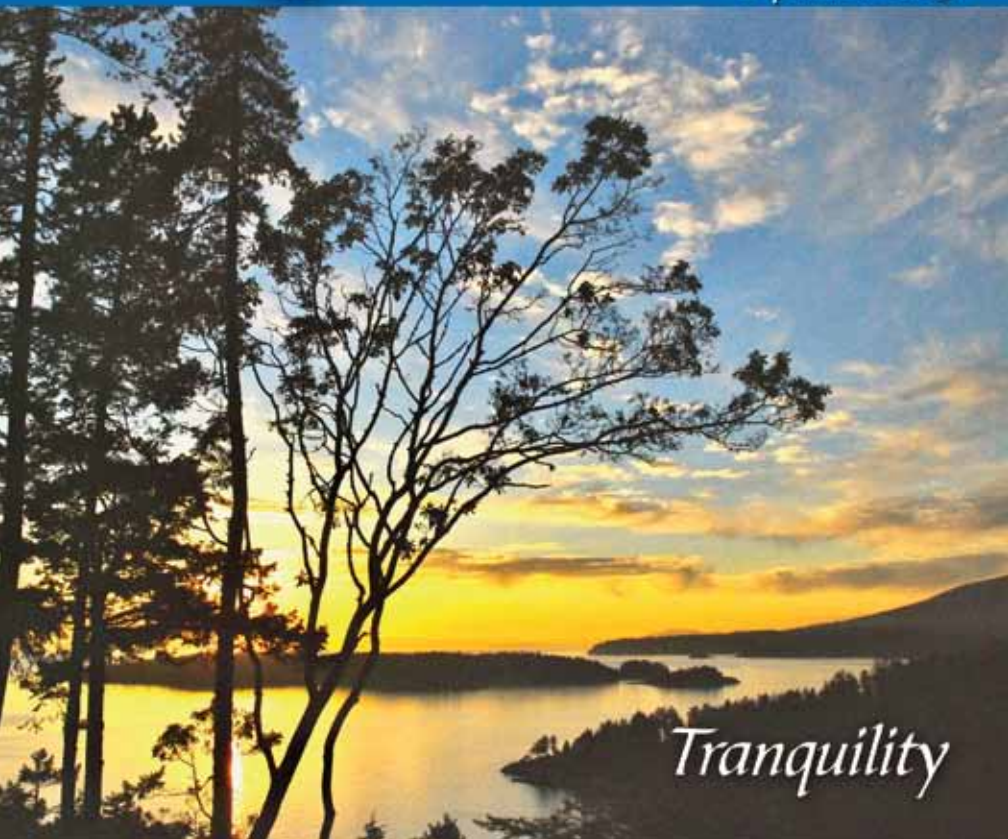


AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

Oblate Spirit



September 2023



Tranquility

Places of safe haven



There seems to be an ever-growing need for places of peace and tranquility in our world, places to which we can escape to avoid the bombardment of depressing news and events around our globe – war in Ukraine, battles in Africa, struggling economies, Covid.

There are four Oblate centres in Canada that we feature in this issue, places that offer tranquility, hospitality, renewal and hope.

Glenn Zimmer, OMI, of the Qu'Appelle House of Prayer, has often expressed amazement at the increased number of calls they continue to receive from people looking to find that something, somewhere, that fills a void in their lives.

That 'something' appears to be nourishment for the soul, a sentiment expressed by Cherie Westmoreland on the following pages and through her amazing photography such as the picture on our cover.

While we seek places to nourish our souls on earth, this is a good time to remind us to pray for souls that have passed to the next world, those we have loved and who inspired us throughout our lives. We recently lost John's sister Marianne Lorence, a MAMI supporter who was a warm and shining star on this earthly plane, and will be adding her name to the list of those for whom Fr. Ron Rolheiser will pray on All Souls' Day. (*See the prayer request form included with this publication.*)

We pray Marianne has found her haven of rest while those of us remaining behind continue the quest for peace in our world, helping those less fortunate as we move through life, for that is the Oblate path!

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators

Coming Home

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CHERIE WESTMORELAND

BOWEN ISLAND, BC – It was just a couple of weeks ago when I returned to beloved Saskatchewan from my west coast Bowen Island home. What good fortune that I would be gathering with a group of dear friends of mine and friends of the Qu'Appelle House of Prayer (QHP) to share the silence, prayer, contemplation and beauty of the place that we know so well.

