

Oblate Spirit

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI



May 2024



Gratitude

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."
– **Maya Angelou**



An eye-opening journey

For some, it was an experience of a lifetime. For others, eye-opening. In February 10 supporters of MAMI (Missionary Associates of Mary Immaculate) joined Fr. Ken Forster, OMI, for a 17-day sojourn to Kenya to experience life in the mission that was initiated by the Canadian Oblates more than 25 years ago.

Their journey, and some of their observations and feelings, are highlighted in stories throughout this issue of *Oblate Spirit*. If nothing else, they returned home with new perceptions of the Kenya mission, its people and the Oblates who serve them.

Their interest in the Kenya mission comes as no surprise. Since the mission's inception, the Kenya mission has been strongly supported by Canadian members of MAMI. For example, last year \$750,981.05 was disbursed by MAMI for various aspects of the mission.

That was a significant portion of the \$1,543,423.52 received in donations by MAMI in 2023. (See Pages 19-21 for last year's financial overview.)

That is an overwhelming number. From the bottom of our hearts, we at MAMI thank you! You make us feel blessed and fortunate to be able to experience your generosity and love for humanity.

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators



The MAMI travellers gather in Vancouver on Ash Wednesday before heading to Kenya

A trip of a lifetime!

BY MARY BATTLE

VANCOUVER – On Ash Wednesday in February, 10 MAMI supporters and Fr. Ken Forster, OMI, (one of the first Kenyan Oblate missionaries more than two decades ago) embarked on a missionary awareness trip to Kenya.

Despite travelling from the three Western provinces of Canada, most of the group was able to gather for Ash Wednesday Mass at the Oblate house in Vancouver before leaving on two long flights, ultimately arriving in Kenya late the next night.

For the next 17 days, the group travelled to many different areas of the country, with the energetic and knowledgeable Fr. Gerry Conlan acting as both van driver and tour guide extraordinaire! The days were busy and action-packed, full of meaningful interactions with locals, of witnessing the impact that the Oblates' presence is having on the people of Kenya, of long drives in the van, and full of non-stop witnessing the joy and love of the Kenyan people. There were many laughs, and many new friendships were formed.



Mary Battle helps distribute food in the Mathare slum

If you've ever wondered what it's like to be on a MAMI mission awareness trip, read on to see what members of the group had to say about their experience. If, after reading this, you think you'd like to participate in an upcoming trip, please reach out to the MAMI office.

Participant Quotes:

- "I've wanted to go to Kenya for over 10 years ... and missed an earlier trip with MAMI. A yearning to go, but not sure why. Knowing the experience would change me, not sure how. So, this trip was a chance to fulfill a dream to see Kenya 'safely' and see where it leads me. See what plans God has in store for me. I'm learning to work with God's timeline, let things unfold as they should. The trip was an amazing experience to connect with locals and feel a part of Kenya, not just a tourist visiting sites."
- "Méru was amazing. Again, the variety of projects visited, and the people encountered was so helpful to understand the depth of the Oblates' impact in the communities. I heard so many times in our visits, especially from the parish representatives, how grateful they were for the Oblates, and how the care and involvement of the Oblates was different (better) than any other they had experienced."

A visit to St. Joseph the Worker parish





Marlis Joller and Janice Haddock visit with women in Larmudiac

- “The hospitality was second to none and attending a wedding was the icing on top. Never again will a wedding be the same.”
- “I wanted to see the projects in Kenya as Fr. Ken had spoken about some of them and Fr. Gerry’s information in the *Oblate Spirit* intrigued me. I felt it would be a great experience to visit a country the Oblates have supported for many years. I went with an open mind and few expectations, and the outcome was much more than I had anticipated.”



- “Very impressed with the young men at Kisaju. One point that I didn’t realize was the amount of work being done in Kenya in Oblate formation.”

Frs. Daquin and Ken Forster enjoy a conversation



Joe Haddock
trades
stories with
an elder

- “Fr. Daquin, Br. Sylvester and Br. David made our stay very comfortable. Being able to relax at the rectory felt like home and this was a good feeling. The evening with the youth was an evening to remember and it was great to see so many attending and really enjoying themselves. Norbert and Millicent’s wedding was a bonus and the music, dancing and ceremony made for a special event. The experience was so different from our weddings and was glad that the couple invited us! Seeing the many children from the slums who were so joyful and curious about this group who were so different from them, was heartwarming but, at the same time, very difficult to see.”
- “It was good to have a ‘home base’ while in Kenya. The grounds were large and beautiful and safe. I appreciated the opportunities to visit with the seminarians and the Oblate formation team located there as well as visiting Oblates from other parts of Africa.”

