

Oblate Spirit

AMMI *Lacombe* MAMI
Canada



Christmas 2024



Thanks a million



As milestones go, one million of anything is huge. To have fed hungry stomachs one million times over the last few years in a Canadian city like Hamilton is so remarkable and heart-warming, so much in the spirit of the Oblates.

The same can be said for Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton, where sustenance is provided on a regular basis and Christmas is made special for many who would otherwise go hungry and children who would miss that little extra that makes the season so special in their eyes.

We help the homeless in Peru, those in the Mathare slums of Nairobi, and countless others when and where the need arises around the world.

We offer a million thanks to all the volunteers without whom this could never happen. And we offer a million thanks to you, the MAMI supporters who have been so faithful all these years. Our blessing is the knowledge that you have, in so many ways, supported these efforts to make life a little better for those in need.

Goodness overflows. Thank God, and thank you.

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators

A reminder: The MAMI office has been relocated in Saskatoon. The new address is:

Box 26119, RPO Lawson Heights
Saskatoon, SK S7K 8C1



Christmas Wish List



CANADA OUTREACH

- ~ De Mazenod Door\$50
- ~ Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples\$50

KENYA

- ~ Prison Ministry\$25
- ~ Children's Schooling.....\$50
- ~ Needs of the Elderly.....\$40
- ~ Families in Need.....\$50

PERU

- ~ Br. Blaise's Mission Works.....\$50
- ~ Formation of Future Oblates.....\$50
- ~ Santa Clotilde Hospital.....\$25

UKRAINE

- ~ Parish Outreach.....\$50



Volunteers at work

One million meals nourishing bodies and souls

HAMILTON – On Wednesday, Aug. 28, De Mazenod Door Outreach celebrated a remarkable milestone – the serving of its one-millionth meal. This momentous occasion marked more than a decade of compassionate service to those in need, as the outreach ministry of St. Patrick's Parish in Hamilton has grown to become a cornerstone of the community.

At 11 a.m., guests gathered to enjoy a special meal of homemade panzarottis and fresh salad, with ingredients sourced from the De Mazenod Farm. The atmosphere was fes-

tive, with music filling the air, and ice cream, generously donated by Brother Terrance of The Good Shepherd Food Bank, providing a sweet treat for the celebration.



The journey of De Mazenod Door began humbly when Fathers Tony O'Dell, OMI, and Jarek Pachocki, OMI, of St. Patrick's Church, decided to offer sandwiches and coffee to those who came to



Fr. Tony and a guest

their door. What started as a small act of kindness, serving about 20 guests a day, soon grew into a mission of love and care. As word spread, demand increased, prompting Fathers Tony and Jarek to prepare meals in advance. This initiative caught the attention of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, which saw an opportunity for collaboration between the parish and the local school community.

In 2016, with the support of St. Patrick's Catholic Elementary School, De Mazenod Door Outreach officially began operating from a dedicated kitchen space, thanks to the renovation of a classroom. Named after St. Eugene de Mazenod, founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the outreach continues his legacy of serving the poor and marginalized with respect and dignity. When the old school was demolished and a new one was built, the school board again extended its support by offering space in the new building. Generous private donors funded a state-of-the-art kitchen, allowing De Mazenod Door to provide fresh, hot meals every day.

Over the years, De Mazenod Door has grown exponentially. Today, the outreach serves breakfast and lunch 365 days a year, with up to 700 meals prepared and distributed within a three-hour window each day. No one is ever turned away,

and guests are welcomed with smiles and open hearts. The outreach's impact extends beyond just feeding the hungry, it fosters a sense of community, dignity, and compassion. The grounds of St. Patrick's Church are meticulously cared for by volunteers, creating a welcoming space where guests can relax and socialize during mealtimes.

The celebration of the one-millionth meal was a testament to the incredible support of the Hamilton community. De Mazenod Door does not receive government funding and relies entirely on the generosity of corporate and individual donors, local service groups, and agencies. Volunteers and staff work tirelessly to ensure that every meal is served with care, and their dedication has made this milestone possible.