As my car headed down into the Qu'Appelle Valley, I could feel the excitement, joy and anticipation of returning to a place that had become a beloved spiritual home for me since 2002, the year of my first visit. I remember my first stay, arriving in the yard and being greeted by Fr. Glenn Zimmer, OMI, Holy Names Sister Margaret Dick and volunteer couple Emily and John Cherneski. I had been longing for a place of retreat, a place of welcome, rest, and spiritual companioning; a place that nourished my spiritual longings.

All are welcome to the property nestled in the Qu'Appelle Valley just a kilometre from Fort Qu'Appelle. Originally a private family home and property, it became a

place of retreat, with a main house that contains a kitchen, three bedrooms and a beautiful chapel overlooking the valley. As well, there is an office/kitchen/



Fr. Glenn Zimmer with Cherie Westmoreland (left) and Dolores Fehr



dining building, two cabins for guests and two cabins for residents, along with a bungalow that is used by volunteers. Trails abound and wildlife is abundant, the vitality of life holding us in the beautiful web of interconnection.

Each day you are welcomed to a prayer or Eucharist celebration. The days are spent in silence; as a guest you prepare your own breakfast in the main house, share a silent lunch in the main dining room, and then join a shared conversational dinner with residents and guests.

The place and the people have accompanied me through many transitions over the years. I have retreated for a few days at a time, and at one point spent one winter month on a personal silent retreat, nurtured by the contemplative heart and spirit of the people who serve, and the land on which QHP rests.

Now, more than ever, we need this kind of place for retreat, reflection and connection with the Divine if we are to meet the challenges of our time. It is a place of deep hospitality, deep love and deep commitment, and the ripples of its influence travel far. I have been blessed to be welcomed here.

The deep hospitality continues with Fr. Glenn and Sister Chantelle Bonk, along with other core community members who volunteer part-time, including Kathy Letkemann and partner Tim Elias, Susan Butler-Jones and partner Boyd Drake, as well as all of those from the wider community who offer their love, support and hard work.



Pilgrims of Hope

BY LUCIE LEDUC

“For us in this Chapter, the two outstanding issues of hope in these times are the calls to care for our common home, and to grow in interdependence or communion.”

ST. ALBERT – I recently received a surprise visit at The Star of the North Retreat House. On a beautiful Friday morning, I was coming into the house after building a few mulch beds in The Star’s Food Security Garden on the Oblate property near the Foyer.

As I walked toward my office, I was informed my “appointment” had arrived. Intrigued and confused, I said to my colleague, “I don’t have any appointments this morning.” I turned the corner and there, down the hallway was a schoolmate I had grown up with more than 40 years ago in the town of Morinville, a 15-minute drive from The Star.

We had grown up together in a Catholic school, in the same class, for six years, throughout our junior/senior school years. I recognized him immediately, called out his name, and an overflow of joy and wonder filled my being at seeing him standing at the entrance.

After 11 years at The Star, this was the first schoolmate to drop by to see me at my workplace. He was also the last person I’d ever expect to visit me at an Oblate retreat house, with the religious ties that working there imply. To my knowledge he was not and had never been a religious person.

At one point in our ensuing conversation, he says to me, without guile, matter-of-factly, “So, ... you are religious. I haven’t been, though I’ve



raised my daughters in Catholic schools.”

I consider his words spoken so trustingly. Deep down, our universal roots of communion still *bind us and draw us together*, just as

the root of the word “religio” means – to bind the ligaments together.

“Yes,” I respond, and unconsciously, with a bit of *kind* defensiveness, I say, “I’m still human.” The Oblates helped smooth a path for me 40 years ago; a community of faith I’ve been nourished by, flourished in, and suffered with, and my Catholic faith has always been important to me, even when we were growing up”.

In my memory, he’d been the class clown; the one we needed to diffuse tension and to keep everyone, including teachers, in touch with their humility. He made us laugh at ourselves and with each other when conflict or tensions arose, as they inevitably do, and he did it all with an easy confidence and peace about him. Visiting with him for the next hour or so, the whole of our lives rushing in without pretense, I was aware he was opening a door or a window of communion with a part of my past I hadn’t dared hope was realizable 40 years later. I see in this encounter the truth of how the Spirit blows where it will; the truth of how we truly are *pilgrims of hope in communion*.

By the end of our time together, I was inviting him to a meal I was planning with another school friend I’ve kept in touch with, and with whom he was wanting to connect after these many years. The joy of nurturing communion, of giving



Garden board members

thanks for reunion, and rejoicing in the echoes of Eucharist that accompany us, daily fuel hope on the journey.

