

# Oblate Spirit

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI



June 2023



*Looking Back*

# Fuelled by kindness



Our world seems to get smaller by the day, yet the needs of its people seem to grow at a disproportionate rate. It comes as no surprise, then, that requests for help from Oblate missionary associations around the world have multiplied.

It is with great humility that we can say MAMI Canada has been able to respond to requests for assistance from several countries last year because of your help. Our small base of less than 5,000 members donated more than \$2 million last year. We were still in a fierce battle with COVID, Russia attacked Ukraine, the global economy sputtered, and Mother Nature showed she was not pleased with our treatment of the global environment, unleashing hurricanes, earthquakes and most unusual weather patterns.

The campaign to help Ukraine began with a goal to raise \$20,000. MAMI members responded in astounding fashion. More than \$500,000 found its way to Ukraine via Poland to help those besieged and caught in a war that was not of their making.

Overall, MAMI provided more than \$1.6 million in assistance to 15 countries last year. The pages that follow outline the many ways you have helped around the world.

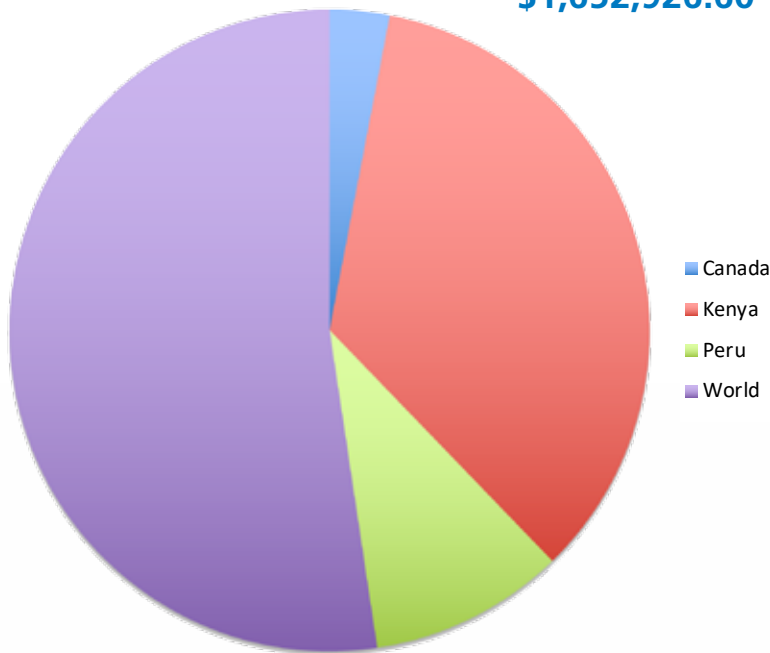
You, our small MAMI family, are a small but powerful army generously fuelled by love and kindness. That is the Spirit of the Oblates at work.

Thank you!

*John and Emily Cherneski*  
*Communications Coordinators*

# 2022 Projects Funded

\$1,652,926.60



Canada	\$50,029.00
Kenya	\$574,164.00
Peru	\$162,935.26
World	\$865,798.34



Kionyo Church

### KIONYO CHURCH CONSTRUCTION

Funds were provided for finishing work in Kionyo Church. This included paint, pews, tabernacle, electrical work, landscaping, and putting glass in the windows. The parish organized a fundraiser and contributed a significant amount to complete this work.



Installing  
windows  
in Kionyo  
Church





## KISAJU POSTULANCY WATER BOREHOLE

The borehole drilled in 2015 dried out. Funds were provided for a new borehole. Due to the lack of stable power from the government grid system, the project included solar power provision that will have long-term sustainability benefits.

Replacing pipes  
in a borehole



## EDUCATION – ST. JOSEPH, LARMUDIAC

St. Joseph the Worker is the new parish in Nakuru Diocese and is located in a rural area. After two years of ministry in the parish, it was decided it was important to support poor children whose parents are struggling to raise the fees for their children's education. This can empower the children and ensure a better future for them. Education is key to progress and to improvement in the lives of the poor.



School desks

Classroom in  
Larmudiac



## EDUCATION – ST. STEPHEN, KIONYO

Many parents lost hope of sending their children to school because COVID-19 affected their jobs and the economy in general. Funds were provided to assist poor children from Kionyo parish, which is in the rural area of the Méru Diocese. Education is the best way for poor children to improve their life for the future.