Looking ahead, De Mazenod Door remains committed to its mission of serving those in need. The outreach continues to provide vital services, helping to alleviate hunger while offering kindness and hope to the community. Each meal served is more than just food – it is a gesture of love and a reminder that no one in Hamilton needs to face their struggles alone. As De Mazenod Door celebrates its past, it also looks forward to the future, knowing that the power of a meal and a kind word can change lives.

Shed sponsored by MAMI arrives at De Mazenod Farm



De Mazenod Farm has played a crucial role in the outreach's success by providing fresh, organic produce to enhance the meals served. Located just outside the city, the farm is an extension of the ministry's mission



Chef Catherine

to feed both body and soul. Volunteers work tirelessly to cultivate a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, which are then used by chef Catherine and her team to prepare nutritious, home-cooked meals.

The farm embodies the values of sustainability and stewardship, ensuring that De Mazenod Door can serve healthy, farm-to-table meals every day. This collaboration not only nourishes the body but also supports a spirit of self-reliance and care for the environment, making De Mazenod Door Outreach's mission even more impactful.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to the MAMI benefactors for their generous sponsorship of the new shed at De Mazenod Farm. This shed will serve as a cozy gathering space and a much-needed shelter for our volunteers and students during inclement weather, allowing them to continue their important work without disruption. Your support has made a lasting impact on the farm, ensuring a safe and comfortable environment for everyone who contributes to this vital mission. Thank you for helping us continue to serve the community with care and compassion!



All are welcome

EDMONTON – Greetings of peace and joy from our parish team, parishioners and the volunteers of Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton. Located in the historic centre of Edmonton, Sacred Heart Church is a national Indigenous parish and the home away from home for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people who come to the city. Although our focus is ministering to the First Peoples, Sacred Heart Church opens

its arms to welcome all peoples. During his visit Pope Francis remarked that this is how all churches should be.

As an Oblate parish we follow the example of St. Eugene de Mazenod, by serving the homeless and those struggling poor people of our area. The church provides relief to families who sometimes can't afford food after all the other costs of living are met. This assistance is provided through our outreach programs that include the following:

Daily Lunch Program – On average, we serve 200-300 homeless people every day.

Emergency Hamper Program – We receive up to 50 food hamper requests each week. Each hamper contains enough food for a family of four for two days.

Daily Outreach Clothing – Serves from 100 to 200 people daily with gently used clothing such as shirts, blouses,

Volunteers make a huge difference



sweaters, pants, jackets, sweats and hoodies. New underwear, socks and feminine hygiene needs are also distributed.

World Day of the Poor – On this day a complete festive hot meal and clothing packages are served for up to 500 people in need in St. Kateri Hall.

Children's Christmas Party – We host two Christmas parties, at which 500 children receive gifts and snacks and a visit with Santa. Many of these children's families are needy and this touches the children's hearts.

Christmas Hamper Program – Last year more than 400 food hampers were picked up or delivered in order that families would have a Christmas-day meal in celebration of the birth of Jesus.

Christmas Day Dinner – This celebratory meal is a traditional turkey dinner with all the trimmings. In past years, the attendance at this event has been 500 people on Christmas day and served by 50 volunteers.

This year we are increasing our offerings of warm clothing during winter. Long-sleeved under shirts and long underwear are requested almost daily.

The outreach programs also operate within the spirit of truth and reconciliation. Our charitable ministries operate from the rectory office and are staffed by up to 50 volunteers weekly. Through your support, children may receive a gift at

Christmas, families may enjoy a meal, and warm clothing is available. Again, as we say thank you to the MAMI supporters, we seek the Creator's blessings on all of you for your support over the past years and we pray that that support may continue. Blessings!



Life in the Slums

BY LOUIS KLOSTER

KENYA – The Mathare slums in Nairobi is a collection of 13 slum villages, with a population of 500,000. There we met some of the Oblate youth that, once a week, visit the area and distribute food to the most vulnerable families.

George, Andrew, Ruth and Anthony expressed gratitude to us, because the money to buy this food comes from supporters of the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate (MAMI), like us. They asked us to pray for them, as they always pray for us. We were also joined by a lovely lady in a red dress named Liliana. She lives in the ghetto and helps organize the visits.

She accompanied us on our home visits on this day.