What word(s) would you use to describe your trip to Kenya?

- A trip of a lifetime! The people, wherever we went, were so giving and friendly
- Life changing, amazing, connected to locals and way of life

- Awesome; welcoming, warm people; exceeded expectations
- Amazing - heart-warming, hope-filled, resilient people
- Meaningful, enlightening, rich, inspiring, worthwhile, enjoyable, educational
- Inspiring, fantastic, life-changing
- Challenging, faith building, encouraging
- Wonderful people, eye opening, educational, challenging (to see such poverty at times), inspiring



What did you learn on this trip?

- “In spite of poverty, the people were happy, and they seemed to collaborate and cooperate. Oblates of OMI Lacombe Kenya Mission are constantly seeking ways to become sustainable with various projects. Seeing the various programs and experiencing it first-hand made it so real and it was a trip I will always treasure.”
- “The Oblates do very significant work in Kenya. They empower the people, teach leadership skills and build capacity so that the people can pursue goals. They work with the Kenyan people in a way that they are invested in and proud of what they do for themselves. The Oblates have a holistic approach to their work. They are concerned not only for the spiritual well-being of the people, but with their physical health and social well-being. They want the people to prosper. They strive to give the people hope for the future.”
- “The women in the prison at Langata have the opportunity for rehabilitation and skill development. They live in community and, from what I saw, harmony with one another. Our prison system could learn from them.”

- “Christianity is alive and well in Kenya. Faith in Jesus gives them the strength they need to cope with daily difficulties.”
- “Community is important to the Oblates and to the Kenyan people. I asked Cindy, who opened her home to us in Mathare, ‘What gives you hope?’ She replied, ‘The flour that the Oblate youth give to her’ and ‘the support she gets from her neighbors’ when she is lacking something. These people know what interdependence is.”
- “The Kenya people know how to celebrate mass, with singing and dancing, with generosity of heart. They all want to contribute to the church, even though they have so little to spare. They remind me of the gospel story of the woman with just two pennies to give to the temple treasury.”
- “I want more than ever to support the Oblate missions.”
- “The Oblates do incredible work on a very limited budget. That funds donated to MAMI are wisely used. That the formation of young men is vital for the mission to continue and be successful.”
- “There is great hope for the church in Kenya. The Oblates are doing great work in educating young men for the Oblate way of life. The parishes we observed are alive with the spirit of Christ.”

The Canadian group was privileged to attend this couple's wedding





The women are gifted with Kitenges (African-printed fabric)

What will/did you tell friends and family about the trip?

- Trip of a lifetime ... but I hope to go back. I had opportunities, sites visited, people met, general safety that I wouldn't have been able to have/do on my own. Travelling with MAMI opened doors to experiences that allowed us to connect with locals, communities, individuals to gain a better understanding of life in Kenya and how we can aid in the future. I felt connected to Kenyans not just a tourist."
- "That I have seen first-hand the wonderful work of the Oblates and that MAMI is worthy of their donations. That the Kenyan people are hard-working, resilient and strong, but because of so many factors outside of their control they need us to be true sisters and brothers and share the resources we have been blessed with."
- "I would let them know there are great things happening in the church in Kenya. When they give support to MAMI they are supporting many great works."
- "If you have an opportunity to go to a developing country, go; also, if an opportunity to go on this Mission Awareness trip to Kenya comes up - go!



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

A Kenyan feast for the senses



BY TANYA MYRFIELD-WOLFE

Tanya makes new friends

SASKATOON – My educational trip to Kenya was filled with a mixture of excitement, exhaustion, and many joyful moments that will remain in my mind and heart. I began this educational experience, a new chapter in my life, by saying goodbye to my husband and three young children as I headed to the Oblate mission in Kenya.

Our trip covered 17 days and our group spent the time exploring the local parishes, meeting with different parish groups including the Catholic Women's Association (CWA), Catholic Young Adults, parish council members, and the Catholic Men's Association (CMA).