## EDUCATION – LANGATA WOMEN'S PRISON

Langata women's prison is the major women's prison in Kenya. Many prisoners have children at home who need assistance for their education. Without education their future is in danger and later they might involve themselves in unlawful practices and behaviours that would also lead them to prison. The best way to help them is to encourage them by paying the school fees.

## EDUCATION – ST. PAUL, KISAJU

Funds were provided to help pay school fees for poor children at Kisaju Parish. The parish is mainly in Maasai land where education is not the priority for parents who live pastoral nomadic lives. Many children are willing to go to school but cannot access education because their parents are poor and

some have been neglected. Young girls who are not going to school are being given to marriage at an early age. Education is a great gift to poor children in this area.





## EDUCATION – ST. EUGENE, IRINDA

St. Eugene De Mazenod is a parish located in a poor area of Méru town. Most of the people are low-income hawkers and casual workers. The parish is surrounded by three slums. Many children have no access to education. Funds were provided to encourage some intelligent poor children to attend school in order to achieve their dreams and improve their living in the future.

## EDUCATION – GACHANKA

Gachanka Secondary School, in St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish, had a fire in the students' residence. Most of the students come from far away; some are from pastoralist

Fr. Ken Forster blesses the school children



communities. All their belongings were destroyed and the students could not afford to buy uniforms, books, blankets and other personal items for their studies and their survival. Funds were provided to support the students and help them replace their belongings. We thank God no one was injured or trapped because they were in class when the fire erupted.

## **HIV AIDS ASSISTANCE – KITUI**

Many children are infected by HIV AIDS in Kitui. Many don't have parents and struggle with life. They receive drugs but are often without proper food. In conjunction with the Ursuline Sisters, the Oblates are helping the children with food, clothes, some workshops and transport.

## **FEMALE CATECHIST TRAINING – ST. EUGENE, IRINDA**

St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish in Irinda is still establishing itself. There was a great need for a female catechist who would be responsible for the youth, schools and women's programs in the parish. It is not easy to get women who will accept this responsibility. Funds were provided for a woman to take training in child protection and gender violence-based conflicts; she would then become a catechist upon completion of the one-year program.

## **TOILET BLOCK – LARMUDIAC**

St. Joseph the Worker Parish is located in a rural area. The parish experienced ethnic clashes in the past due to political rivalries. Many Christians were victims of post-elections of 2007. The



Toilet block in Larmudiac



local community is starting to rebuild itself. Some outstations have no toilets, which makes it difficult for those attending mass or meetings. As well, many Christians with health issues found it difficult to go to church knowing that there was no toilet. Funds were provided to assist two prayer houses to have decent toilets.

## **KISAJU RECTORY CONSTRUCTION**

The parish council and parishioners would like to have the ministers closer to them, more accessible and available. The Mission office, after meeting with the parish council and the Oblates working in the parish, started a process that involved discussing the concept of the house, the drawings, and the local contribution. Funds have been provided to begin the process of construction.

## **GACHANKA CHURCH CONSTRUCTION**

This project will assist the Gachanka Catholic community to build their prayer house. The prayer house is located

### **Construction of Gachanka Church begins with excavation**

This will be a shared 50/50 project. The local Kenyan people have already raised \$97,000 CAD.

MAMI matched these funds and will match more as they continue their fund-raising efforts.



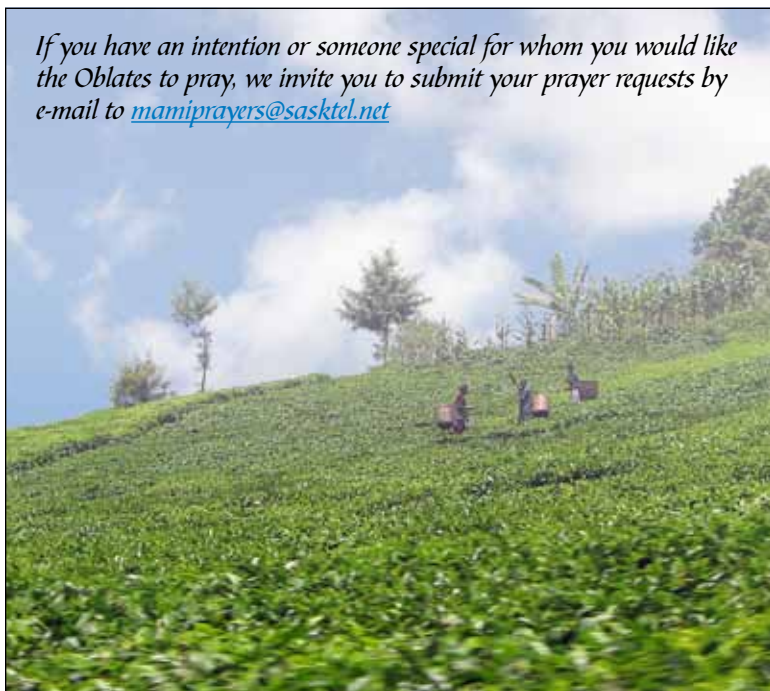
Smiles were the order of the day as the land is leveled to begin construction of Gachanka Church

