

Oblate Spirit

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI



September 2025



Inspiration

Inspired to help

In the spirit of the Oblates, we are often inspired to act on the basis of our values. We respond to suffering and injustice, unfairness and oppression. God knows there are too many examples of this in our world today, but there are also bright lights to guide us.



Dr. Brian Medernach and his wife Dr. Antoinette Lullo are passionately involved in the ongoing success of the Santa Clotilde Hospital, a remote mission in Peru founded by Canadian Fr. Moe Schroeder, OMI.

Dr. Medernach gives us an inspirational glimpse of the hospital mission after his recent visit to Santa Clotilde. (Page 20). He and Dr. Lullo served at the hospital from 2012 to 2016, providing healthcare to countless patients while training local medical staff to ensure the best care available under difficult circumstances.

During his four-year tenure in Peru, Dr. Medernach addressed faith in a message. “It’s really hard to talk about faith with someone if they’re worried about their kid dying, or feeding themselves. You have to walk with them and stand up for their human rights and dignity – the dignity to work, to live a safe life, to raise a family, and be healthy.”

That same message applies to the Langata Women’s Prison in Nairobi, where Fr. Fidele Munkiele (cover picture), OMI, serves in prison ministry. A moving emotional tribute to Fr. Fidele’s works and the transformation of the women in the prison begins on Page 3.

These are just some examples where hope is instilled for some where hope was non-existent. In whatever ways we can, we are inspired to advancing this faith in humanity. That is the Oblate way!

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators



From Chains to Wings

BY TANYA MYRFIELD-WOLFE

(Administration assistant, AMMI Lacombe MAMI)

SASKATOON – I wasn't planning to go.

When I first heard that four members of our Kenya Mission Team could visit a women's prison in Nairobi earlier this year, I hesitated. A maximum-security prison wasn't exactly on my list of places I feel called to visit. Yet, Louis Kloster, another Kenya Experience participant who would become a dear mentor on that trip, encouraged me to go.

He said, "I think you'll find this place transformational."

And he was right, though I didn't fully realize it until I sat down to write this article bringing together All Soul's Day and the Kenya Mission Experience.

I had already left my husband, my three kids, and flown halfway across the world to be part of this mission in Kenya. Why stop now?

What I found inside Langata Women's Prison surprised me and moved me in a way I still don't have words to fully express. It's strange to describe a prison experience as hopeful, but that's what it was.

Many of the women are in prison for petty crimes, often theft or choices made to survive. Many have their young children with them, living together in the same space. Despite the hardships, they have built a strong community. They cook and sing together and support one another. There is even a bakery on site where they bake bread and pastries that are sent out to feed those in need. The pastries were absolutely divine.

Laughter and music fill the air alongside their Sunday chores of washing clothes. The women have access to medical services, mental health support and a small school for their children, who can stay with their mothers until they turn four.

They are in a place of limits, but they live like community. They are mothers, sisters, wives, transforming their lives one day at a time.

Langata's rehabilitation program has become a model for others. It gives women the tools they need to succeed, teaching everything from communication to small business basics, while rebuilding their sense of self-worth.

And this model of rehabilitation is working and becoming a model for the whole country of Kenya. Their rates of



reoffending are low. These women don't just leave prison; they step out with purpose.

When I started reflecting on what to write for this All-Souls' Day edition of *Oblate Spirit*, that day at Langata kept surfacing. And then, an image came to mind: a butterfly.

I know, this is a little cliché. But stay with me.

There's something about how a caterpillar moves: slow, close to the ground, just inching its way forward. And then, it simply stops. It enters a chrysalis - still, hidden, and changing. That middle stage isn't glamorous and often looks like nothing is happening. This is where transformation is taking place. Within the calm, the quiet, the stillness.

And finally, when it's time, it emerges. Not the same, never the same again. It emerges with transformation, with beautifully identical wings of beauty and colour!

The image of a butterfly reminded me of what I saw at Langata. These women, many of whom had been judged, dismissed, forgotten, were in their chrysalis season. Becoming. Healing. Preparing for a life outside those walls.

The butterfly also reminded me of what All Souls' Day is about.

It's not just for remembering our dead loved ones, but holding space for the mystery between here and eternity, that



in-between place where transformation happens, where the soul sheds the weight of this world and steps into something new, something beautiful and eternal with God.