My experience of this encounter was a glimpse of what heaven will be like – an encounter with all the people we’ve seemingly left behind but whom God held in an interdependent union and communion all along. The grace given was being conscious of it.

The 37th Chapter document “Pilgrims of Hope in Communion” of the Oblates 37th Chapter, grants us a beautiful glimpse of the dignity, privilege, and joy of our call as Oblates and Associates, reminding us, *“Nothing in this world is indifferent to us”* (LS 3). *We have become aware of the bonds that unite us as a religious family. This reflects the ecclesiology of communion of the Second Vatican Council which affirms: “It was God’s will to sanctify and save [humanity], not in isolation, without any connection with one another, but by constituting a people”* (Lumen Gentium 9; cf. EG 113; Fratelli Tutti 137).

This speaks to me of my ‘chance’ encounter not as a

chance at all. It speaks to me of the work of the Holy Spirit, binding us together at every opportunity, in and through every crack of defence or false sense of privilege that might make us think we are working out of an isolated specialness, and always at work and blowing where she will to “sanctify and save (humanity), not in isolation, without any connection with one another, but by constituting a people.” It speaks to me of Oblate



communion alive in the larger communion of our Church in the world and in the smallest daily activities and encounters.

The Chapter document goes on to affirm a generous and miraculous truth, that wherever we are as a family, when one part of the family does something “in favor of the most abandoned”, we are all joined in “carrying out that act”.

Every mission in the Congregation is our mission. This reality invites us to accept that we cannot be in all the places and countries we would like to be. However, when an Oblate Unit does something in favor of the most abandoned, we are all carrying out that missionary action. This expresses the character of universality and communion as Oblates.”

The words pass through any sense of isolation and invisibility I or we might harbour, to the heart of hope and truth in the depths of the soul. Does my small act of work in the Food Security Garden, or the work done at the retreat house with spiritual formation through retreats, programs, and Aurora Living, or my simple encounter with an old schoolmate, have any consequence in the Oblate communion?

Similarly, do your small acts and encounters matter? Here the Chapter document truthfully says, yes. It raises every act in the Oblate world done in faith and love, to a level of foundational hope within communal interdependence and union in God that we all share in, whether we know it or not.

On meeting my school mate at the door, I instinctively led him outside to The Star Garden area where I had been work-





Garden volunteers

ing moments earlier. We stood in the garden, outside, sharing about our lives, where we are and where we've been, our families, and familiar connections we had growing up together.

Here, where food is grown and shared freely with others, and where community gathers to build the garden together and to share in its fruits and vegetables, I consider how the Oblates carried out their mission in my life, and I in theirs, mutually flourishing each other, restoring our truest dignity and purpose, fully human at the service of fullness of life for all. The word used in the Chapter to express this reality is interdependence, as a way of channeling what is written in Constitution 25: *"By obedience, we become the servants of all. Challenging the*

spirit of domination, we stand as a sign of that new world wherein persons recognize their close interdependence". 14.2 *Integrating interdependence is learning to live as a member of a body."*

And the best response we offer each other for this



interdependent awareness is thanksgiving, which at its Source is our sharing in Eucharist.

"Nothing in this world is indifferent to us" (LS 3). We have become aware of the bonds that unite us as a religious family."

(Lucie Leduc is executive director of Star of the North.)

Chapel at Star of the North



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





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



A sacred space

BY KAREN ANN MCKINNA

OTTAWA – Retreats have been a part of my spiritual journey throughout adulthood. Coming to live in Ottawa, I attended Saint Paul University for courses towards a Bachelor of Theology. Many of my profs were Oblates and I was well educated and enlivened by their teaching. I might mention Frs. Dave Perrin, Eugene King, Normand Bonneau, and others (my aging memory fails!). I heard about the nearby Galilee Retreat Centre and made some visits/retreats there.

The challenging times and circumstances in which we live drives the need for retreat ministry, even higher than when I first experienced the value of coming for a time of prayer and reflection. (Jesus did this regularly, we are told in scripture.) Recharged and remotivated, we return to our lives of service in the community. Having a designated place to go on retreat has the advantage of becoming ‘a thin place’, as the Celts say, a sacred space which is felt.