in Méru, a semi-rural area populated with low-income people and farmers. The Christian community is growing. There is a large presence of youth and students from secondary schools and primary schools. The Missionary Oblates are evangelizing through words and socio-development actions. The local church has been fundraising to build the church and continues to raise funds for a place to worship; it would also be a centre for, and symbol of, unity, peace and development. The parish is responsible to raise 50 per cent of the total cost of the project. The parish has raised \$97,000 (CAD) and work has begun. Matched funds were provided to buy materials in bulk, considering inflation and the fluctuations of prices of construction materials.

## CARE OF THE MISSION

Funds are provided to support the OMI Kenya mission office, vocations office, and formation.

*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)*



### AURORA LIVING PROGRAM

The Star of the North Retreat Centre offered an on-line/on-site, three-year program. Aurora Living: Word and Creation is rooted in the wisdom teachings of Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* and Sacred Scripture. Aurora Living is a way to grow more deeply as an inter-generational, intercultural faith community. This program brings various aspects of healing to our Indigenous Peoples. Funds were provided for four parishioners from Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton to take this healing workshop.

### CHRISTMAS PARTY, HAMPERS AND OUTREACH

Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples provides lunch for 250 to 300 people a day. In addition, emergency food hampers are available with a limit of two requests per month per recipient.

The annual children's Christmas party delivers gifts to approximately 800 and each child receives a minimum of two gifts each during the party. Otherwise these children may not receive a gift during the celebration of the birth of Jesus. The children also enjoy clowns, face painting and balloons shaped into animals during these parties.

Clowns entertain the children at Sacred Heart's Christmas party



In 2022, the Christmas hamper program provided a complete turkey dinner for more than 3,200 families who would not have had access to a meal on Christmas Day. Single folks were invited to a Christmas Day meal. Forty turkeys were cooked over a three-day period and served to 800 people.

All of Sacred Heart's ministries are operated through the parish offices and staffed by up to 100 volunteers during peak periods. There are no paid volunteers in any of the programs.

Funds were provided to assist Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in reaching out and serving the poor among us.

## OLIVE BRANCH

Olive Branch provides mediation ministry for couples who are separating and divorcing. It is not marriage counselling; it is for people who have arrived at the decision to get a divorce and emerges from *Amoris Laetitia*, which asks the church to be involved in the life of the married couple from beginning to end. The service ensures the church's presence in what is the most difficult and isolating time in a couple's life and assists the couple in achieving an amicable divorce. Funds were provided for wages, training and operating expenses.

## QU'APPELLE HOUSE OF PRAYER

Nestled in the hills of the Qu'Appelle Valley, near Echo

A cabin nestled in the woods at the Qu'Appelle House of Prayer





Lake, the Qu'Appelle House of Prayer is a calming oasis that provides quiet, solitude, nourishment and hospitality for those seeking a time away from their hectic, busy lives. Funds were provided to cover the costs associated with a septic field mound.

## RECONCILIATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle, a Catholic coalition of Indigenous people, bishops, lay movements, clergy and institutes of consecrated life, engages in renewing and fostering relationships between the Catholic Church and Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Working with the Centre Oblat and other faith-based and reconciliation-focused organizations, popular education materials were developed to aid faith communities to understand and engage in the process of reconciliation broadly and in the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in particular. Funds were provided to assist in the development of educational materials.

## STAR OF THE NORTH RETREAT CENTRE

As an Oblate Retreat Centre, part of its mission is to provide programming that reaches out to the marginalized and speaks to JPIC (Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation) values. Programs/workshops offered include: Cancer and Residential School Survivors; Men's Wellness; Women's Wellness; Reconciliation through Justice; and Twilight Evenings. Funds were provided to assist as subsidies, where needed, for participants.