We don't always get to see that final flight. But we can witness the chrysalis. We can believe in what's being made new, even when we don't fully understand it. Truthfully, as humans we often do not understand the people, situations, or events around us and we can simply pray for grace, forgiveness, and humility while having our human experience.

This year, I'm remembering that transformation doesn't just happen after we die. It happens every time someone says "yes" to healing, to changing our initial thoughts and patterns of being, to trying again, to accepting grace and staying humble.

That day in Langata, I saw women becoming something new. And I saw how, even behind prison walls, *God makes room for wings.*





Shedding a ray of hope for women in prison

BY FR. FIDELE MUNKIELE, OMI

NAIROBI – We are attempting to change the end of the story for many in the Langata Women's Prison.

A workshop was held to inform and assist the inmates in



Fr. Fidele during the presentation

the largest female prison in Kenya. There are about 700 women in the maximum prison, while the remand prison houses between 400 and 500 inmates.

Our ministry consists of attending to the prisoners' spiritual needs (masses, sacraments) and pastoral needs, social welfare and psychological care. It is a challenging ministry because it involves time, material means and presence.

Many women are convicted because of crimes (minor or major) committed because of their lives of poverty and joblessness. Desperation leads them to do anything to survive. Many are single mothers, and some are there with their babies. Our ministry gives them an opportunity to reform their lives.

Counselling is available so when they leave prison they have some tools to live normal and healthy lives.



Presenters at the workshop

Desperation, unawareness and lack of education lead many of the young women to be exposed to, or to expose others to, human trafficking and exploitation in many ways. After serving their sentences they find themselves lost, without any support for reintegration into society. They are vulnerable and many succumb to false promises of jobs abroad (Middle East) or in Africa, just to become sex slaves, drug transporters, or partners in crime.

The workshop facilitated by a group of professionals and staff from the prison was an opportunity to bring awareness and prevention techniques to about 200 who attended.

Some short videos were projected to illustrate the reality of human trafficking, how it happens, who benefits and the harm it is causing society.

Locally, young men, women, and children are being trafficked for cheap labour, prostitution and human organs. Some inmates were involved in such crimes without knowing what they were doing and the consequences of their actions.

This workshop was designed to inform and help them avoid traps that could make them victims or co-operators, especially when they are released from prison. We want them to know there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Workshop participants watch a video





Frs. Daquin and Fidele

A shared journey for 25 years

KENYA – They celebrated 25 in 25 ... 25 years as priests in 2025!

Oblate priests Daquin Iyo and Fidele Munkiele celebrated their Silver Jubilee of priesthood on July 23.

Fr. Daquin and Fr. Fidele, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, were originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Both started their vocation journey at the minor seminary in the diocese of Idiofa that was founded by the Oblates.

After minor seminary, Daquin joined the pre-novitiate and one year later entered the novitiate.

Fidele completed his minor seminary formation one year earlier than Daquin, then entered university for a degree in

philosophy while discerning his vocation before entering the pre-novitiate program. Daquin and Fidele professed their perpetual vows together in Cameroon on Sept. 5, 1999, and were ordained deacons a month later.



Fr. Fidele (second from right)

They were ordained as priests in 2000 at the scholasticate in Kinshasa by Bishop Louis Mbwol Mpasi, OMI, the bishop of Idiofa.

After their priestly ordination, both served in Congo, Fr. Daquin as assistant pastor at Dibaya Lubwe Parish until 2003, while Fr. Fidele served as a principal at Saint Bosco High School and later as the vocation director and formator at the pre-novitiate.

In August 2003, they joined the Kenya Mission. After a short course in Swahili in Tanzania, they began their ministries in Kenya in December.

Fr. Daquin (left)





Frs. Fidele and Daquin

Fr. Daquin began as an assistant parish priest at Kionyo, and later became the pastor. Fr. Daquin is now the pastor of Saint Eugene De Mazenod Parish in Méru.

Fr. Fidele was assigned to the pre-novitiate in Méru in 2003 and later became its director. He now serves as the Kenya Mission

Superior, residing in Nairobi.

Both became members of Lacombe Canada in 2006.

The two priests joined seven other Oblates who were ordained with them to celebrate their silver anniversary together during a mass organized in Congo and presided by Bishop Edourd Isonga. The mass took place at the scholasticate, the same venue of their ordination in 2000.