I was privileged to serve on the Galilee board and committees for many years. I continue to volunteer there and to attend many events and retreats as well as Oblate offerings for associates, including regular Oblate Community meetings. When I am there, I marvel at how bright and peaceful people look, whether they are retreatants, staff, volunteers, or visitors at Galilee.

Long may retreat ministry continue to serve the people of God!

Taking a road well trodden

Let me take you on a journey to the Land of the Galilee Retreat Centre, where the trees grow taller, and everything, including people, grow.

Arriving on my bicycle I quickly dismount as I approach Holy Ground. My consciousness elevates without warning. However I felt earlier, I feel better now. My foot hits the earth as I wheel my bike forward. I am on my way to a meeting and there are a few minutes to spare. Carefully propping up the bicycle against the Gate House I knock on the kitchen door. The friendly welcoming atmosphere hits me as Fr. Roy Boucher greets me with a big smile. "Do you ever ride that thing?" he asks with a twinkle in his eye. (Sadly, the twinkle is only a memory. Fr. Boucher died May 26, 2023)

I slide onto the kitchen chair opposite him at the table by the window. I brighten in his light. We chat of many things before it is time to go.

Galilee retreat center



I push the bicycle along the road past the side of the hospital ground to the cemetery. Leaning the bike against a tree I pause for a prayer and to remember some Oblates who I have had the pleasure of knowing while they lived on Earth.



Along I go past Martha's cottage and Fr. Richard Kelly's well-kept lovely garden, the Community Gardens to the left and the tennis court on the right. On and on I go, stepping lightly, pushing the bike. I do not ride it in the Land of Galilee. I do not want to miss anything: perhaps a leaf falling from a tree or a chipmunk hastily running in front of me. As I walk I admire the vegetables and flowers profusely growing in the gardens and around the bend past the barn with its dream of becoming a chapel and around to the main building and further around to the left to leave the bicycle beside the fire escape.

In I go to be greeted by lovely folk who work there to keep the fires burning. Perhaps it is for a committee meeting, a board meeting, a luncheon, a workshop, an Indigenous gathering, a Eucharist, a community day, a retreat day, an Oblate Community meeting, an educational event, a longer retreat, a meeting with friends, or a volunteer activity that has brought me many times to this place.

After lingering goodbyes I retrieve the bicycle. I walk it around to the front facing the river, seeing and remembering the fire pit where sacred fire burned in the centre of our circles. There is the tree a Sister once pointed out to me on a retreat - it looks like it has its arms (branches) raised and dancing in praise of the wonder of the Creator! And the mighty river with recreational boats sailing along on its thundering, ever



Chaplain Richard Kelly, OMI,
and Liz Murphy, program committee member

changing current. Its fresh smell and sound and even the taste of water is borne on a gently teasing breeze.

Footfalls are deliberate, an intentional exercise. Lift, carry, place; lift, carry, place; lift, carry, place ... savor the moment! (Saviour in the moment?) That is all there is! Why would we want anything else?

Pushing the bicycle past trees of some age, past the labyrinth (great working symbol of life's journey) and around past the chapel (I mean barn), to the top of the field. Here I bid farewell to the enchantment and climb on the bike for a lively ride downhill across the field (I am once again nine years old) with a song in my heart! It seems to go with that lovely ride through tall grasses, up and over bumps in the path. Under the trees, past Gilles Grove, and along Harrington St. I continue without having to pedal until I have returned to the everyday world, and until I am home.

