

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

Oblate Spirit



February 2026



Hope

Degrees of hope



In a world that seems to become more fractured every day, we look to the future with hope for a better tomorrow for our children and all the children of the world. But when we look at the cover picture of a child in the slums of Nairobi, it shifts our perspective. What does this child hope for? What is its future? Is this child hungry, and does it have access to food? Safety? Shelter? Education?

Our perspective comes from living in a country of abundance. Canada has its imperfections, and our neighbors to the south may not be as welcoming as they once were, but we are fortunate to be able to look to a future beyond our next meal.

We were touched recently by the words of UNICEF ambassador Amanda Gorman, the young American poet who spoke at President Joe Biden's inauguration in 2021. "Words get their best and deepest meaning when they are paired with action ... and when we give, particularly when we give to children, there is no way in which we cannot be changed."

As supporters of MAMI, we facilitate Oblate missionaries around the world, those who are dedicated to serving the poor and marginalized. We feel blessed for what we have, and what we can give. Yes, it's a matter of perspective. Just look at the world through the eyes of that child on our cover.

We can facilitate change. We can offer hope. That is what the Oblates do.

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators

A pilgrim on a transformative journey

BY ED HAUSNER

PRINCE RUPERT, BC – Kenyan Mission Awareness Tour 2025. The title caught my attention from the start.

Years ago, my wife Regina and I had served in lay missionary roles in Papua New Guinea in a town called Aitape, and later in the Inchang region of South Africa. Working with the impoverished in some of the poorest regions of the world was hard work and challenged every aspect of our thinking.

Yet, it was here where our lives felt most invigorated and rewarding. The people we served seemed to be more grateful, more alive, closer to God than we ourselves had been. The people we worked with loved their work. Though only for three weeks, I expected the Kenyan tour would expose participants to something similar.

Ed shares images with the locals



I was a latecomer to the 2025 tour group, but when the opportunity arose it didn't take long for me to jump on board. After some prayer and reflection time, I quickly concluded that Kenya was where I needed to go.

After many years battling multiple sclerosis and then cancer, Regina passed away in early May of 2025. Suddenly, everyone seemed to be vying for my time and attention. I needed time away. I was looking for an opportunity connected to my Catholic faith, something that was far enough away from my community, something that was perhaps a bit of a distraction, while still giving me time to reflect, pray and re-pivot in life.

Through our previous experience, Regina and I had learned that it was easiest for us to feel God's presence amongst the poor, especially amongst the poorest in the world. The Papuan and South African cultures were so different from our own and this served to distract us from everyday life back home. From the information I was able to glean so far, "Kenya Mission Awareness Tour 2025" seemed to fit the bill. So off to Kenya I went.

As with any group trip, the first few days are usually needed to sort through practical necessities, getting to know

Ed with young artist at the Alfajiri Street Kids Art Centre





Young artist at work

each other and the like. For me, there was only one practical necessity. With the pre-trip news of Kenyan political flareups, some of my children and extended family encouraged me to cancel the trip. Getting a Kenyan data plan for my cell would keep us in touch and alleviate some of their concerns. Apart from this, I was pretty much set.

Honestly, I hadn't done a lot of preparation for the trip. I was traveling through Europe the four weeks prior and arranged to join up with part of the Kenyan group in the Amsterdam airport. Before leaving Canada I did load an English version of Simple Swahili for Tourists on my e-Reader.

That didn't work out very well since I lost my e-Reader shortly after arriving in Europe. I doubt I would have learned



Shanty town

much Swahili anyways while traveling through Europe. I was having enough challenges juggling basic Portuguese, Spanish, French and Dutch as I moved through Europe. Obrigado ... oops they speak Español here; non, Francais s'il vous plait, Nederlands in België ... ugh! I tend to be someone who "flies by the seat of my pants" anyway. No problem. Swahili could wait until I arrived in Kenya.