Bishop Louis Mbwol, OMI, who ordained the Oblates in 2000, was also present at the jubilee celebration in Kinshasa. Bishop Louis is now Emeritus of Idiofa, residing at the scholasticate.

The celebration was a thanksgiving to God, with gratitude to all who helped the two priests grow in their vocation.

“It is a great opportunity to thank the province of Congo for the formation we received and the care they offered. We thank Lacombe province and MAMI for the support and for

facilitating our missionary experience and our ministry both in Kenya and Canada. Our gratitude goes to all,” wrote Fr. Fidele.

May God bless Frs. Daquin and Fidele and grant them the grace to continue serving as Oblate priests.

Laudetur Jesus-Christus and Maria Immaculata!

Check out our Facebook page:



Lacombe Canada MAMI



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



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and ministries of the Oblates.



FROM FR. KEN THORSON, OMI

(Editor's Note: Fr. Thorson's six-year term as Provincial for OMI Lacombe Canada ended in July. This was his parting letter.)

Dear brothers and sisters,

On June 10, we celebrated the installation of our next Provincial, Fr. Andrew Stendzina, and his council.

As I came to the end of my time as Provincial, I found myself reflecting on the grace of God that has carried us, often quietly, through these past six years: grace in times of clarity, and grace in times of diminishment and uncertainty. If there is a single thread that runs through it all it is this: God has been faithful.

We have walked together in times that have changed us. The global pandemic disrupted our lives, stripped away our routines, and exposed both our vulnerability and our resilience. In that vulnerability, we were drawn back to what matters most: community, hope, and perseverance in our daily lives of service.

We were also invited, often painfully, to listen more deeply



Fr. Ken at the opening of
the new church in Kionyo

to the truths carried by Indigenous peoples, especially survivors of the residential schools we once administered. That listening has opened us, however slowly, to a deeper conversion. I am grateful for the small steps we have taken in the direction of truth, healing and reconciliation. These are not mere gestures. They are movements toward humility, mutuality, and toward the suffering Christ, present in our wounded history.

I am deeply thankful for the generosity and wisdom of the core team, the Provincial council, superiors and directors, and our Provincial office staff who have carried this responsibility with me. I thank the Oblates and Oblate Associates, who continue to incarnate the charism of St. Eugene in parishes, retreat ministries, prisons, and countless quiet corners of life where compassion, hope and presence are needed. A further word of gratitude also to our staff across the Province who support our communities and ministry. To my elder brothers across the Province, thank you for the prayerful witness you give, and the warm hospitality you extended to me, and to all who visit your homes.



This ministry has provided opportunities of ministry beyond the borders of Canada; in CROCUS gatherings in Canada and the U.S., at general chapters, and other congregational



meetings. These experiences have deepened my appreciation for the diverse and rich expressions of our charism and strengthened my conviction that our missionary vocation continues to speak to the needs of our time.

One of the great privileges of my time as Provincial has been to come to know and walk alongside the Oblates of the Kenya Mission. Their generosity, vitality, and commitment to the poor have inspired me. I am grateful for the time I was able to spend with them and for the opportunity to witness the good work they are doing in service of the Gospel and the people with whom they walk.

Not every decision we've made over the years has been easy. We've said goodbye to ministries, places and people that mean a great deal to us. These decisions left many of us with the pain of loss, even as council discerned them to be necessary. We hold that pain with you.

And I need to say this, too. I have not always led as well as I'd hoped. There were times I hesitated when I should have acted, and times I acted when I should have waited. There were conversations I avoided out of fear and others I mishandled out of fatigue. For all the ways I have fallen short, as a leader, a brother, and a fellow pilgrim, I ask your forgiveness.

As I step away from leadership, I look forward to a time of rest and renewal, which began in Saskatoon, my home town.

In closing, I offer my full support and encouragement to Andrew and his new Council. I trust that the Spirit will lead them, and all of us, into the future God is preparing.

Thank you for your kindness and support over the years.
May we all continue to grow in charity, wisdom, and faith.

In Christ's peace,

Ken

NEW PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

The installation of Fr. Andrzej Stendzina, OMI, as the new provincial superior of OMI Lacombe Canada took place on June 10 in Ottawa. The new provincial council includes Fr. Stendzina, Oblates Richard Beaudette (vicar provincial/treasurer), Frank Kuczera (vicar provincial), Susai Jesu (provincial councillor), Jacob Herklotz (provincial councillor) and lay advisor Serena Shaw.