Queen's House infused with Oblate hospitality

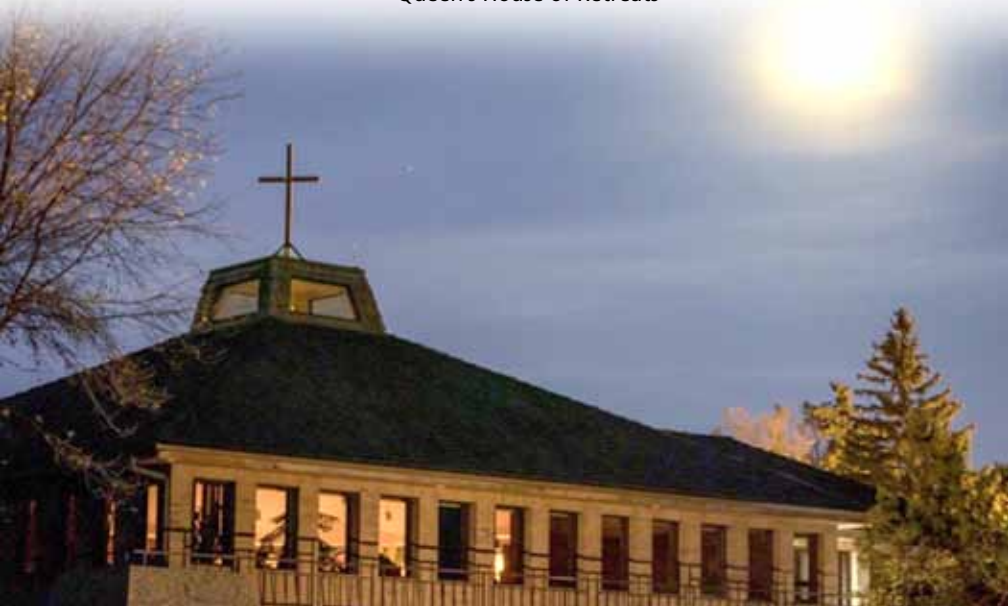
BY MARK AND DARCIE LICH

SASKATOON – Resting on a small piece of paradise on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River, Queen's House Retreat and Renewal Centre in Saskatoon is infused with Oblate warmth and hospitality. It offers the gift of peace in a place that provides a space for personal and spiritual growth.

All are welcome here. No matter their reason for coming, whether for a group workshop or private retreat, a meeting or a prayer circle, when people enter through its doors, they are greeted like friends.

For us, Queen's House feels like home. Long before we became Oblate Associates, we were in its conference rooms for programs like marriage preparation or in the chapel for lay formation. Some 25 years later, we still find ourselves sitting

Queen's House of Retreats



in the lobby chatting with friends old and new, or wandering down the hall to the Prairie Lounge where we can sneak a few moments of quiet as we marvel at the view out of the massive windows.

We love that its versatility means we can find silence and solitude in the Stillness Chapel, and moments later find ourselves in the dining room amid uproarious laughter and even the odd sing-along. A cup of coffee before a morning workshop, a cookie during a coffee break, a glass of wine during 'pre-prandial' before supper, all of these things lend themselves to a sense of cheerful familiarity and contentment.

The building cannot provide this feeling on its own. The staff brings the House to life. Queen's House is synonymous with hospitality. Each and every person working there, be it employee or volunteer, is an exemplar of the Oblate charism and characteristic hospitality. Warm smiles, greetings by name, hugs, jokes, and pauses for hallway conversations are all hallmarks of the House's ethos and character. Without them, it would merely be a beautiful building.

Celebrating Walter Demong, OMI



Our own children, now adults, cannot imagine growing up apart from Queen's House. They were – and are – every bit as welcome in the



halls as any priest, retreatant, or program participant. It was in the chapel that they discovered what full, conscious, active participation in a liturgy really meant. They fed the goldfish at the little pond in the hall, and learned that they, too, were Oblate stewards of the house. In the dining room, they learned during Oblate Community Days that elder and youngster had much in common, and that there was always time for a good game of cribbage.

We are so blessed by the countless ways in which Queen's House has touched our lives, and the lives of everyone who has passed through its doors. The sense of peace and welcome are truly soul-touching, and we are so much the richer for its existence and the ministry of the people in it. This is truly holy ground, and we hope that anyone who has not yet visited the House will someday have the opportunity to do so, for we know that they will be touched deeply, too. It's impossible not to be.



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Can we prove that God exists?

BY RON ROLHEISER, OMI

I wrote my doctoral thesis on the value of various philosophical arguments that try to prove the existence of God. Can there be such a proof? Brilliant philosophers, from Anselm, through Aquinas, through Descartes, through contemporary intellectuals like Charles Hartshorne,

submit that the existence of God can be proven through rational argument. Except, except, a lot depends upon what exactly we mean by the word “prove”. How do we prove something?

There’s a legend about St. Christopher that’s pertinent here: Christopher was a man gifted in every way, except faith. He was physically strong, powerful, goodhearted, mellow, and well liked. He was also generous, using his physical strength to help others, but he found it hard to believe in God, even though he wanted to. For him, the physical was what was real and everything else seemed unreal. And so, as the legend goes, he lived his life in a certain honest agnosticism, unable to really believe in anything beyond what he could physically see, feel, and touch.