Star of the North Retreat Centre

### **BLAISE MACQUARRIE**

Blaise MacQuarrie continues to build everything from classrooms to halls to dining rooms at the police station. He also supplies mattresses to improve the comfort of the poor people in Peru while at the same time distributing rosaries to contribute to people's spiritual development.



Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI, loves to help

Funds were provided to assist in construction, as well as musical instruments. Construction costs included labour, materials, a small motorcycle and gas, cement mixer repairs, two truck tires, roofing materials, paint and a toilet repair.

### **TERTIARY LEVEL CARE PATIENT HOUSE – LIMA**

The Medical program of Santa Clotilde maintains a patient house in Lima for patients who require tertiary level care unavailable in Santa Clotilde or Iquitos hospitals. This is typically for cancer treatment requiring housing, food, transportation and medicine. It also provides for their accompanying family member.

### **SANTA CLOTILDE HOSPITAL**

An extensive revision of the water supply system was undertaken in 2018 involving tank construction and distribu-



Construction of a playing surface underway

tion piping to the Santa Clotilde Hospital, Convent and Girls' Boarding School. It was in need of repairs so funds were provided for the repairs.

## FOSTER PARENTS

This is an ongoing project. The parish school of San José has 550 students. Funds were provided to support the children in their educational studies. The school year runs for 10 months, beginning in March and finishing in December. It costs approximately \$80 per student per month.

Children at the parish school of San José



## PERU DELEGATION EXPENSES

Funds were provided to assist with upkeep of the central house and administration.

## SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Funds were provided to support some of the poorest people in the parish communities. Many are victims of different diseases and deficiencies. They are helped through the provision of food and medicine.

# WANTED YOUR STORIES!

*There are many charities and good causes that solicit your support. Yet for some reason you have chosen to offer the Oblates your prayers, friendship and assistance.*

## We are curious:

Why did you choose us?

How did you hear about the Oblate missionary work?

How have the Oblates supported, inspired and encouraged you?

What are some of your best memories of Oblates and their missionary work?

**Send your stories (and photos) to:**  
**[lacombemissions@yahoo.ca](mailto:lacombemissions@yahoo.ca)**







Gathering for the blessing and the feast

# Fun dining, fine friends

**BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI**

CHINCHA ALTA, Peru – I received an invitation on May 13 to go to the Peruvian National Police Station for a celebration of a small kitchen and dining room we helped construct. Edward, the young police chief, had asked for help to build the kitchen and dining room, and after hearing him out I found his plea reasonable.

So, we came to an agreement. Edward agreed to provide all the material and we provided the labour.

There were no papers to sign and no written contract, just a word of honour and a hearty handshake. He asked when the work would begin, and I replied by saying “when the material is at hand!” I did not have to wait long, and soon the work was completed.

The day of celebration arrived, and what a morning it was.

The celebration took three hours. There were two occasions to celebrate. The mayor provided a fleet of new pick-up trucks for a special force of police officers who had no means to make their rounds in this huge city.

Fr. Justo, our parish priest, came to bless the fleet, and then the dining room and kitchen. The blessing of the fleet did not take very long but, yes, blessing the work that we got accomplished took more than two hours.

Present were the city mayor, two police chiefs, many public dignitaries and members of the public. We all had a good meal, there was music and even two clowns (I was not one of them!) But the clowns did a great job in bringing laughter and joy to the party.

Before a good meal was served, there was the blessing. Above the door of the dining room was a bottle hanging from the centre of a red ribbon and two 'godfathers' were selected (another man and me) to break the bottles with a hammer. The bottle was in a black plastic bag so that when it broke, no one

Fr. Justo blesses the dining room





Br. Blaise helps christen the dining room

would get splashed with the contents.

Then we all piled in to eat. The dining room was a showcase for those present. While we ate, a reporter asked me some questions. I told him the funds to get this done came from the hearts of Canadians.

After all was said and done, a plaque, engraved with the name of this missionary was bolted to the wall close to the main door of the dining room.

People here love the Canadians!



## GIFT PAYMENT OPTION



We have the ability to accept donations by way of credit card! Please complete the gift form enclosed, visit our website at [www.omilacombe.ca/mami/donations/](http://www.omilacombe.ca/mami/donations/) to give on-line, or call our office toll free: 1-866-432-6264 and we will be pleased to assist you in facilitating your donation to the Oblate missions.