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



Entrance to the administration building

Santa Clotilde: From a small outpost to a thriving hospital

BY DR. BRIAN MEDERNACH

SANTA CLOTILDE, Peru – Earlier this year I was able to return for my annual visit to the Santa Clotilde Hospital Mission in the Peruvian Amazon where I previously served as a missionary doctor alongside my wife Dr. Antoinette Lullo and our children from 2012-2016.

We were initially invited to Santa Clotilde by the priests/physicians who began their mission in Santa Clotilde 39 years ago. Fr. Maurice (Moe) Schroeder, OMI, started his work in Santa Clotilde in 1986 at the small outpost initially with four



Boats are a vital means of transportation to the hospital



workers and shortly thereafter was joined by Fr. John 'Jack' MacCarthy, O. Praem (DePere, WI, USA).

They were the foundation of the work that continues to thrive and serve the rural indigenous Peruvian population of roughly 25,000 people in over 100 communities on roughly 400 kilometres of the Napo and Curaray Rivers.

On my first day back at the hospital I attended the brief daily morning meeting of all the workers. After greeting many old friends and meeting new young faces working there, I sat back reflecting in awe at the growth and how the seeds planted by Fr. Maurice continue to bear much fruit.

The group was so large that we now met in the fresh air underneath the pavilion roof of the hospital as opposed to the nursing station just inside the hospital. The Santa Clotilde Hospital has expanded to 30 beds with a delivery and operating room and now serves as the head of an enlarging health network with 15 outposts along the river.

Each health post is operated by a small team of healthcare workers to serve in the communities attending to well-child

visits, administering vaccines, providing pre-natal care and treating common illnesses. The more complex cases and emergencies are evacuated by boat to the hospital in Santa Clotilde.

The health network is being led by our administrator Gabriela Filonowicz, a Polish lay missionary, and medical director Dr. Norberto who is a retired OB/GYN physician from Spain.

They are supported by Sr. Yanabel who is a nurse and member of the San Camila congregation from Lima, Peru, and Dr. Zach and Dr. Lucy who are serving a three-year missionary assignment with Mission Doctors Association. This team serves along with many young Peruvian physicians, nurses, midwives, laboratory and nurse technicians, boat drivers, security, maintenance and cleaning personnel.

Over the past 39 years, with the prayers and support from the Oblates and generous donors, this work has grown tremendously.

Many thanks are owed to the great leadership of Gabriela, our administrator, during the past six years, navigating our health system through the COVID pandemic, obtaining more contracts for our workers to staff the health network and for making major improvements in the aging infrastructure. She and the team have fortified the foundation to hopefully continue for another 40 years.

She and the administration oversaw many projects to include a new roof over the patient pavilion; updated patient ward to include a new

Administrator
Gabriela Filonowicz



pediatric and isolation ward; construction of a new kitchen and dining hall; construction of a new structure to house pharmacy, housekeeping, vaccine coolers and storage; reconstruction and expansion of the administration building; new vaccine boat; new ambulance boat and the renovation of eight health outposts to include improved water pumps, solar power and internet.

We continue to work with many partners in Canada, Spain, Poland, Peru and the United States.

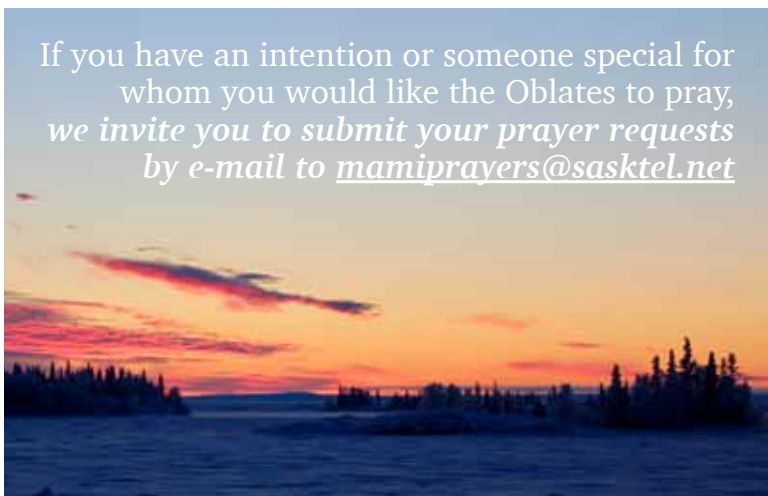
As Padres Maurice and Jack were finishing their careers, they created the Peruvian not-for-profit civil association called PANGO to serve as the Peruvian entity to continue co-ordination between the Oblates and the Vicariate Apostolico de San José de Amazonas and administer the Santa Clotilde Hospital mission.