However, this did not prevent him from using his gifts, especially his physical strength, to serve others. This was his refuge, generosity and service. He became a ferryboat operator, spending his life helping to carry people across a dangerous river. One night, as the legend goes, during a storm, the ferryboat capsized and Christopher dove into the dark waters to rescue a young child. Carrying that child to the shore, he



Ron Rolheiser, OMI

looked into its face and saw there the face of Christ. After that, he believed for he had seen the face of Christ.

For all its piety, this legend contains a profound lesson. It changes the perspective on the question of how one tries to “prove” God’s existence. Our attempt to prove God’s existence has to be practical, existential, and incarnate rather than mainly intellectual. How do we move from believing only in the physical, from believing only in the reality of what we can see, feel, touch, taste, and smell, to believing in the existence of deeper, spiritual realities?

There’s a lesson in the Christopher story: Live as honestly and respectfully as you can and use your gifts to help others. God will appear. God is not found at the conclusion of a philosophical syllogism but as the result of a certain way of living. Moreover, faith is not so much a question of feeling as of selfless service.

There’s a further lesson in the biblical account of the apostle, Thomas, and his doubt about the resurrection of Jesus. Remember his protest: “Unless I can (physically) place my finger in the wounds of his hands and stick my finger into the wound of his side, I will not believe.” Note that Jesus offers no resistance or rebuke in the face of Thomas’s skepticism. Instead, he takes Thomas at his word: “Come and (physically) place your finger in the wounds of my hand and the wound in my side; see for yourself that I am real and not a ghost.”

That’s the open challenge for us: “Come and see for yourselves that God is real and not a ghost!” That challenge,



however, is not so much an intellectual one as a moral one, a challenge to be honest and generous.

Skepticism and agnosticism, even atheism, are not a problem as long as one is honest, non-rationalizing, non-lying, ready to efface oneself before reality as it appears, and generous in giving his or her life away in service. If these conditions are met, God, the author and source of all reality, eventually becomes sufficiently real, even to those who need physical proof. The stories of Christopher and Thomas teach us this and assure us that God is neither angered nor threatened by an honest agnosticism.

Faith is never certainty. Neither is it a sure feeling that God exists. Conversely, unbelief is not to be confused with the absence of the felt assurance that God exists. For everyone, there will be dark nights of the soul, silences of God, cold lonely seasons, skeptical times when God's reality cannot be consciously grasped or recognized. The history of faith, as witnessed by the life of Jesus and the lives of the saints, shows us that God often seems dead and, at those times, the reality of the empirical world can so overpower us that nothing seems real except what we can see and feel right now, not least our own pain.

Whenever this happens, like Christopher and Thomas, we need to become honest agnostics who use our goodness and God-given strengths to help carry others across the burdensome rivers of life. God does not ask us to have a faith that is certain, but a service that is generous and sustained. We have the assurance that should we faithfully help carry others, we will one day find ourselves before the reality of God who will gently say to us: "See for yourself, that I am real, and not a ghost."

Can we prove that God exists? In theory, no; in life, yes.

*(Used with permission of the author, Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser.
He can be contacted through his website, www.ronrolheiser.com.
Follow on Facebook www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser)*



Joe Gunn

Blood minerals fuel the global economy

BY JOE GUNN

OTTAWA – “A child in the Congo dies every day so that we can plug in our phones.”

Ouch!

It is rare that a book can bring one to tears. But not with Siddharth Kara’s *“Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives.”* When a grief-stricken father utters these words, we must face the reality of “a global economic order that preys on the poverty, vulnerability and devalued humanity of people who toil at the bottom of global supply chains.”

It just so happens that one far-away corner of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) contains more cobalt than the rest of the world combined. You’d think that would make the country rich – but the DRC ranks 175th of 189 countries on the UN’s Human Development Index, a place where four-fifths of the population lives below the poverty line.

The situation in the mining regions of the DRC is “a hellscape of craters and tunnels, patrolled by maniacs with guns.” Entire communities have been displaced by mining concessions. Tens of thousands of Congolese have no option but to toil as artisanal miners. They dig for cobalt (toxic to the touch) without protective gear – usually clad in only shorts, flip flops and maybe shirts. Artisanal miners excavate by shovel, often engaging in dangerous tunnel digging to retrieve underground

cobalt seams. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development reports that 70 per cent of cobalt from the DRC has some touch of child labour. Buyers are Chinese overseers but include some of the world's largest mining conglomerates, some purportedly under the Canadian flag. Corrupted government officials allow tax evasion and non-existent environmental controls.