One part that stood out was the formation of community in the Oblates at Karen House. There are 15 young men studying philosophy and exploring their discernment to priesthood or brotherhood. On one of our last evenings, Fr. Ken Forster, OMI, said mass and stressed that their first community was their families. Now they will learn to live in another community as Oblates before deciding their next steps either towards brotherhood or priesthood if this is their mission in life.

I quickly learned that my journey through the Kenyan missions would not be just physical but spiritually and

culturally awakening. Each place had its unique charm and energy and provided glimpses into the lives of the local people and their faith community.

Our visit to St. Joseph the Worker Parish was a vibrant experience. The timing couldn't have been better as they were hosting a deanery meeting with strong representation from the five parishes, with the local bishop presiding at an outdoor mass under the Kenyan blue sky.

The parish grounds were bustling with activity in the very early hours as volunteers were preparing a meal for the approximately 1,000 people from the five parishes. Pieces of chicken were cut, while large basins of carrots and lentils were cooked over large open fires. Among the church grounds were chickens, ducks, sheep, and a goat that roamed freely. This was a very exciting experience for my first trip to Kenya.

At breakfast, Br. Zachary and Br. Stephen indicated that I should prepare myself for at least a three-hour mass. The mass was a wonderful four-hour experience that started with a children's liturgical dance. The mass was filled with dancing, singing and clapping, not just from the children and youth dancers,

or the 100-person choir, but also joyful movements and singing of praise from the congregation. The mass was spoken in Swahili except for one sentence in the bishop's message: "There is more to life than what we think about life." This was a powerful sentence that I often reflected on during the remaining part of the trip.

Cooking preparations



Cooking preparations





CWA women gather before mass

Water is an essential part of life, and when we visited the St. Bernardo Prayer House, this aspect became evident. With the support of MAMI members, a borehole had been drilled, and the community now sells water to nearby farms and homes for supplementary income. Solar panels on the roof provide power for three pumps, ensuring a steady supply of water. This project is a great example of the 50-50 partnership between the local community and MAMI.

Kenya is a very 'young' country with many youth active in parish life. We spent an evening with the youth from the two Oblate parishes in Méru outside Our Lady of the Assumption Church. MAMI had gifted this youth group with a large speaker, and the youth quickly found how to play music. We

Nap time in the classroom



danced to Jerusalema, the macarena, and many more songs. There was a lot of joy, laughter, and pictures being taken. As night came, we quickly sang Happy Birthday to Louis, a fellow MAMI member on this mission trip, shared a cake and then sent the youth home before it became too late and unsafe for them to travel.

As I reflect on our journey through Kenya, I am filled with gratitude for the warm hospitality and the vibrant spirit of the Kenyan people. From the bustling towns to the serene parishes, from youth to seniors, each moment was a reminder of the beauty of human connection, community, and the power of faith.

(Tanya Myrfield-Wolfe is MAMI's Administrative Assistant.)

Check out our Facebook page:



Lacombe Canada MAMI



YouTube Lacombe MAMI Oblate Missions

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



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





Farm manager Euticus leads a tour of the farm

Visit to Kiirua Farm

BY LOUIS KLOSTER

KENYA – In 2013, the Oblates purchased the Kiirua farm with 19.6 acres of land. It is located 12 kilometres west of Méru. They hired Euticus, a 30-year-old man, to develop and manage the property.

Since then, a forest of trees – eucalyptus, pine, cypress, and some hardwoods – has been planted. Some of those trees will soon be ready to harvest and will become a source of income. Timber is expensive in Kenya.

The road up to the farm was steep and impassable, so our travelling group hiked up and past corn that must have been 12 feet tall and rosemary plants that were as tall as me. For an hour we visited Euticus and his wife, Ann. They welcomed us in warm Kenyan style, and Euticus led us on a tour of the farm.

Carrots were being harvested in the garden, and four cattle, one of them a dairy cow, were being fed. Chickens provided eggs, and goats, meat.

Some of us followed Euticus up the slope and into the forest. Corn was planted between the rows of trees, and several beehives were situated among them, each providing six kilograms of honey every four months.

The produce and any revenue from this farm support the Oblate missions. After accepting a cup of coffee and some buttered bread, we were on our way to our next destination.

(Louis Kloster was one of 10 MAMI supporters on a recent missionary awareness trip to Kenya.)