Prior to arriving in Nairobi I had decided I would be a sort of pilgrim throughout the Kenya tour. Anyone who has ever done a pilgrimage somewhat like the Camino (walk) to Santiago de Compostela knows there are essentially two kinds of pilgrims. The first is a person who primarily seeks adventure: seeing new places, testing one's stamina, meeting new people and cultures. For many in this group, socializing at local restaurants or bars at the end of the day's journey becomes nearly as important as the walk.

Then there is the second kind of pilgrim. Adventure and socializing still play a role, but this person is focused on the journey within. This pilgrim usually takes very little on the daily journey. With the confidence there will be a place to rest at day's end, regardless of where the stop, planning is no longer the same concern. This pilgrim intends to use the isolation

from regular life and the monotonous routine, day after day, of putting one step in front of the other, as a way to create an uncluttered space within; an empty inner space. This provides the springboard from which to reflect on life's elemental question, or at least the burning question of the moment. I like to call this person a "pilgrim on a journey."

My intention, for Kenya, was to be more like the second kind of pilgrim. I had a yearning for some quality time with God. I needed this both externally and internally. I was certain I would find this through the experience of the people I would be meeting on the journey and through the opportunities for reflection that I believed would be provided through the Catholic setting.

So off we went to Sweetwaters, Méru, Kionyo, Larmudiac, Kisaju, Nairobi and places in between. We marveled at Africa's flora, fauna and wildlife. We were impressed with the accomplishments of the Kenyan Oblates and their communities. Daily mass, morning prayer and evening prayer were available for those who wished to participate. We visited many a prayer house, community schools, water supply projects, and medical centres.

Roadside market





At the bead factory

We quickly learned to give short speeches. We were moved and inspired by the many successes of projects like Alfajiri's art therapy outreach project for street kids and Kazuri's bead factory project for women's employment.

We rubbed shoulders with people in Nairobi's slums, coming to realize that really the only thing separating them from ourselves was place of birth. Coming together with the deaf community, we heard their silent voices as they shared their joys and struggles with us.

And who can forget how Kenyans love to sing and dance, anytime, anyplace. What a thrill to be among a crowd of voices singing in perfect harmony, perfect rhythm, while bodies are gliding and swaying with such uniformity. Let me not forget Marathon Sunday, where some of us attended mass three

times that day as we experienced the vibrant Kenyan liturgies.

I was pleasantly surprised with the more than adequate accommodations and meals. I wasn't expecting much after my South African experience. I was grateful to see four solid walls, electricity and lighting, a bed with mosquito netting, a real sit-down toilet and hot showers to boot, at least most of the time. Fresh fruit, veggies and meat from out back which I found were always made to be tasty. Back home, I only wish!

Sure there were inconveniences. I was expecting t-shirt and shorts weather. Mother Nature didn't cooperate. So I regretted only bringing a pair of pants and one sweater. Rides were bumpy, stairs uneven, slums were dirty and smelly, drinking the Kenyan homemade brew gave me the runs.

A very busy itinerary left little room for downtime. Children loved to touch grey hair. What about the endless speed bumps and pedestrian crosswalks on major highways. Oh, let's not forget the numerous roadblocks where the police only stopped people who looked like they could pay a bribe. For me, worst of all, there was no zero beer. I had to resort to the regular stuff.

Yes, perhaps a lot of inconveniences, but they serve as markers which made this trip so memorable. Hopefully, just hopefully these inconveniences, along with the marvels and surprises, brought us to a changed way of thinking. I'd like to say transformative or something along those lines. At the very least, something that has led us to see with new eyes and to listen with a changed heart. Something that leads each of us to respond to others anew; patiently, lovingly, truthfully and with justice in mind. Hmmm, sounds a bit biblical.

Child in slum





Street in the slums

Perhaps the most difficult was to witness the hardship of the Kenyan life. Like much of Africa, Kenyans live in a world that hovers between poverty and “just getting by.” Those living in slums earn an average of \$7 per day, if they can find work. By contrast, car gas sells for about the same as it does back home, maybe a bit more.

It isn't much better in rural areas, but at least you have the chance to find a piece of land where you might grow some fruit and vegetables. Back home we encourage people to reduce, reuse, and recycle. For most Kenyans there is no other way. They scrounge, repair, remake, and then some. In a land governed by corruption, unemployment is high and basic public services are just not there: no reliable water for most, no sewage, no sanitation. Schools are underfunded and few have access to basic medical care.