I'm powerfully aware that I'm writing this text on a laptop that must use more than 30 grams of this "critical mineral" in its rechargeable battery. Each of us who owns a smartphone also holds cobalt in our hands. To face the climate crisis, governments are mandating more than 100 million electric vehicles (EVs) on our roads by 2030 – with each EV requiring up to 10 kilograms of refined cobalt in its battery packs.

The solution is not to unplug our phones, nor to refuse EVs.

After all, three-quarters of the world's mining companies are registered in Canada. The town of Cobalt, ON, was the "cradle of Canadian mining" during the 1903 – 1921 mining boom there. (Read MP Charlie Angus' *"Cobalt: Cradle of Demon Metals"* for gory details of those days.)

Canadians can control this rapacious industry.

Earlier this year, members of my Oblate parish signed petitions from Development and Peace – Caritas Canada demanding our federal government enact firm environmental and human rights mechanisms over multinational mining practices. The petition was read into the Parliamentary record by our MP. We won't stop there. Our faith demands we take on the daunting responsibility of changing unjust economic structures. Children in the DRC – and our own children – depend on us to act.

(Joe Gunn serves as executive director of Le Centre Oblat: A Voice for Justice)

Oblates honored for service to victims of war

KYIV – During a special meeting of the State Administration of the Kyiv Military Administration, recognitions were presented to representatives of churches and religious associations involved in humanitarian aid to victims of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Fr. Pawel Wyszowski, OMI, and Bro. Sebastian Jankowski, OMI, were honored for their heroic work during the war. Father Pawel is the pastor of St. Nicholas Church in Kyiv and Bro. Sebastian is the director of Kitchen for the Homeless, a ministry to people living on the streets of Kyiv.

“I am pleased that the State Administration of Kiev noticed the activities of the parish of St. Nicholas during the Russian invasion,” said Fr. Pawel. “Yes, we stayed, we didn’t run away, we try to serve the best we can. We distribute and deliver humanitarian aid to those most in need, even when Kyiv and Chernihiv regions are under fire.”

Bro. Sebastian and his team of volunteers cook and distribute as many as 500 meals a day to people living on the streets in Kyiv. He also works tirelessly to deliver gas cookers to people living in surrounding villages.

The war in Ukraine has had one unexpected positive effect on the Oblates’ ministry at St. Nicholas Parish. The church had been converted into a music hall when the communists were in charge of Ukraine. When communism fell, the Oblates were allowed to enter Ukraine and began using the building on a limited basis as the facility was



still under the control of the owner of the music hall. When war broke out, the owner fled, and the Oblates now have complete freedom to use the church as they desire.

“The church is open, active and alive, always full of people in need of help and those who, despite being tired can help,” said Fr. Pawel. “This is yet another proof that the House of God must function as intended.”

Oblate churches have become asylums for the needy. War refugees have found shelter there and humanitarian aid campaigns are also carried out at the churches.

The Oblates in the Kyiv region continuously distribute aid that flows in from all over the world. A shipment of nearly five tonnes of aid, consisting of clothing, footwear, hygiene products, blankets, bedding and other everyday items, arrived from the Oblates in Germany.



Aid arrives in Kyiv

Transforming Armour to Icons

A unique exhibition is taking place at an Oblate parish in Ukraine.

The exhibit, “Spiritual Victory,” consists of 12 icons that were made of armour plates from Russian weapons. Some of the plates contained bullet holes. Artists from the Art Armour Project painted the icons with images of Christ and holy protective elements.



The exhibit opened at St. Nicholas Church on June 1, International Children’s Day in Ukraine. A prayer service was held at the opening of the exhibit for the children of Ukraine, particularly those who have been killed, injured or displaced.

Sharing God's comfort in times of suffering

BY FR. IYAN DAQUIN, OMI

IRINDA PARISH, Kenya – As a minister of the sacrament of anointing, I had a profound personal experience that I would like to share.

It began when I visited one of my parishioners who was experiencing intense pain. On the occasions I visited her, I found her in great pain and discomfort. Her family informed me that she had been diagnosed with ulcers, but her condition seemed to indicate something more serious. Eventually, the family received devastating news from the doctor—a heart condition that left her with only a few days to live.

I approached her knowing that her time was drawing near. She was certainly not aware of her last days. Yet, despite her suffering, she greeted me with unwavering eyes, calling me by name: John.



As I prayed for her, holding her hand, I was acutely aware that her presence in our church would soon be absent. No longer would I see her occupying her customary seat every Sunday. The 80-year-old woman was admitted to the hospital, where her children and grandchildren would come during visiting hours to check on her.