As the current president of PANGO, I am pleased to share this update on the mission of providing quality and accessible healthcare to all our brothers and sisters living on the Napo River.

Thanks to all of you for the role you play and I ask for your continued prayer and support.

God bless!

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*





Kenya

NOTEBOOK

BY FR. GERRY CONLAN, OMI

APRIL 19

NAIROBI – The Holy Week and Easter ceremonies went off well. We had eight baptisms and 17 receiving First Holy Communion at the Nyumbani Easter Vigil.

Politics continues to dog the country and distract the politicians from their principal duties of caring for the people. The Judiciary are regularly threatened, but we are hopeful that change might happen in the Lands Ministry after widespread senior corruption was exposed allowing land grabbers to operate.



Gerry Conlan, OMI

First Holy Communion in Nyumbani during the Easter Vigil





Fr. Gerry attended the general finance committee meetings in Rome

APRIL 26

It was a shock to get off the plane in Rome, where we held finance meetings, and hear that Pope Francis had died. It has been inspiring to see all the positive responses from world leaders at the loss he is to our world. The Pope's funeral was a memorable celebration and quite touching.

I decided to wear my cassock and large cross for the Pope's

Rome during the Pope's funeral



funeral. We finally got a seat in the priest's area by 7:30 a.m. after standing for the metal detectors and getting our credentials checked three times. I found out later that there were 750 bishops, 220 cardinals, plus 105 heads of state, including President Ruto of Kenya, and their minders. There were 400,000 people, including 250,000 in St. Peter's Square, 150,000 in the streets of Rome. On top of that 250,000 people filed past the coffin of Pope Francis to pay their respects.

Even with that many people, mass and the final commendation rites were over by 12 noon. The most moving parts were at the beginning when the coffin first came out carried by 14 members of the papal household, then at the end when the Eastern Rite bishops did special prayers (mainly in Greek) at the coffin after Holy Communion. Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, the 92-year-old dean of the College of Cardinals, led the mass.

It took more than an hour to get out and get around to the start of our road to the Oblate General House, but they had blocked off the normal entry area and we had to walk miles in the opposite direction before finally reaching the house at about 2 p.m.

Pope Francis received a Star Blanket from the Canadian delegation



MAY 3 – JUNE 28 IN AUSTRALIA

I left Rome and arrived in Melbourne, Australia, for some rest and relaxation. I caught up with several families and many Oblates before moving on to vacation time with my family in Sydney.

I finished reading *Three Cheers for the Paraclete* by Thomas Keneally, which should be necessary reading for all seminar-ians and new bishops! I finished another novel I'd started two months ago in Kenya and continued the more exciting action novel *The Last Templar*. I also saw a challenging and inspiring movie called *Head Full of Honey*, which opened my eyes to a few things about Alzheimer's/dementia. It is well made, hilarious but also sad, and inspiring and challenging our responses.

I spent a few days in the Binya area where I was raised to age 15. It was great to be grounded again, seeing many relatives and walking on the same land again.

It has been disturbing to see the violence and protests in Kenya on the news in Australia. It does not inspire confidence in people to go to Kenya as a tourist. It is very sad for the people involved and the country as a whole.

(Editor's note: Fr. Gerry's idea of an extended holiday was to spend a profound amount of time in what seemed like daily communication and assistance with the Oblates and projects in Kenya.)

JULY 5

I travelled all day on July 1 from Perth to Nairobi. My desk was quite full when I arrived, but not as bad as it could have been if I didn't do some work most days while in Australia. So sad what is happening in the Middle East and grateful for the safe passage.

Unfortunately, the political issues in Kenya have gone from bad to worse. The president has now promised to build a church in the State House compound worth 1.2 billion KES (Kenyan shillings). He says it is from his pocket, at a time people cannot get jobs, food or medical care.

The family of a boy killed in the police fighting received two million KES, but the next day it was reversed. A church received 20 million but had to give back 19 million after all the publicity was over. Lies, lies and more lies. A police source told us 100 youth have been killed, not the 30 reported in the media.

