irrigation system reaches them. The farmers approached the Oblates many times for help either for drinking water or something more lasting. In 2019 the Oblates decided a farm would be more lasting and would both help them economically and lead to some sustainability. Approximately 40 people from the surrounding area work on the farm and in its related businesses. They have established a very good relationship and there is a sense of social cohesiveness.



Calves were purchased for the De Mazenod Farm in Indonesia

Twenty-four cowsheds have been built and can accommodate 280 cows. Other facilities have also been established, such as three boreholes, two warehouses, water tanks, etc. Funds from MAMI were used to purchase 50 calves for the De Mazenod Farm.

MADAGASCAR

Madagascar has no health coverage, so patients and their families are responsible for any expenses such as hospitalization, medication, medical analysis, etc. Funds were provided for Georgine, a poor widow who lives by working as a traditional farmer. The funds covered her medical costs as well as purchasing rice for her as her health condition meant she was unable to work in the field.

SRI LANKA

The Oblate Province of Jaffna in Sri Lanka has 13 Oblate parishes and 23 Oblate centres. The Oblates work together with the people and try to address some of the burning issues such as lack of drinking water, lack of education, lack of proper housing, etc. COVID-19 resulted in many families experiencing severe difficulties in feeding their children. Funds were provided for financial assistance to purchase dry food rations and safety items for these families.

Battala is a remote village situated in the Monaragala district, the poorest district in all of Sri Lanka. Fr. Michael Paul Rodrigo, OMI, started the mission in 1980 and was gunned down on Nov. 10, 1987. The Oblate community is engaged mainly in the ministry of education and wanted to enhance computer literacy for children, youth and adults. Funds were provided to purchase computers, tables, and a multimedia projector. This allows the students to connect to on-line classes under the guidance of a mentor. The electrical work and room preparation was completed by volunteers.

TANZANIA

The Archdiocese of Arusha is working to provide pastoral, social and economic services to all people regardless of differences in culture, age, religion, colour and origin of status. Due to economic constraints in the country, it has been very difficult to support all people who are in need. Vulnerable students from poor families were helped with tuition fees, food, uniforms, stationery, medical expenses and transportation.

THAILAND

Br. Bernard Wirth, OMI, has been working with detainees and refugees in Thailand for more than 25 years and has helped more than 400 refugees get bail, and thus their freedom. His work helps improve the lives of those inside overcrowded immigration detention centres, especially mothers

and children. He helps some of them return to their countries through payment of tickets and taxes. Those that remain in Thailand are assisted with food, room, rent, hospital visits and schooling. Refugees in Thailand have no legal rights, with tens of thousands of them spending decades in refugee camps with no way to get legal status in the country. Funds were provided to assist Br. Bernard with his good work.

TESTIMONIAL FROM SELVAKUMAR SUHASHAN

I am 23 years old, from Sri Lanka, but currently living in Thailand as a refugee with my parents and my brother. My father was arrested by the Thai immigration police and detained for many years in the IDC (Immigration Detention Centre) prison. Due to the situation in this country, my father's bail was cancelled three times and we spent many years in four different IDC jails in Bangkok, Pathum Thani, Kanchanaburi and Trat.

I fell seriously ill, and we were released in April 2020, by medical bail after a strenuous effort. After the release we lived in horrible conditions because of COVID-19. My father is currently suffering from diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol, and chest pain.

Recently my father had an accident while he was going to the IDC, as he's on bail and needs to go there two or three times a month to get his bail paper signed. He had a fracture in his right knee in this accident and can hardly walk.

A few months ago, I got picked up by the Thai tourist police while I was going to buy groceries for my family. They took me to the police station and put me in lockup. We tried to explain our poor situation and ...

...

begged them to release me, but they still did not, and then they demanded or asked for a bribe. Two days later, they reduced the bribe and warned us that they would give us eight hours to bring the money, or they would detain me in the immigration detention centre.

My parents immediately sold their wedding rings and borrowed money from many people to arrange the amount. After paying the bribe I was released.

Our financial situation is very poor. We borrowed a lot of money from many people to arrange for the medical bail from the IDC prison and still have not paid them back. Then we had to borrow more money for my bail. I have no idea how we are going to pay this back without a job

Thanks to Br. Bernard we have received some financial support but are still struggling for daily meals, essentials, medical needs and room rent.

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://omi-lacombe.ca/powerful-way-leave-legacy-2/>

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



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



Remembering

We remember the following Oblates who died in 2021:

Br. Louis Gendre – January 13, 2021

Fr. Alfred Hubenig – April 19, 2021

Fr. Lester Kaufmann – September 12, 2021

Fr. Robert Bernardin – September 28, 2021

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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considered
including the
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as a beneficiary
in your will?

*Your gift to
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would ensure that the good
ministry and mission works of the
Oblates continues in Canada and
throughout the world. You could
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that is dear to your heart.*




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