Yet, Kenyans seem to be a much happier people than we are back home. One senses a joyfulness in them which we forgot long ago. This, combined with deep faith, resourcefulness and resilience creates a people who are able to withstand and rise above very harsh circumstances.

Returning home to Prince Rupert with much shorter days and endless showers of rain has certainly given me time to look back and wonder about Kenya. My assessment: our trip had been quite remarkable. Fulfilling comes to mind.

So, were my expectations met? Very definitely. Was I able to reflect and re-pivot my life? Reflect, yes. Re-pivot, no. But the path is much clearer for me now. Was I transformed? I hope so. Truthfully, I see myself as a work in progress, but also as someone determined to continue changing, someone who might be an agent of change for others.

My last thought turns now to you. So, what about you? Should you go on a MAMI Mission Awareness Trip to Kenya? Medical concerns and practicalities aside, the real question is whether you are prepared to go on a journey, for just a short little while, that leads you through a world very different from



Children in the slums

your own. A journey of surprises both good and bad, perhaps inconvenient or uncomfortable at times and, most especially, a journey that in all likelihood will challenge some of your most fundamental thinking.

In other words, can you be a “pilgrim on a journey?” Maybe you already know the answer. I’d say, “better yet, reflect on it for a week or two.” You’ll know by the passion created within.

Oh, and just so you know, I think everyone should go! At least once, anyway.

(Editor’s Note: The next MAMI pilgrimage is scheduled for September 2026.)

Kenya, beyond the safari

The Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate (MAMI) and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) invite you to embark on a journey of cultural immersion and social justice in Kenya.

Join us as we travel through Kenya to explore the untold stories of its lands and peoples during a 16-21 day glimpse into one of Africa's most prominent and beloved countries. It is a journey of faith and personal growth for the brave and the adventurous. Stand at the crossroads of the past and the present during a unique faith encounter.

In a place of insurmountable odds, witness how the Oblates and their partners are positively impacting the lives of the destitute, the marginalized, the forgotten. See how the church has come to the forefront, helping to build better lives for all Kenyans.

This trip will immerse you into the daily lives of Kenyans where they share their struggles and joys; where personal stories offer deep insights into the country's economic, political, and social structure. You will visit local schools, community centres, churches, and social enterprises. Meet the men and women making a real difference in the lives of people. Attest to the grateful smiles of children whose future holds great hope, the kind of hope that an education along with three meals a day provides.

The next trip will be in September 2026, with more tours planned in the future.

If you would like to join a small group of MAMI supporters from across Canada, to make a difference that really matters, contact Fr. Ken Forster, OMI, at kforster@omilacombe.ca

A Canadian Oblate's missionary story

BY FR. VINCE JAMES, OMI

VANCOUVER, BC - As a relatively young Oblate in 1994, I was sent to Fraser Lake, BC, to serve as priest to the Carrier Nations: Fraser Lake Mission at St. Andrew's Parish Church, St. Patrick's in Stellaquo and St. Peter's in Nadleh. At the time, I had no idea the impact that this assignment would have on my life in the task that was set before me.



Fr. Vince James, OMI

Following the work of Fr. Jules Goulet, OMI, a primary focus for me was the revitalization of the Rose Prince Pilgrimage. Rose Prince was born in 1915 at Fort St. James, the third of nine children. She first attended a little school in Stuart Lake. In 1922, Rose's parents enrolled her in a new residential school in Lejac. It was to remain her home until her death in 1949.

What was it about this humble, prayerful Native woman that so moved the people to create an annual pilgrimage in her name? A pamphlet that is available at the pilgrimage captures the essence of their devotion to her cause of sainthood:

"There are Saints who were unknown by the world. Their holiness was hidden from our eyes and known only to heaven. They drew no attention to themselves but lived quiet and gentle lives of prayer and service to others. Yet sometimes, God in His mercy reveals a glimpse of holiness in our midst. Such is the life of Rose Prince." (taken from a pamphlet by St. Andrew's Parish.)