Canadian guests trek through the farm



Words a Christian should never say



Joe Gunn

BY JOE GUNN

OTTAWA - "There's nothing we can do."

I wish I hadn't heard it expressed publicly that way, even in reference to the horribly destructive conflict in Gaza between Israel and Hamas.

There is no doubt that the world's seemingly intractable crises can weigh heavily upon us. God knows, we may sometimes feel helpless before massive problems such as global injustice, war, or environmental catastrophe. It is also true that we cannot hope to put an end to all human suffering. Nonetheless, "There's nothing we can do" is a phrase we Christians might refrain from uttering.

At the risk of appearing to be glib, allow me to insist that members of faith communities believe in the power of prayer. Bringing a complex problem to our meditative consciousness can help bring compassion to the fore. Prayers for victims, prayers for peace, are always meaningful responses. Human cultures have always created structures of meaning – praying together – through communal ceremonies and liturgies.

Another important action is to prepare for meaningful conversations on complex topics by educating ourselves – and here it is especially important to access several sources from which thoughtful minds can test divergent viewpoints.

Additionally, at times of suffering and stress, many people

could appreciate a kind, supportive word or gesture of care and concern. Reaching out is not always easy. In these months I've had conversations with a veteran who defends all Israeli action as resulting from atrocities committed by Hamas, as well as conversations with a young woman who organizes public rallies for Palestinian rights. Some faith communities, afraid to court controversy, simply avoid saying anything at all on any contentious issue. Their silence runs the risk of being perceived as a less-than-courageous complicity with the status quo.

In approaching difficult questions, it's wonderful to recall that we belong to the Christian community for a reason – we know we can be better, together. There definitely are some issues that we, as individuals, may not be able to resolve alone. There are places in the world we will never visit, cultures and political realities we'll never comprehend, and complex problems well beyond our ken. But that's precisely why we need the richness of community, where our actions can be informed by the resourcefulness and expertise of others.

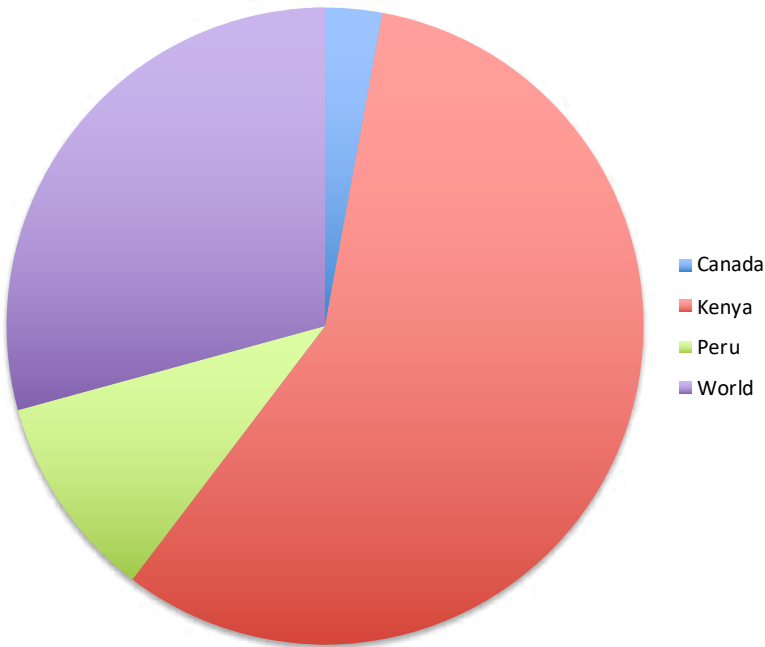
Returning to the example of war in Gaza, Christian faith communities are privileged to be able to listen to the church there. I was brought to tears to hear the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem offer to give himself as a captive in exchange for the freedom of hostages! Cardinal Pizzaballa called not only for our prayers, but also insisted that we advocate for an immediate ceasefire and the establishment of humanitarian corridors so that our increasingly necessary donations of aid can securely arrive to those Gazans in such grave need.

Christians recognize that there are always ways we can act to create a better world.