The families that receive support are often single, unemployed mothers with little children, and elderly men and women who can no longer support themselves. Different families are recipients each week. The young people led us through a small part



Louis and Canadian visitors help deliver food

of this sprawling slum, down narrow passages where clothes were hanging to dry. The ground was very uneven, due to rain and sewage carving and eroding the path.

We ducked into a dim room, where we met Cindy, the mother of a three-year-old girl wearing a pink dress, sweet as can be.

Three of us sat in her tiny living room. A curtain hid the bed from us. Liliane translated between English and Swahili.

Cindy is expecting another child in two months. She also looks after her brother's two orphaned children. Her husband works in the construction industry, but Cindy is in constant fear for him. Construction sites are dangerous and too often men, with few safety measures in place, fall from buildings and die or are injured.

Cindy identified the challenges of life in a ghetto. Life here is very hard. She lives in a room with an area of about 100



A home in the slums



square feet. The houses are built by private developers, and rent is between 2,500 and 3,000 shillings per month. Electricity costs another 300 shillings monthly, that is, when it is on. The power is purchased from individuals who have hooked up the necessary wires and have stolen it from the Kenyan power company. However, when the company finds out, they disconnect the wires. Such was the case at Cindy's home today.

Government hospitals and dispensaries often lack the necessary medicine. To get medicine from a private dispensary would be much more expensive.

Water is a luxury for the people in the slums. Clean water is very difficult to find; when they run out of clean water, they boil water. Water is available but for a cost. A 20-litre jerry can of water costs 50 shillings (50 cents CDN). People line up at water stations with their many yellow jerry cans. None of the homes have their own toilet or shower. They pay to use the toilets and showers built by the developers. It amounts to a lot, when the family is large. If they wish to shower, they can either discreetly wash outside their home after dark or they can pay to use a designated shower. The sewer system is inadequate, and a lot of wastewater flows in the concrete ditches along roads and pathways.

When asked about safety in the slum, Cindy spoke about fires that occasionally break out, as a result of people cooking inside their homes. Fire can spread quickly, as houses are

Lining up for water



side by side. The children, however, were free to run around and play with the countless other children in the streets. They seemed to be happy, likely completely unaware of what life is like outside the slum.

After listening to the many challenges for slum dwellers, I asked Cindy what gives her hope. The two bags of corn flour she was receiving today gave her hope, as do her friends, who provide support whenever she is lacking.

The second home we visited was that of a jovial woman with three children, ages 15, 10, and 6. Lucy is no longer with her husband, and he provides no child support. She has a small business, selling vegetables. Many people in the slums are casual workers and, therefore, struggle to pay the rent, buy food, and pay their children's school fees.

It was laundry day in the slums. Women and children were washing clothes in colorful plastic basins, and clothes were hanging on lines everywhere. Courtesy of the government, water is free on Saturdays. Sufficient water needs to be stored, as this free source of water is not guaranteed every week.

Laundry day





Youth deliver food in the slums

When Kenyan children reach high school, they are sent to high schools around the country, some of them a long distance from home. Where they attend school is determined by their achievement levels. Bursaries of around 5,000 shillings are

available on a first-come, first-served basis. Parents line up at the bursary office, even staying overnight, in order to access these funds. The money is limited; most people walk away empty-handed.

The last house we visited was the home of a 78-year-old man named Julius. Julius worked as a night guard and had lived in this place for 19 years. His wife lived in their village, and together they had eight children. Even at his age, and with impaired vision, Julius had to work to support his family. His grown children were unable to provide any support for him.

Before we left, we took part in the distribution of maize flour to about 30 families. The Oblate youth, all young adults, are being empowered to help others. It is said that St. Eugene de Mazenod, the founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, had a heart as big as the world. I could see that in these young people.

Our next stop was at a school for the deaf in another slum area known as Kayole. The roads were in horrendous condition, and vehicles had to zigzag from one side to the other, trying to dodge deep and wide potholes. The streets were a hive of activity. Men were pulling carts with heavy loads. Sheep and goats scavenged for food on the road. People were busy

buying and selling, doing whatever they needed to do in order to survive.