In 1951, two years after her burial, a few graves that were located west of the Lejac Indian Residential School had to be relocated to a larger cemetery. During that transfer, the casket

of Rose Prince broke open, and the workers found her body and clothing perfectly preserved. For Catholics, such un-corruption has a very special meaning, and the Church accepts it as a “possible sign from God witnessing to a life of holiness.”

And here I was ... charged with the task of revitalizing the Rose Prince Pilgrimage. Where does one begin with such a task? My goal was to develop a plan that would involve all the communities, because they were central to our task.

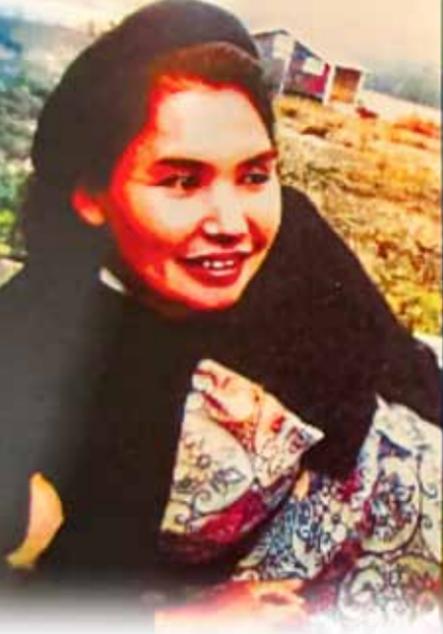
Much work was done by volunteers who helped to clear the grounds, level the fields, beautify the cemetery, and build structures to support the annual pilgrimage, such as out-houses, a cookhouse and a sheltered place for the expected large gatherings of people.

Vision, determination, generosity and service helped to keep the pilgrimage at the centre of life in Fraser Lake. As I've said many times over, “In the spirit of working together, the place blossomed.”

Over the course of 26 years, the number of pilgrims increased to more than 1,000 each summer. As part of the Native People's commitment to hospitality, feeding the people

Rose Prince's gravesite





Rose Prince's gravesite

was the responsibility of the community, and I heard it said many times: "Father, when the people visit on our land, we feed them." Fund-raising, donations and faithful volunteers help to maintain the pilgrimage to this day.

This past summer, following five years away from Fraser Lake, I was finally healthy enough to return to celebrate mass and spend two weeks with the people. The joy, love, hospitality and memories that the people shared with me while participating in the pilgrimage reinforced my deep devotion to the Carrier Nations, their devotion to Rose Prince and to her cause.

Many people have shared stories of healings that were attributed to Rose Prince's intervention. This eventually led to the creation of a video telling her story and its impact on many seeking healing. The video has been played on SALT and LIGHT and on EWTN at various times.

My 26 years serving the communities in Fraser Lake were a great blessing and I am grateful for the Oblate obedience that brought me there so many years ago.

You can learn more about the Rose Prince Pilgrimage by contacting the diocese of Prince George: www.pgdiocese.ca.

Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage site needs an upgrade

BY ARCHBISHOP SUSAI JESU, OMI, AND RON MARTINEAU

LAC STE. ANNE, AB – First called *Wakamne*, or God’s Lake, by the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation who live on the west end of the Lake, and *Manito Sahkahigan*, also God’s Lake, by the Cree, the lake was later named Lac Ste. Anne by Rev. Jean-Baptiste Thibault, the first Catholic priest to establish a mission on the site in 1842.

According to Alexis’s oral history, a charismatic Nakota chief from the southeast followed his vision and led his people to the shores of the sacred Lake Wakamne. To this day, it remains a spiritual centre celebrated yearly during a well-

established pilgrimage.

Fr. Joseph Lestanc organized the first pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne in July 1889 after an inspirational visit to St. Anne d’Aurey shrine in French Brittany the previous year. Over the years, the Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage has continued on an annual basis and always during the week of July 26, the feast day of Ste. Anne, mother of the Blessed

Aurora Borealis at
Lac Ste. Anne



Virgin Mary. The grandmother figure has a strong importance within Aboriginal culture.