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

2023 Projects Funded

\$1,307,007.24



Canada	\$37,762.93
Kenya	\$750,981.05
Peru	\$135,902.54
World	\$382,360.72

PROJECTS FUNDED

CANADA/USA

MAMI continues to support the following projects in Canada:

- Star of the North Retreat Centre
- Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples
- Olive Branch Mediation Ministry
- Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples
- The Forest Dwelling Program in the USA

KENYA

MAMI funds assist the Oblates in Kenya and respond to many needs in the parishes including:

- Gachanka: church construction and education of students
- Irinda: education of students and youth gatherings
- Kionyo: education of students and the building of a rectory
- Kisaju: education of students; construction of a rectory; a water borehole; and installations for solar power
- Kitui: HIV/AIDS assistance
- Korompoi: water borehole and solar power installations
- Langata Women's prison: education for the prisoners and provision of necessary supplies
- Larmudiac: building of a toilet block and rectory
- Nairobi:
 - a piano
 - keyboard
- Support of the mission

Education is an
important contribution
for MAMI in Kenya



PERU

MAMI funds in Peru support the following projects:

- Blaise MacQuarrie's building projects (homes, dorms, chapels, classrooms, retreat centres, sports fields and equipment)
- Tertiary Care Patient House in Lima
- Santa Clotilde Hospital (boat motors, milk for mal-nourished children)
- Soup kitchens, children's art programs and pastoral visits

WORLD

MAMI continues to fund various projects around the world including:

- Angola: the formation of catechists and supporting vocational discernment
- Cameroon: first formation of young men in Oblate religious life
- Haiti: emergency relief and Oblate residence repair after the cyclone
- India: first formation along with education for poor children and homes for the poor
- Nigeria: vocational training for women
- South Africa: scholastic studies
- Sri Lanka: humanitarian aid; a solar-powered water pump; programs for empowering youth; medical care and social assistance for the needy; and medical care of the Oblates

A ceramics workshop at a prison in Peru



Passing the bucks for a good cause

BY SHIRLEY A. BROWN

VANCOUVER – The Oblates continue to serve at St. Augustine's Parish in Vancouver's Kitsilano Beach area. In that parish there is a group of senior women called "Busy Hands." We meet every Tuesday and keep our hands and minds busy by making crafts and playing mahjong or cribbage.

Everyone puts \$3 into the pot to help pay for the craft materials and the "sweets" and tea provided at lunch. We also rely on donations of crafts materials, mainly yarn and fabrics. We are doing what we can for the environment by recycling these materials.

This is the social highlight of the week for some of us women. It started years ago to make crafts to sell at the Catholic Women's League (CWL) Christmas and spring fairs with all the proceeds going to CWL charities. The current group of crafters have been together for 15 years and have raised just over \$20,000.

Then COVID came and the craft fairs were cancelled. Busy Hands was not able to meet although some women continued to sew or knit at home in the hope that we would soon be back together.

We first resumed by meeting in the beautiful church courtyard, socially distancing and chatting as we ate our bag lunches.

Finally, the ban was lifted and we were able to meet again at close quarters. Now we were faced with finding a way to sell our crafts without the CWL fairs, which had not resumed operating.



Members of the Busy Hands group

The parish has a program with St. Augustine's School that teams Grade 7 students with an elderly person (senior) who pray for each other. The seniors particularly pray for the students who are preparing for their Confirmation. We are appropriately called "prayer partners".

Four times a year the school sponsors a seniors' lunch at which time the students meet their prayer partners. The Busy Hands women decided it might be a good idea to sell their crafts at these seniors' luncheons.

Because this is an Oblate parish, it was only fitting that the Busy Hands group should donate the proceeds to the Oblate Missions. Many of our seniors are familiar with Fr. Ken Forster's tremendous work in Kenya and have been very generous in their support of the Busy Hands group.

Last Christmas, the CWL held its Christmas fair for the first time in five years and the Busy Hands group was asked to participate. We negotiated with the CWL to let us keep half of our earnings so we could continue to support MAMI.

Since March 2021, post COVID, Busy Hands has sent \$3,500 to MAMI and we hope to continue "passing the bucks" to this worthy cause, as long as we can keep our hands busy.

(Shirley A. Brown is the co-ordinator for the Busy Hands Crafters at St. Augustine's Parish)



Celebrating mass under the church

From Ukraine, with thanks

BY FR. WITALIJ PODOLAN, OMI

KYIV, Ukraine – Thank you, dear benefactors, for remembering us. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine continues day and night ... regular sirens, rockets fired, people wounded or killed.