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



### ANGOLA

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate have been in Angola for 25 years evangelizing the poor in education and health. Many talented young people are committed to and interested in working with the Oblates. Funds were provided as scholarships for four young people to further their education in the fields of medicine, construction and social science, following which they will assist the Oblates to further their mission and goals.

### CAMEROON

Similar to concerns through the Oblate congregation, Cameroon wants to promote the vocation of Oblate brothers. There are currently 12 Oblate brothers in perpetual vows requiring ongoing formation and three young brothers in first formation. Funds were provided to assist in specialized training for three of the brothers, one as a nurse and director of a hospital infirmary, one as a professional carpenter, and one in the healthcare field.

### HAITI

The earthquake that hit Haiti on Aug. 14, 2021, badly damaged the church and rectory of St. Michel Parish at Charpentier

where two Oblates live. Funds were provided to help repair and reinforce the infrastructures destroyed or affected

The aftermath of an earthquake in Haiti



by the earthquake in the rectory. Funds were also provided to the scholasticate for materials, equipment and computing devices for on-line studies and training.



People gather on the grounds of the ashram

## INDIA

The temple at the Aanmodaya Ashram, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, suffered from leakage and corroding. Funds were provided for repairs to the temple and also for renovation of some of the cottages.

Repairs are conducted at the ashram



In the Visakhapatnam Archdiocese of Andhra Pradesh, a new church and hall were under construction in Chintalavalasa, a fast-developing rural mission. Due to the pandemic, cost of materials went up and the Oblates could not finish the work within the expected and estimated cost. As well, there was no residence for the two Oblate priests or a meeting place for family/youth programs or catechism classes. Funds were provided to assist in the construction of Christ the King church and hall.

## **NIGERIA**

The Oblates have a boarding school (College De Mazenod Bassa) with more than 200 students. It is the only Catholic School in the entire local government area of Plateau State, Nigeria. It is a mixed school that provides qualitative education for Nigerian youth.

Despite heavy flooding that has ravaged many states in Nigeria, lack of water, especially during the months of January and May, is a major problem. Funds were provided for a water tank to add to their reservoir of water by at least an additional 30,000 litres.

## **DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SINSINAWA**

Funds for elder care included COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Test kits and face masks, as well as basic everyday health products needed for the dignified comfort and ongoing care of the sisters. Funds were also provided to refurbish the cemetery by removing, releveling and replacing decrepit gravestones and providing appropriate markers for recently deceased sisters along with updating a monument for deceased associate members.

## **MALAWI**

Funds were provided to the Medical Mission Sisters for renovations on a building they own in Malawi, East Africa. It is used for retreats, gatherings, recollections and meetings.



## PAKISTAN

Emergency relief funds were provided after Pakistan was devastated with monsoon flooding. During the flooding, Fr. Khan Paulus, OMI (delegation superior) reported: "Roads are destroyed. People are using small boats instead of vehicles. Their crops are totally destroyed, their livestock is all gone. People have nothing to live on except the help that is provided by various charitable organizations."





## PHILIPPINES

Emergency relief funds were provided after a recent typhoon hit the Philippines. The Missionary Oblates conducted a rapid needs assessment and estimated they would need to provide food, clean water, blankets, soap, infant needs, hygiene kits, household essentials, etc., to more than 17,600 families.

## SRI LANKA

Suba Seth Gedara, Buttala, was initiated and founded by Fr. Michael Paul Rodrigo, OMI, in 1980 in the Uva Province, one of the most neglected, underdeveloped regions in Sri Lanka. He came to the village and built his tent among the people, the poorest of the poor farmers. He won the hearts of the people by concentrating mainly on education, formation of communities and health programs. Unfortunately, Fr. Michael was gunned down in 1987 while he was celebrating Eucharist. The Oblate Province of Colombo has continued Fr. Michael's mission by appointing two Oblates to work and serve in his place. Funds were provided to assist in rural development and community animation. The goals are to train youth and adults

Leadership training in Sri Lanka





to play a leading role in village development and to build solidarity and fellowship among the people of the area beyond boundaries of class, religion and ethnicity.