Once at the deaf school we were warmly greeted on both cheeks by Consolata, the director. There are about 50 students in the school, and we had come to celebrate mass with them. The staff and students were already in the church, waiting for us. Consolata and another woman, the mother of one of the students, translated all that was spoken and sung into American Sign Language, with a few adaptations. The staff members led the singing, and the students sang along, but with their fingers. I was captivated by one older boy who moved fluidly with the music, even though he could not hear it. At the offertory, a carton of eggs was carried up to the altar.

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/>

KENYA WISHES

A Caring Prison Community

BY LOUIS KLOSTER

KENYA – On a recent visit to Kenya, I was one of three Canadians who were fortunate to join Fr. Fidel for his weekly mass at the Langata Women's Maximum Security Prison. The prison houses about 350 women; an equal number inhabit the remand centre next door. While it is called a maximum-security prison, there is just one wall surrounding the whole compound, and women can roam anywhere on the property.

Upon our arrival, we were greeted by Jane, the catechist at the prison. Her title does not fully describe all that Jane has done at the prison, during her 14 years of service.

We were not allowed to bring our cameras into the prison.

The women in Langata have committed various crimes, some more serious than others. For many, poverty has played a part in their current situation. They have committed petty crimes, such as stealing, to provide for their family's basic needs.

Jane led us to the prison 'church', where about 60 women were practicing the Holy, Holy and Lamb of God with two seminarians from the Consolata order, one directing the choir and the other playing the keyboard. The women were dressed in black and white-striped prison uniforms.

Mass was offered in Swahili, and women were organized and prepared to proclaim the readings. When it came time for



Fr. Fidele prison ministry



Prison catechists with Frs. Fidele and Gerry

the Prayer of the Faithful, five of them quietly stepped forward, turned to face us, and offered a lengthy prayer from the heart. As in the past, at the end of mass, the three of us were asked to introduce ourselves and address the women.

I was able to speak of my involvement in prison ministry at the Edmonton Remand Centre. The women's prison was vastly different, due, in part, to the fact that inmates in a prison are there for much longer than those in remand. Jane and Ann, a prefect who is an inmate with some matronly duties, preferred to speak of Langata as a correctional institute instead of a prison. They would start by saying, 'God is good', and the women would respond 'all the time'. Then the catechist would say, 'All the time', to which the women would respond 'we are getting better'.

After Mass, Jane led us on a tour of some parts of the prison. We did not visit any of the women's dorms, so I can't comment on the conditions. However, the women could spend a great deal of time outside, moving freely. They were not idle. Some were washing clothes and hanging them out to dry. The choir could be heard practicing even after mass was over.

Several women were working in a bakery that made bread and sweet cakes for the prison and others in Nairobi. Another bakery prepared samosas and cakes. Others worked in a textile room, making clothing and uniforms. The construction of an institutional-grade kitchen was near completion. Next door, in the 'old' kitchen, on stoves heated by burning wood, women were preparing huge vats of rice and a mixture of beans and maize that would be served at lunch. Special meals were being prepared for the children.

Yes, there are children in this prison. Some are born within its walls. Eight babies, up to the age of three months, were with their mothers in a nursery on site. Because children need their mother's love and nurturing, they remain with their mothers until the age of four and then must be integrated into a normal lifestyle outside the prison walls.

Holy Thursday



There was a broad spectrum of educational backgrounds amongst the women. Some were illiterate; others were adept with computers. All had the opportunity to finish their education and even take university level courses.

What also impressed me is the rehabilitation program they offer the women, preparing them to be reintegrated into society. This process begins six months before their release, so that they are well-prepared to return to life in society. Counsellors, like Jane, help the women understand what is right and wrong, so that they do not repeat their offence. These counsellors spend much of their time just listening to the women's issues. With the women they speak of correction, rather than punishment. An office at the prison offered legal services for those who could not afford it.

Based on my observations and the information shared with us, I felt a strong sense of community here. A caring environment was being nurtured. Opportunities for personal and

spiritual growth were being offered. A library and computer room were available for their use. At the same time we were visiting, another church group, about 12 strong, were visiting and bringing food donations to the



Prison chapel



prison. Although the women were confined within the walls of the prison, they could spend lots of time outside in an open environment with plants. I observed women who seemed joyful.