Fr. Charles, in Méru now, said Euticus harvested 33 kilograms of honey from our Kiirua farm, so Charles now wants me to buy more beehives. We currently have five, and one is not occupied yet. Hopefully the honey will help offset some costs.

JULY 12

There were sustained protests in Nairobi, and many businesses were afraid to open, or didn't because the government blocked access to central Nairobi and other areas.

Our youth member George asked if they could restart the Mathare slums food program. He said the people were asking for help during the time I was away. Thanks to those who contribute to this program.

The Kisaju Parish team was happy to receive a second car they have been struggling to get for the last two years. It is a 2016 Nissan X-trail with 140,000 kilometres.

Kisaju postulancy grounds





Construction on the Karen residence

Because the solar system was operating quite well, I was able to turn off a couple of water heaters that are not needed. We thank God because it has saved us a lot of money every month.

I was greeted by a woman at the entrance gate who had visited twice before. She was desperate for help to pay for her son's tuition at university. I gave her \$25 to assist, which is more than I usually give so that I can help more people.

The Government ordered live coverage of the protests to be banned, but people are sharing video clips all the time. There is gunfire in Ngong town (a no-go area now) and half-way between Karen and Ngong there are also shots being fired. There were thousands of protesters chanting: *Ruto (president) must go*. It was a good day to stay at home.

Allegedly, the president had recruited "mercenaries" from Somalia and Uganda. They appeared in many places around the country in Subaru cars without numberplates and the men were dressed in plain clothes, shooting indiscriminately. The

sisters told me the “mercenaries” were in Ngong town nearby, shooting innocent people.

JULY 19

Sadly, we have learned of more abductions of young activists in Kenya. People are still struggling. The youth are planning a meeting to help some struggling youth members.



Oblate youth take food to the deaf community





Dome on the Gachanka church

JULY 26

We were happy to celebrate Frs. Fidele and Daquin in absentia as they clocked up 25 years of priesthood. Fr. Fidele shared a picture of himself in his ordination vestments in the year 2000. We thank God for their energy and enthusiasm.



Politics remains a major concern. God knows where the country will end up. According to Business Daily, global credit rating agency Moody's says Kenya will face difficulties in sourcing external financing without having programs from the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in place.

AUG. 2

I followed up an invite to check out an offer of land (as

much as 10 acres) in return for establishing some sort of church in Tatu City, an up-and-coming suburb in Nairobi. Catholics on the committee wanted a Catholic church and the powers that be also preferred that instead of a small Protestant church.

I shared with them what we hope to achieve in Kisaju and suggested something similar could be excellent for the developing population: a focus on youth activities, church, and a community meeting/celebration venue. It could be an exciting development. But first the Archbishop would have to approve. Then issues of land ownership and development costs create another hurdle.

I will share with the Mission Council and see what they think. As a mission we have been trying to get a parish in Nairobi to help with pastoral training opportunities for the pre-novices.



St. Joseph the Worker parish in Larmudiac

Thank You

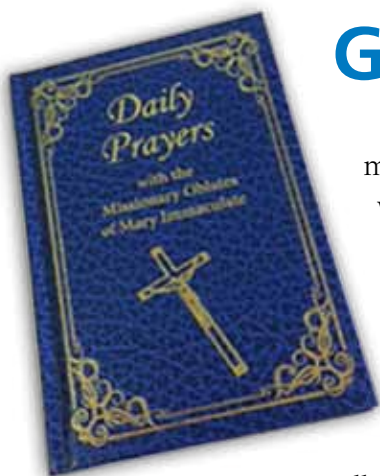


HERIOT BAY, BC – I want to thank you for your dedication and skill in putting together the *Oblate Spirit*! It never fails. It always brings me to tears and deepens my love and respect for this wonderful big family. Always inspiring!

It is so interesting to watch the growth and development of the construction of the Gachanka Church! It is quite amazing.

Through your booklet, and the stories in it, I feel connected to OMI.

Baerbel Jaeckel



Gift offering

Prayer is the foundation of the mission work of the Oblates and we would like to share with you a complimentary copy of our Daily Prayers with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The prayers found in this blue, hard covered, 264-page book will provide you with a year's worth of daily prayers

as well as special prayers for holidays and feast days to inspire you as you deepen and strengthen your relationship with God. One copy per household as quantities are limited.

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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.

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Reminder: for those who have named MAMI as part of their last will and testament, please note important changes to our contact information.

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