In the district of Mannar, the Oblate Province of Jaffna in Sri Lanka would like to safeguard the poor people from starvation due to the economic crisis by meeting basic needs of the traumatized and affected persons especially widows, amputees, elders and poor throughout the district. They identified 750 families who were in need of emergency assistance. In addition, in the northern and eastern provinces, another 600 families were identified as needing emergency food assistance for their survival. Funds were provided to assist in these efforts.

## UKRAINE

Funds were provided to assist the Oblates and the people of Ukraine for humanitarian efforts and other mission works during the time of war. Our Oblates did not abandon people even when the military suggested leaving Chernihiv city. Instead, they lived in the basement of the church together with more than 60 people (faithful and non-believers) for more than a month. In Tyvriv, a shrine the Oblates have been renovating

became a refuge where 90 refugees are living. In Kyiv, more than 300 tons of foodstuff were distributed.

Since the beginning of the war, St. Nicholas Parish, located in the center of Kyiv, served not only as a place of worship but also as a

People sought refuge  
in the basement of  
St. Nicholas Church





Young women gather to pray in the Church basement

centre for humanitarian aid. The parish distributed more than 300 tons of aid to the needy, providing support for the faithful and a temporary shelter for internally displaced people. The Oblate community does not abandon people in the most difficult times but takes care of them.

The war has caused trauma to the men defending Ukraine, to the women and children who have witnessed war atrocities. In partnership with the Ukrainian Institute of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, the Missionary Oblates created a psychological support centre in the church basement that would provide the following: outpatient surgery – first-aid medical interventions for minor trauma; outpatient clinic for psychological assistance; playroom for children; soup kitchen; bathrooms with showers and toilets. Funds were provided to assist in these efforts.

The priest sprinkles holy water on the makeshift chapel





Pictured are Carol Gielens, Michael Doyle, Donna O'Hara, Linda Arnold, Georgina Marcotte, Lois Hobbs, Marie Luttrell, Jo Creedon, Kacey Chee, retreat director Neil Macauley, OMI, David Sax, Chuck Luttrell, Karen Sax, Francis Maza, Mike Creedon, and Ken Forster, OMI

# Retreating into peace

**BY DAVID SAX**

Most of our Oblate Associates in British Columbia were able to gather in Vancouver for a much-requested in-person retreat in May, with four each from Salt Spring Island and Vancouver Island, and six from the mainland.

In gratitude to Fr. Neil Macauley, OMI, for being our retreat director, a donation from the retreatants was sent to MAMI via Fr. Ken Forster, BC District Animator and MAMI Promoter.

After he was ordained, Fr. Neil served in the Oblate missions of Peru and then Puerto Rico before moving back to Vancouver this year to be with his OMI Lacombe community.

Fr. Neil gave us an overview of the retreat theme of peace in three stages – peace God gives, peace the world gives, and peace to live by. He shared scripture, personal stories, and

insights to delve into this theme throughout the two days we gathered.

He spoke to us of God's peace keeping us in balance, and that fear was cast out of our lives as we grew in and lived within God's peace; he compared the peace of the world (success/happiness comes from the outside) to God's peace, realizing we are somebody – beloved daughters and sons of God.

The final discussion focused on living peace in action, leaving us all with much to ponder as we returned to our daily lives.

Thank you Fr. Neil, and may God continue to bless you with peace!

## 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/>

**Check out our Facebook page:**



**Lacombe Canada MAMI**

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



**YouTube Lacombe MAMI Oblate Missions**



Joe Gunn

# Indigenous rights and reconciliation ... an unfinished journey

BY JOE GUNN

OTTAWA – During the papal pilgrimage to Canada last summer, several venues were draped with protest signs as Indigenous people asked Pope Francis to “repudiate the Doctrine!” What was that all about?

In the 2015 final report of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Call to Action #49 stated: “We call on all religious denominations and faith groups to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and Peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius.” This “Doctrine” originated in a series of Papal Bulls from the 15th and 16th centuries that allowed Christian explorers to claim “empty” lands for their respective European Crowns. The Doctrine formed an integral element in the European colonization of newly discovered continents, and by the 19th century, similar language and thinking had been integrated into legal systems here in North America.

On March 30, a joint statement was released from the Vatican Dicasteries for Culture and Education and Promoting Integral Human Development, repudiating the policies and principles of the ‘Doctrine of Discovery.’ The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops also released a statement welcoming this news.



The nine paragraphs of this statement declared that “The “doctrine of discovery” is not part of the teaching of the Catholic Church,” as well as stating that, “The Catholic Church therefore repudiates those concepts that fail to recognize the inherent human rights of Indigenous peoples, including what has become known as the legal and political *doctrine of discovery*.”