Even so, they will face challenges upon their release. Because of their crimes, these women are often rejected by their own families and communities. Sometimes they have been in prison so long that family dynamics have changed dramatically during their absence. They are strangers to their own kin.

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.

Support for the poor in Peru

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

CHINCHA ALTA, Peru – The Oblates do much work supporting the poor in Peru and this will continue until the coming of Christ. We missionaries have a certain number of years to serve and then God calls us home. Seeing myself way up there in age, I would ask that you continue to support the Oblates of Peru.



Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI

Education

One of the most important things we are doing is helping students with their education. Most are studying for professional careers and have good marks. All are from poor families. We are currently helping five females and five males. I see such great importance in helping these young people. The future Peruvians and their country need them. One of the earliest students is a nurse and is now being helped by doctors to continue her studies.

The way that we help them is very simple. Let's say the student spends 60 soles per week (about \$22). We give them half. We have been doing this for quite some time.

We also want to continue with the education of young men who are studying for the priesthood. The work of God must continue in having young priests proclaiming God's word and work.



Building



Two realities in Peru are families without a roof and communities with chapels but without toilets.

Soon another homeless family will be moving into their new little house, thanks to the generosity of the Canadians.



The families and communities help with funds, labour and materials. The family, community and parish supply 50 per cent of the cost and donors from Canada contribute the other 50 per cent. The houses are constructed of adobe bricks with solid base pillars, walls, and a roof. The family puts in the doors, windows, and floor. The family must not have a house elsewhere and must have legal documentation regarding their land.



The same division of funds applies when toilets, which have to be close to the sewer system, are provided in the parish.

We've also worked with 22 clean running water projects that got water to thousands of families in the area of Chincha Alta.



Without your financial help we can do but little ... the poor need me, but I need you! When I am no longer here, please continue helping our mission.

Check out our Facebook page:



Lacombe Canada MAMI



Lacombe MAMI Oblate Missions

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



Memories of Fr. Jack Schnersch

BY SR. TERESITA KAMBEITZ, OSU

SASKATOON – When our family moved to Richmond, SK, in 1945, it wasn't long before we learned that the pride and joy of the village was the men's baseball team with Fr. Jack Schnersch, OMI, as its manager. The team of young men from British, Norwegian, Irish and German backgrounds had become well known for their successes on ball diamonds in the province, in Alberta and even in Montana!

Fr. Jack was a true shepherd in the community. During his 10 years (1939-49) as pastor of St. Mary's Parish he "smelled of the sheep" long before Pope Francis coined the phrase. He lived simply, had no car and was generous with the poor. Stories abound of instances when he put people ahead of rules. We kids kept him supplied with water from the town pump since every pail was rewarded with a chocolate bar. And we loved to play with his three-legged dog, Crippy. We girls were "honeysuckles" and the boys were "bums."

He was instrumental in forming the local credit union and encouraged Alex Cameron, a well-educated, gifted parishioner, to enter politics. Fr. Jack influenced the local school board to invite the Ursuline Sisters to teach in the village public school along with non-Catholic teachers. He curled on my dad's curling team. Having no housekeeper, he became part of many families in the community. I recall several occasions when he invited himself to our home and asked Mom to make plum dumplings! In our multi-cultured, multi-faith community, he was loved and respected by everyone for his goodness, kindness and joy.

I visited him in Mazenod Residence in Saskatoon shortly before his death. He did not remember me, nor our family, but when I mentioned “Richmound” his eyes lit up. He hobbled to his desk, fetched his well-worn breviary and pulled out a photo. “When I die,” he said, “they won’t know what to do with this. But if you’re from Richmound, you will know what to do with it.” It was a photo of a smiling young Fr. Schnerch with his 1940s baseball team. Their striped baseball uniforms bore the name “Richmound Aces.” The photo is now a cherished item in the village office museum.

Fr. Schnerch died on Nov. 4, 1987, at the age of 90. As we celebrated All Saints Day, I prayed with gratitude for the blessing he was to our world, our church and our community. I am confident that he is enjoying eternal bliss in the loving embrace of our Great Umpire in the heavenly ball diamond.