We experience many losses, death, pain and injury on a daily basis. We feel exhausted because of the constant sirens and shelling, but we stand ready to provide help to those in need.

With MAMI support for the Centre for Psychological Assistance under the church in Kyiv, electricity and ventilation were installed, and the walls were partially plastered. There was an issue with waterproofing that existed for 30 years, but thanks to your financial support we managed to solve it so that the water was completely retained. The process was lengthy because it was necessary to carry out long-term waterproofing on the exterior and interior. Specialists from Poland did not give us a chance that it would be fixed, but thank God we succeeded.



Seeking shelter under the church

More than 20 men from our parish are fighting on the front line, and seven of them were killed during these two years.

Despite the fact the centre has yet to fully function because the appropriate permits are not in place, various events have taken place.

More than 200 homeless people were provided a festive Christmas dinner and more than 80 orphan children received help, warm clothes and sweets for Christmas.

At the church centre, a heating point was established for people who do not have electricity and warm food in their homes. During a recent night, about 25,000 people were hiding in the Kyiv metro due to massive shelling. When the sirens sound, the residents from the nearby apartment houses come to the church to hide, especially the children from a nearby school.

Food is shared in safe confines



Recently, 96 people from the parish donated blood at the centre for those people at the front line and helped save 200 lives.

We are very grateful to MAMI Canada for your interest and help, as well as for your prayers. The Ministry of Culture of Ukraine promised that the church will be transferred to the parish community on May 1, and then our centre will be able to fully operate. With your assistance, we can offer help for mothers who have lost their sons at war, providing professional training sessions with psychologists and physiotherapists. And also help children and the homeless.

It is a sad and difficult time in our lives.

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



A gift of entertainment for the inmates

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

CHINCHA ALTA, Peru – Santiago and Walter, part of my work team, arrived one morning at the parish house with several sports items in the car. I joined them and we headed for the huge penitentiary 10 kilometres away. It was very hot as we are still in summer.

To get to the jail we pass through the city garbage dump, which is quite huge and smelly. At a distance you can see the forlorn-looking grey jail buildings at the foothills of the dirty Andes Mountains.

As we approached the penitentiary, we noticed the quietness of the area considering there are close to 5,000 inmates behind those high walls. We were met by police guards at the huge iron gate, and we asked permission to meet with the woman in charge of social work.





We waited 15 minutes at the gate, then had to go through an inspection of the vehicle. We were then taken to a large room where each sports item was examined for drugs. All went well and a police officer guided us to several pavilions. At each of 12 pavilions we gave inmates (men and women) two soccer balls. We also provided them with two goal nets plus two pumps for the balls.

My God, if only you could be there to see the facial expressions on these people. They were like children receiving candy!

I took photos of each group with the intention to give them a picture of the event. I also noticed how nice the police were to the inmates ... not because I was there but because of the respect the inmates showed to the police guards. There was joking and laughter.

The inmates greeted me with hugs, and expressed thanks to the people who were so kind to have items sent to them from so far away ... Canada!

This huge jail is very clean and has beautiful gardens. Even the birds are happy there. Another thing I noticed is the deep silence. You could hear a pin drop. But the spirit between the police guards and the inmates was most notable and the communication excellent.

Over the years I have visited this jail and met many inmates. Several are there for life. How do you call it justice when a long sentence is given to people for stealing a hen? I had the opportunity to chat with them and encouraged them never to lose hope.

It was a very kind Canadian who helped provide these sport items that were so much appreciated. We hope this act of love will garner supporters like this 'a heap of spiritual merit' on their way to heaven ... and maybe a football to kick when they get there!



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.



Kenya

N O T E B O O K

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

JAN. 27

NAIROBI, Kenya – The excitement continued this week after our five young men took final vows in Larmudiac Parish, mainly since most of them have their roots in western Kenya. Final Vows means they have committed themselves to the Oblate congregation to serve and empower poorer people and the society where we live.



Gerry Conlan, OMI

FEB. 4

Women staged a large protest crying for help and a change in attitude by men to stop killing women. The rate of killings has increased significantly in the last few years.

There was a terrible gas explosion at an illegal gas filling station in a poorer area of Nairobi called Embakasi. The owner was arrested two years ago but the station continued to operate. I feel so sad for the many people with serious burns (270 injured, three dead). Earlier in the week there was a terrible bus crash with many deceased passengers in northwest Kenya. The bus driver was speeding and trying to make up time after being delayed at the Uganda border.