April 19 the *Centre Oblat* co-sponsored an on-line panel of speakers with the Centre on the Churches, Truth, and Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples at the Faculty of Theology of Saint Paul University. The event included Archbishop Donald Bolen and two Indigenous persons, educating participants and addressing possible next steps for Canadian Catholics.

But in case you might be tempted to think the issue of decolonizing religion is now resolved, note the stamp issued by the Vatican to commemorate August’s World Youth Days in Portugal:



It turns out that, after only three days, on May 19, the stamp was recalled from circulation. Public protests decried that the

stamp closely resembled the “Monument of the Discoveries” built in Lisbon in 1960 by the Salazar military dictatorship to memorialize Enrico il Navigatore, the founder of Portugal’s imperial colonies. No wonder a Portuguese bishop called the entire design “in bad taste.”

June 21 marked National Indigenous Peoples Day – and this year it also marked the two-year anniversary of the passage in parliament of Bill C-15, *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. The legislation demands that the federal government releases an action plan explaining steps to inculcate the Declaration into Canadian law.

Our church’s journey towards decolonialization may seem to be slow, and sometimes stumble, but Oblates will continue to deepen this ministry in the months and years ahead.

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

## Angel of Hope Rosary

Find inspiration through the intercession of the Angel of Hope dedicated to people dealing with illness. The glass beads are purple for cancer awareness and pink symbolizing breast cancer awareness. The Our Father beads are delicate flowers and the crucifix is accented with hearts.





# Kenya

## NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

### APRIL 22

President Ruto has removed the alcohol bar in the State House. It is probably a good move as excess alcohol has been a problem among politicians for many years.

We are sad to see the suffering in Sudan's civil war, and the impact it has had on neighbouring countries like Chad trying to cope with refugees. They were suffering shortages before the refugees came.

Our youth continue to take food to the Mathare Slums.

We were fortunate to meet an amazing Australian woman who shared many stories of suffering by street children in the Mathare Slums, stories of murders, drugs, police shootings, and the rounding up of children before President Obama visited Kenya.

But she also related stories of hope, helping addicted youth get back to school and to detox programs. She has some sponsorship and manages five staff members. She has established an art drop-in centre to allow the street people to do something creative and it works very well because art seems to be an excellent therapy to deal with trauma. The children have had art displayed in the National Museum each year since 2017 and have upcoming exhibitions in Germany and France.

I've shared the painting that this woman loves: *the angel of God weeping over the suffering in the world, with a blue river of tears, and a*



Gerry Conlan, OMI



*broken heart above the angel from which a flower is growing, and the butterflies feeding from the flower... a sign of beauty in an ocean of suffering... a little hope for a suffering people.*

Our missionary work feels rather tame compared to her projects. But I think the idea of using art might be a program we can duplicate in our parishes. Canvas and paint are cheap. Many people around us are traumatized but never show it openly. Perhaps their artwork can be the therapy they need.

By coincidence, BBC aired a short documentary about the huge increase in drug shipments into Europe and the USA, and said it is also expanding into Africa. The drug situation is worsening in Nairobi, but I hear it is the same all over, including Australia and Canada.

## **APRIL 29**

We were blessed by a surprise visit from Bishop Neil Frank, our newest Oblate bishop in South Africa. He travelled with three other bishops from South Africa to study the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) in Nairobi.

Bishop Neil said they were all growing alarmed by the cost of formation in South Africa and wanted to look at whether a university modelled on the CUEA would help the whole of South Africa. It's not easy.

Fr. Greg Oszust was supposed to come and visit us in Karen, but the car broke down again, the second time this week.

41st anniversary celebration in Larmudiac





Kionyo youth donate food to Méru prison

## MAY 6

I was happy to hear through our Nairobi youth that the Kionyo Oblate youth were fund-raising to help the Méru prisoners. This is the prison that Fr. Fidel and Fr. Faustin elevated into a lively community with an excellent choir. A few years later the Oblates were told to leave the prison. While the Oblates were in charge, some priests at the Cathedral were complaining to the bishop that people were leaving the Cathedral and attending services at the prison. The bishop told them to reflect on the quality of the liturgies at the Cathedral!

Our wonderful Nairobi Oblate youth are still active in taking food to about 50 families in Mathare slums. Andrew and George have been involving more of the other youth members to allow them to experience this public service. George said they are very inspired.