One of the honeysuckles,

Sr. Teresita Kambeitz, OSU

In praise of Blaise

BY JANET GUERRA

CHINCHA ALTA, Peru – Dear friends, my name is Janet Guerra. I am 39 years old, married to Miguel Yataco, and we have three wonderful children: Adrian, 17, Lucia is nine and our little Maria Fernanda is four years old.

Brother Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI, has known me since I was in my mother’s womb because he was the best friend of my late beloved father, Marcos Guerra. I am an English teacher in a public women’s school with 2,130 students who study in two shifts, one group in the morning and the other in the afternoon. I truly love my profession.

My husband Miguel works as a security guard in a supermarket. My son Adrian has just entered a public university.

It is difficult to be accepted to a public university because only the best students enter. About 7,000 take an entrance exam for only 1,400 vacancies. Adrian will study to be a civil engineer.



Janet Guerra and her family

My little daughters Lucia and Maria Fernanda are still in school, and they love to study.

We participate in a parish program where we help young volunteers to teach children who are preparing for their First Communion.

I help Brother Blaise in his work by sending letters, being aware of everything he may need, making some calls and loving him very much, because he is a member of our family. Together with my mother and my siblings, we share breakfast with Blaise every week, whether on Saturday or Sunday morning. Our children love him very much.

I am always willing to help him with everything he asks of me, whether it is taking his project photos, writing e-mails, or helping him with his reports because he loves to carry out his works for he is always thinking about "the poorest."

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*

Echoes of a journey to Canada

BY FR. DAQUIN IYO IYAN, OMI

(Fr. Daquin serves at St. Eugene de Mazenod Irinda Parish in Kenya)

KENYA – Earlier this year, I had the profound privilege of attending the Oblate Convocation in St. Albert, AB. It brought together Oblates from across the OMI Lacombe Province, the Kenya Mission, and our Oblate associates, creating a unique opportunity for reflection on our shared challenges and the ministries that continue to inspire us.



Frs. Greg Oszust, Phelix Johya, Joseph Kyuli, Fidele Munkiele, and Daquin Iyo arrive from Kenya

In the days following the convocation, I have taken time to reflect on the experiences and insights gained during this important gathering. The journey we shared, filled with moments of both challenge and celebration, has left a lasting impact on me. I would like to share these reflections with you, not only as a recounting of events but as a way to invite each of us to consider the significance of our collective mission and the enduring OMI charism and spirituality that bind us together.

As we convened, we confronted the significant struggles

facing our province, particularly the diminishing number of active Oblates in OMI Lacombe Province. This shortage has compelled us to relinquish some missions



Fr. Daquin with Fr. Singarajah, one of the founding fathers of the OMI Kenya mission

and ministries, raising critical questions about the future of the OMI in Canadian regions the Oblates have long served. Yet, amid these hurdles, our gathering reinforced our resolve to adapt and persevere in the face of changing circumstances. We found strength in one another and took time to celebrate the vibrant work that remains impactful, renewing our commitment to serve the Canadian Church and other places with dedication.

A highlight of my journey was the mission appeal preaching, where I had the opportunity to visit several parishes and share the impactful work of the OMI Kenya Mission. I spoke at Holy Spirit in Calgary, and subsequently visited St. Theresa in Edmonton and St. Augustine in Vancouver. These moments allowed me to convey our dedication to walking with the people we serve in entrusted parishes and outreach ministries, as

Fr. Phelix Johya, Mary Battle, Fr. Fidele Munkiele, and Peggy Ho Yuen in Calgary



well as our interactions with individuals from various faiths and backgrounds. These experiences underscored the profound impact of our work and inspired a renewed sense of dedication.

Building partnerships was another crucial aspect of this journey. I had the privilege of meeting with individual donors, both longstanding supporters and new partners. These interactions underscored the importance of collaboration in our mission to serve the poor and marginalized. The support of organizations like MAMI, coupled with the enthusiasm of new donors, reaffirmed the value and sustainability of our mission. I was particularly touched by the warmth and generosity of the MAMI families who hosted me over the weekends in Edmonton and Calgary.