FEB. 11

The president of Kenya almost had an accident in Méru when his car tire blew out due to high speed and “broken” road. Within days, the road had been repaired. So, we are all hoping he has more tire blowouts to ensure more roads get fixed!



Br. Harley Mapes and
Fr. Ken Thorson visit
Kiirua Farm

Br. Harley Mapes of Ottawa provided us with an update on the financial reality of Lacombe Province in Canada, which basically indicated we are spending much more than income and donations received each year. The Oblate income in Canada is reduced mainly because the average age of Oblates in Canada is over 80 and not many are in ministry.

FEB. 18

It's been a week of surprises and celebrations. Ten MAMI members and Fr. Ken Forster (our first superior in Kenya from 1997 to 2006) arrived from Canada to begin a 17-day immersion experience in the mission. The old rectory renovations

Fr. Ken Forster introduces the Canadians at mass



in Larmudiac parish were basically completed, beds were installed and prepared for our MAMI guests.

Fr. Gideon, Fr. Phelix and Br. Magambo officially moved into the new Kisaju rectory and vacated their rooms in Kisaju postulancy.

FEB. 25

The highlight and pre-occupation of the week has been our



Fr. Ken Thorson joins the Nairobi youth for a forest walk

MAMI family members visiting from Canada. We started in Larmudiac, moved to Kisaju for three days, a day in Nairobi and up to Méru. It has been a good experience for them. We have enjoyed a small party each evening which always makes the day finish with relaxation, a smile and many stories.

On the political front, I was a bit surprised to hear the government minister launching a new project to stop teenage pregnancies (or at least reduce them). It's a good idea to address the urgent problem, but the means is unrealistic.

She talked about a nine-year old girl reported pregnant. She expressed great sadness and said she cried when she heard it. But the whole program does not seem to be about solving the real problem of moral behaviour and abuse of young girls. They just want to reduce the number of pregnancies. Condoms are not going to stop the abuse of young girls by older youth and men.



St. Joseph deanery mass

MARCH 5

Our MAMI family members continued visiting the mission and have shown great stamina. Where possible I was leaving the local Oblates to look after them so I could have some time for other mission business.

MARCH 12

Sadly, we bid farewell to the MAMI family visitors. They have been wonderful faith-filled people. And lots of fun. But, as Jesus said to his disciples, we must go down from the mountain (to do some work!). Later we bid farewell to Fr. Ken Forster. Fr. Fidel kindly took him to the airport because I was a little bit exhausted.

Before leaving, Fr. Ken helped arrange a meeting with the Rotary Club. We were fortunate to meet the past and present presidents in Karen. They expressed interest in helping us connect with the Canada-based Rotary and a Rotary at Kitengela. They were impressed by our plan for the Kisaju OMI centre. Let's hope we can move the project along.

MARCH 18

The Kisaju borehole progressed well. They conducted a 24-hour pump test, and it looks like it will produce more than

30,000 litres per hour. That is a great blessing for the parish, which plans to sell water (and even do some purifying for drinking water).

Euticus has continued with the Kiirua farm earth-bag wall, but progress is slow because the bags are very heavy! I decided to get him to move the

bags one or two inches into the hillside with each course, so we get a small slope on the wall by the time it reaches the top (about 1.5 metres). This will make it more stable.

We assisted a couple of the youth who are still busy trying to get a project up and running. They have located a small piece of land in Nairobi and want to get the goats that were offered by a MAMI appeal a few years ago. They are deciding whether to get milking goats or goats for meat? The demand for goat milk is slowly increasing as people come to believe it's better than cow's milk.



Building a retaining wall at Kiirua farm



Br. Makori pays a midnight visit to the bees

MARCH 23

There was continuing chatter in Karen about the theft of land by powerful people. The matter went to court, which ruled that the thieves must desist and vacate, but the police are

afraid to do anything. Someone drove past and noted that all the buildings on the property had been demolished, like what happened to our neighbor in 2023. People are becoming afraid of losing their own properties.

MARCH 30

As usual the Holy Week is busy enough, but probably not as busy for me as the parish priests. May God bless them and their hard work.