Fr. Iyan Daquin visits a parishioner

She died in the absence of all, leaving entrusted messages of love and forgiveness with other patients sharing the same ward. It is a reality in our system here that many people die in the absence of their loved ones.

As ordained ministers, our presence beside those who are nearing the end of life brings forth a profound realization of human powerlessness in the face of God's compassionate and loving presence. The encounter with my parishioner, Anita, exemplified the deep desire she had to see me during her arduous journey of illness.

This experience underscores the consolation and comfort that the presence of God and the sacrament of anointing can provide. It reminded me that in times of despair and impending death, individuals often seek spiritual support and find consolation in their faith. Religious practices and rituals offer a profound sense of peace and connection to the saving power of God.

This personal encounter highlights the vital responsibility of ordained ministers in caring for the sick and souls of those nearing the end of life. Through our presence, prayers, and the administration of sacraments, we can bring solace, forgiveness, and a profound connection to the divine. Let us embrace this calling with reverence and compassion, offering comfort and consolation to those facing life's most challenging moments. May we serve as vessels of God's love, guiding souls toward eternal peace.

Check out our Facebook page:



Lacombe Canada MAMI

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



YouTube Lacombe MAMI Oblate Missions



Kenya

NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

JUNE 17

Our Nairobi youth continue to distribute food in Mathare slums. I'm pleased they are including new and different youth members each week to experience and learn from the generosity. They discover they are rich compared to some other people, and this can change their attitude. So, the program is a win-win activity.



Gerry Conlan, OMI

JUNE 24

I was disturbed to hear the president threatening his MP's that if they don't vote for the finance bill, there would be no money to their regions for roads, etc. Unfortunately, the opposition is practically zero because since the election in August last year many of the opposition members have been absorbed into the government ranks. My friends are deeply worried about where Kenya is heading. Control, corruption and coercion are increasing.

We were happy to receive Fr. Ken Thorson, our provincial, from Ottawa. We are trying not to have the program packed too tightly because he needs to be alert for his meetings with each of 16 Oblates plus scholastics, pre-novices and novitiate candidates.

Provincial Ken Thorson, OMI,
visits the postulancy



We are excited to hear there might be a group of Canadians coming to visit Kenya in 2024. It has been too long since the last one.

JULY 1

Our youth did their usual good work and visited a different place within the slum and managed to feed 80 people. The occasional youth members who assist are always inspired and go home more grateful for the little they have.



Food distribution in the Mathare slum

We were happy to see Br. Matthew give a seminar to the youth about Laudato Si. This encouraged the youth in Irinda Parish to clean the church compound and surrounding areas. It was great to see and I hope they received much praise from the local people so they feel good and see the value of helping the community.

JULY 15

Fr. Thorson continued to visit the mission, talking to people about mission leadership for the next three years. Fr. Fidele's second term as the mission superior



A good harvest at the postulancy

Fr. Ken took his 'fix it' skills to Kenya





Construction continues for the Gachanka church

People took advantage of free water during a pumping test in Kisaju





Fr. Gerry helps his dad celebrate his 90th birthday

ends in October. Fr. Thorsen completed his visit, touching base with every Oblate and scholastic in Kenya.

I later left for Australia to spend some time with my aging parents and other family members. I arrived in time for 8 a.m. mass and slid into the seat next to mum (85). She was certainly surprised! Thankfully she has a strong heart. After mass we went back to her house for breakfast and a long visit (the first of many).

I also spent a day preparing a special invite for dad's 90th birthday in August. I decided to create a newspaper front page highlighting events of 1933 and that era.

I connected with the graphic designer for the Australian Oblates and he kindly came up with some nice logo designs for Kenya using the shape of the country and the Oblate cross.

JULY 22

Hi from Mazenod College in Perth, Australia. Somehow two weeks have already flown by ... only two weeks left. I'm now staying at Mazenod College, my old school where I was a boarder from 1977-1979. It's much better being here as an Oblate priest! I celebrated mass for the 100-plus boarders. It is not something I thought I would be doing 45 years ago!



Fr. Gerry points to his room at his old school

JULY 30

Three scholastic Oblates (Benjamin, Wekesa and Charles) travelled to Cameroon to begin a one-month study program to help them prepare for final vows, followed by a one-week retreat.

Our youth are trying to be active, but it is difficult when people are busy and short of money.

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



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.



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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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