Fr. Daquin at Sacred Heart Church in Edmonton

One of the most enriching experiences was visiting OMI retirement houses and connecting with elder Oblates who have served in the Kenya Mission, as well as in Canada and Latin America. These encounters provided a rich tapestry of wisdom and history, deepening my understanding of our mission's legacy and inspiring a profound respect for those who have dedicated their lives to service.

This convocation not only enriched my Oblate identity but also presented new challenges to my commitments and missionary perspectives. The insights and experiences shared during the event prompted deep reflection on my personal journey and the evolving nature of our mission. Alongside these challenges, I was inspired by the vitality of our ministries, which continue to provide hope and support to the communities we serve.

As I navigate the path ahead, the collective wisdom, support, and inspiration drawn from this gathering will serve as my guiding light, reminding me of the enduring impact of our work. I carry forward the spirit of the convocation, embracing the challenges with resilience and a renewed dedication. Together, we can continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve, ensuring that the echoes of our journey resonate far and wide.

As you read these reflections, I invite you to take a moment to consider your own journey within our shared mission. What challenges have you faced? What experiences have renewed your spirit and strengthened your resolve? Let us continue to share, support, and inspire one another as we walk together in this sacred mission. Your experiences and insights are invaluable as we navigate the path ahead, united in our commitment to serve with compassion and dedication.

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.

Learning on the streets

BY MOSES WAFULA KHISA, OMI

OAKLAND, Calif. – *Internship* or *Regency* is essential to the formation of an Oblate. It's a time for integration, seeking harmony between what Gerald O'Collins SJ calls theology on the desk/knees, and theology on the streets. I had this deep and essential experience at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Oakland, California.

Br. Moses flipping pancakes



I had several ministries in the parish, such as preaching, teaching, visiting the sick, hospitality, justice, and peace. Oakland is part of the Bay Area, the host of tech companies on one end and the host of thousands of unhoused (homeless) people on the other. These are striking opposites: the land flowing with milk and honey to some is a land of destitution for others. My call as an Oblate is to be in solidarity with the poor, who are different and have different needs everywhere. And I had to learn from the poor, who are “theologians” in their own right.

After the Sunday masses I always joined a group of evangelical ministers for worship service with the homeless on the streets of San Francisco, followed by meal distribution to the unhoused – usually, a sandwich. The spiritual nourishment is followed by physical nourishment.

In one of my early encounters with one of the homeless, while sharing about his life with me, he mentioned that he did

not believe in God. My initial instinct, out of naivety, was to convince him that God exists and loves him. He argued that if God exists, why is he on the street? Why is he not working and making money like other people? After a long conversation, no one changed the other’s perspective. However, this encounter changed my approach to ministry. It marked the



Br. Moses with evangelical ministers

beginning of my search for what these people needed. This was a theology from the streets that sent me to my knees and the desk. I had good Oblate mentors and an internship committee to help me learn/unlearn.

At the end of my internship, the same man hugged me and told me, *"Thank you for*

the love that you have shown us." He also shared my photos on Facebook with the words, *"Our intern ... shares his message of love with his beautiful African accent. Such a beautiful, loving, and open spirit he has brought to our little congregation."* This is not a success story: it's a hard-learned lesson that took me a whole year. It's a reminder of the words of Maya Angelou, *"...people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."* I didn't make him believe, but I helped him feel loved.

This experience helped me discover how we are all connected. My enriching internship experiences have come from a vast interconnected-web: the lay associates who have made it possible to study at the Oblate School of Theology; the mentorship of Oblates with the lay internship committee for my internship and ministry in Oakland. The African dictum, *"I am because you are,"* is made a reality through MAMI. Most of you have never met me, or been to Kenya, but your generosity inspires and touches deeply the young men in formation, our ministry, and thousands of laity.



Br. Moses helps feed the hungry



Kenya

NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

AUG. 17

NAIROBI, Kenya – I travelled to South Africa for a week-long Oblate treasurers' meeting of which I am the secretary. The meeting was intense, but started more relaxed as we had a half-day retreat and a pair of two-hour training sessions on budgeting and IT cyber security. Our treasurer general was present and challenged us about starting projects to generate income.

On the project front, the solar power installation at Kionyo Parish was completed in five days.