Had an exciting day at Nyumbani Children's home on Palm Sunday with a donkey that I had arranged to be present. When I arrived, I was mobbed by 10 of the small children while I was sitting in the car. Five minutes before "kick-off" the donkey finally arrived. It performed well and provided some light entertainment along the procession.



Palm Sunday mass at Nyumbani

Sister nominated a young lad called Emmanuel to sit on the donkey, but he was too scared, so Hezekiah volunteered. There were four Maasai men who came with the donkey. One

acted as the lead man with a rope halter, while another helped Hezekiah onto the donkey and held his arm as we walked along. A third older man (grandfather) walked along behind with a walking stick and gently tapped the donkey's bum from time to time. The owner walked on the other side of the donkey holding a rope on the front foot. This was helpful when the donkey became stubborn!

For the homily, I recalled the entertainment by the donkey and why Jesus chose a donkey instead of a powerful horse like a conquering King from battle would use. I asked the children to recall the funny things the donkey did:

1. the donkey polluted (let out a bit of gas) – so everyone laughed! I linked that to our bad behaviour to others that creates a bad smell in the family or community, but Jesus puts up with us.

2. the donkey refused to move sometimes: but we were patient and gently coaxed the donkey along: just like Jesus is patient with us.

Palm Sunday mass at Nyumbani



3. the donkey refused to step over a steel drain grating: he was afraid to try something new, just like we are afraid sometimes, but Jesus is always patient and encourages us to have courage.

4. the donkey did a little kick and jump and bumped Hezekiah off his back! Sometimes we get angry and act as though God no longer exists, but Jesus is patient and waits for us.

So, it all went along very nicely: I was very glad the donkey misbehaved a bit, or I'd have had a very boring homily!

I gave the owner \$20 to say thanks. Later I found out the two young men got up at 5 a.m. and walked the donkey a good 14 kilometres to reach Nyumbani just in time, so I gave them another \$10. The Nyumbani driver drove the two elders home while the young men walked home: yes, another 14 kilometres! Maasai herders can walk miles every day.

The Sisters and children were delighted, and so was I. Thank God.

APRIL 6

It has been a wet week, but somehow God always managed to send enough sunshine for the solar hot water and solar power. Our upgraded solar panels and re-wiring has reduced outside (grid) consumption to an average of five to six units per day (down from 20 before the solar system went in). The next step is to install a change-over switch so we can also include the kitchen on solar during daylight hours and use up the excess solar power generated on most days. However, we want the kitchen switched back to grid power at night so it doesn't drain the battery backup.

Government charges are rising quite substantially. Water permits have gone from \$5 to \$250, up 50 times. My work permit went from \$50 to \$500, a tenfold increase.



The Heart of a Mother rosary

Celebrate a mother's love with this beautiful rosary! Light purple heart-shaped beads are combined with very special Our Father beads – silver hearts with spinning heart-shaped Madonna medals at the center. The heart-shaped centerpiece is a locket, opening to reveal the photos of your choice. The crucifix with its heart accents completes this rosary.

Limited quantity available.

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/>



Remembering

We remember the following Oblates who died in 2023:

January 22	Oscar Pauwels (97)
March 16	Alarie Laurent (98)
April 16	Terence John Conway (81)
May 26	James Roy Boucher (83)
September 5	Adam Exner (95)
September 28	William (Bill) MacDonald (84)
September 7	Ronald Zimmer (88)
October 20	Walter DeMong (91)



Have you
considered
including the
*Missionary
Oblates*
as a beneficiary
in your will?

*Your gift to
AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI
would ensure that the good
ministry and mission works of the
Oblates continues in Canada and
throughout the world. You could
even specify an Oblate mission
that is dear to your heart.*



**Communications
Coordinators:**

John and Emily Cherneski
lacombemissions@yahoo.ca

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

 Lacombe Canada MAMI

 YouTube Lacombe MAMI
Oblate Missions

*A publication of the
Oblate Mission office.*

**Donations for Oblate
Missionary Projects
can be sent to:**

AMMI Lacombe
Canada MAMI

601 Taylor Street West
Saskatoon, SK S7M 0C9

Phone (306) 653-6453

TOLL FREE:

1-866-432-MAMI (6264)

Fax (306) 652-1133

lacombemami@sasktel.net

On-line donations
can be given through:
[https://www.omilacombe.ca/
mami/donations](https://www.omilacombe.ca/mami/donations)

Printed in Canada