I was surprised by a call from Susan, our former cook at the pre-novitiate. She had been robbed on her way home and was quite shaken by the experience. She lost her phone and was hoping we would have one to spare. We gave her a phone from Canada. Thanks to all those who took the time to share a pre-loved phone last year when I visited. They really do make a huge difference to people who are struggling to



survive. The phone is a real necessity for Susan because she does some business on it. If you don't answer a call, you miss job opportunities.

Times are tough for young people (and older) to find work. This week I gave two people a lift as I headed to Karen. They were very grateful. Even a small bus fare helps them survive a bit easier.

Finally, I was inspired by Fr. Peter Stoll, OMI, who sent us some pictures of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre where they prayed until 5 a.m. for the Oblates, their families and MAMI members.



Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem

## MAY 13

Life continues at a fast pace here in Kenya. One thing finishes and three things start!

I joined the Nairobi Oblate Youth for coffee and a catch-up at the restaurant in town. It was good to see them, but only eight came. Andrew is trying to be a father to one of the young men. It seems hard to convince young men here of the need to work hard and make sacrifices. Maybe it's the same all over the world? Perhaps it is harder here for them to see a positive future and a benefit for working hard.

I was happy to see that Fr. Fidele instructed Dancan, our cook, to use banana leaves wrapped around the whole fish for supper this week, instead of using the usual aluminum foil. I think it improved the flavour and is a small contri-



Using banana leaves to cook food

bution to *Laudato Si'* by less material wastage. *Laudato Si'* is the Pope's manifesto to get all Christians and others to work harder to reduce pollution and increase care for the earth.

Our Oblates went to support Fr. Wilhelm for his long-awaited defence of his thesis at Catholic University. Thankfully it went well. But the next man being grilled, a Diocesan from Nakuru doing a PhD, stumbled badly and was sent away to redo parts. I was happy to hear this because it means some rigor is still present to maintain academic standards.



Br. Charles teaches catechism

## MAY 20

The excitement for the week is the start of construction for Gachanka Church at Irinda Parish, Méru. The parish chair and Fr. Daquin were all big smiles as the excavator cleared the tree stumps and leveled the ground. Others were constructing a simple wooden fence with roofing iron sheets to protect the site from the public and criminals at night.



Erecting fencing  
around the  
Gachanka  
construction site

We were also delighted to welcome Br. Moses Wafula, OMI, home from Texas where he has been studying for a few years. He will stay in Kenya for about six weeks before heading to Canada for his pastoral year and further education before finishing his priestly studies in Texas in mid-2024.

We added two new beehives at the Kiirua farm, hanging them between two trees close together as a form of protection. Euticus, our farm manager, and I calculated we have now planted 13.5 acres of trees. Fr Daquin loves the pine trees. We also chose almost an acre of land for planting apples trees.

Kiirua farm is growing





## MAY 27

I believe we are heading into turbulent waters in Kenya, caused by the continued devaluation of the currency and the increasing desperation of many poorer people.

I was asked by a young man to help him with food. I had helped him recently to buy a coat and to register for a free government technical course. People are really struggling. I am often asked for money and assistance wherever I go ... except in the shopping mall.

Our results came back from the farm soil sampling we had done. It indicated we need to apply organic matter (including manure) and lime to enhance the production.

## JUNE 4

We were very happy to welcome Br. Sylvester home from the Philippines after an absence of almost five years. Many members of his family were at the airport to welcome him home including his parents, aunts and uncles, cousins and his younger brother. His mother prepared a celebratory feast at a location near the airport. I understand the joy of parents welcoming their son home.

Br. Sylvester is welcomed home with a family feast



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# *Remembering*

*We remember the following Oblates who died in 2022:*

January 26	Sylvester Lewans (1933)
February 1	Anthony "Tony" Schmidt (1928)
April 21	Gilbert "Gil" Mason (1934)
May 9	Otto Rollheiser (1938)
May 15	Dennis Alexander (1948)
July 14	Louis-Philippe Roy (1925)
July 26	Philip "Phil" Smith (1940)
July 31	James (Jim) Dukowski (1941)
September 22	Wieslaw "Wes" Szatanski (1965)
September 30	Wayne Jarvo (1937)
November 23	Henri Bisson (1930)
December 20	Francis "Frank" Kavanagh (1927)



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