Gerry Conlan, OMI

AUG. 24

Politics just got a bit uglier. The opposition leader and some of his followers have now become part of the government ministries, which is considered a great betrayal of the Kenyan people. There is speculation the finance bill and taxes that led to country-wide protests are about to return, so we are concerned there will be more protests and killings. This

week a good politician was arrested on trumped-up charges. A car near his house had grenades in the trunk and he was blamed even though the car didn't belong to him.



Blessing the excavator
for a neighbour



Lenore Boyd leads the Alfajiri Street Kids art project

The poor in Mathare Slums are angry because authorities have removed many people and demolished homes to make way for a new road.

I was inspired by an exhibition of art by the street kids at a centre called Alfajiri that is run by our friend Lenore Boyd. The exhibition was a great success. Many were intrigued by the content and quality of several paintings based on the trauma experienced by youth in the Mathare Slums.

AUG. 31

I spent the week in Nairobi, Malindi and Mombasa. I flew to Malindi and sorted out the purchase of the quarter-acre property next to our quarter-acre property. So now we will be able to build a decent retreat house or rehabilitation centre in the coming years.

Rose, my shoeshine friend, is at home with TB. She seems to be getting weaker. Say a little prayer for her. I send her something for food each week while she is confined for two months. These encounters are a good reminder to me about how blessed I am and that I shouldn't complain!

SEPT. 7

It's hard not to start with the terrible news of a fire at Hillside Enderasha Academy Primary School in central Kenya where 18 boys between 10 and 14 are known to have died, and 27 were hospitalized. The whole country is in shock. The sad thing is it was a wooden building and probably had the door locked and the windows barred for security. In Kenya boarding school fires are commonly caused by disgruntled students, and usually occur close to the exam period. Kenya's deadliest school fire in recent history was in 2001, when 67 students died in a dormitory fire in Machakos County.

During the week we also lost a wonderful Olympic athlete (marathon runner). Her former boyfriend came and set her on fire the day before a court case over land ownership. It has once again created a social media storm over gender-based violence that is common in Kenya. Earlier this year several young women were killed by their boyfriends.

On the mission front, we sent our three brothers to their pre-ordination retreat at Resurrection Gardens.

Fr. Phelix accompanied the father of the late Br. Collins, OMI, to St Joseph's Scholasticate in South Africa. We felt it was important that the father or mother visit the site of Br Collins's

**Fr. Phelix and Mr. Masinde at the beach where his son
Br. Collins disappeared**



disappearance in the water and find some closure. The father returned home and met with the family to discuss the reports and experiences he had. They will plan a memorial mass that we will help them celebrate.

SEPT. 14

We must start with the good news of three deacons being ordained this week. The ceremony went off well, with Archbishop Philip Anyolo doing the honours. We even started 10 minutes early, a minor miracle in Kenya! The three men were very happy and so were all the Oblates. We were grateful to God that all people travelled and returned home safely.

Our three new deacons kindly handed in quite a lot in donations received at the ordination, about \$440. It went into the self-reliance account to support the mission.

We welcomed Valerie, our MAMI friend from Vancouver. She is busy with water and waste-water management training through her organization, Operators Without Borders.



Mr. Masinde, father
of Br. Collins

Collecting banana palms to feed to the cows at Kiirua farm



SEPT. 21

Youth members Andrew, Patrick and George distributed food in Mathare Slums. Patrick and his brother George were not getting along, but Andrew has done a good job of reconciling the family. Andrew took Patrick under his wing two years ago after Patrick left high school. I think the youth group is creating instruments of God's mercy (what St. Eugene told us Oblates to be). We thank God.

I was informed that our architect, who I have been mentoring for eight years, has named their baby boy after me.

We are grateful for the energy of Fr. Phelix and enthusiastic assistance from our MAMI friends in Vancouver who are helping the students in Jamii Bora. We now have enough support for 20 young students struggling through secondary school. The community is amazing, looking after them with accommodation and food. I wonder what these young souls will become one day?



Gerard, newborn son of catechist,
named after Fr. Gerry

OCT. 6

I learned that Rose, the shoeshine lady we've been assisting a bit, has died after getting tuberculosis three months ago. I feel sorry for her son who is in high school. She was very proud of him.



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