The annual Pilgrimage of Indigenous Peoples in honor of Ste. Anne is one of the most unique and memorable spiritual gatherings in North America, attracting as many as 40,000 pilgrims. The grounds have been sacred for generations of peoples and have become widely known as a place of healing.

The pilgrimage is especially close to the hearts of many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people who attend faithfully each year. In 2022, Pope Francis, during his Penitential Pilgrimage of Walking Together, visited Lac Ste. Anne to pray with Indigenous People.

The shrine dedicated to Ste. Anne and built in the early 1980s has well served all who visit these holy grounds. However, as the shrine and the site age, renewal and updating has become inevitable. Several phases of repair and renewal are planned.

As an outdoor shrine, the first phase of renewal was to replace the bird netting around the perimeter. This project has been completed using 100 per cent volunteer labor (a huge thanks to all those who volunteered).

Several phases are in the planning stages such as statue renewal and lighting, altar and sanctuary upgrade, seating upgrade, Internet and charging stations, children's playground, and washroom and shower facilities. In order to accommodate these needed changes, hundreds of thousands of dollars are required.

If you would like to walk together with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, please consider donating through MAMI.



Pope Francis and Susai Jesu, OMI, during a visit to Rome

Susai Jesu, OMI appointed archbishop

Susai Jesu, OMI, who served as pastor of Sacred Heart of the First Peoples in Edmonton, was named by Pope Leo XIV as Archbishop of Keewatin-Le Pas, a territory encompassing 725,000 square kilometres across Northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

More recently, he served as pastor of Lac Ste. Anne Parish.

Fr. Jesu, 54, was born on May 17, 1971, in Pushpavanam, India.

“As I reflect on my feelings at this memorable moment, the words of the Blessed Virgin Mary come to mind: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my savior. God lifts up the lowly and fills the hungry with good things.’

“It is a humbling experience to receive God’s calling to serve as a bishop. I truly realize that God chooses the weak

to make them strong in faith and love. My heart is filled with gratitude and joy,” said Fr. Jesu.

“I am grateful to Archbishop Emeritus Sylvain Lavoie, OMI, who invited me to serve the First Nations in Canada, and for the Oblates who brought a young missionary to this country. They provided me with essential orientation for ministry in Canada and wonderful formation in counseling.

“I am also grateful to my parents and family – especially my late mother, whose constant prayers that I might become a priest have now been fulfilled and more. I am thankful as well for Archbishop Richard Smith and the Archdiocese of Edmonton, particularly for their support during the papal visit (to Edmonton).

“I was very happy learning Cree and accompanying Indigenous communities in Pelican Narrows and Sandy Bay, Saskatchewan, and later at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton, where I had the privilege of welcoming Pope Francis.

“My passion is to bring people to Jesus and to evangelize the poor, fulfilling the Oblate charism of our founder, St. Eugene. I was blessed to have a brief new start in Lac Ste. Anne, and I am now happy to serve with the priests and pastoral workers of the Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas. Thank you all for your support and prayers.”

Retirement

Fr. Glenn Zimmer, OMI, whose input was instrumental in the development of *Oblate Spirit* in 2009, has retired. His guidance and advice have played an integral role in the fund-raising efforts of MAMI, for which he served as Oblate Director for more than 25 years.



Stations of the Cross relocated

SASKATOON – The large outdoor stations of the cross on the grounds of the former Queen’s House Retreat Centre, which closed in 2024, have a new home at the Blackstrap Youth Camp south of Saskatoon.

The stations, which were placed on large stones on the Queen’s House grounds in 1961 as a diocesan Knights of Columbus project, have the name of the artist on the side – “GARDINI” (Professor Giovanni Ardini) – and came from Naples, Italy.

Finding a new home for the outdoor artwork has been a process undertaken by Fr. Doug Jeffrey, OMI, and Ron Schira, past Grand Knight of St. Philip Neri Parish K of C council in Saskatoon, who then consulted other Knights of Columbus members, including those serving on the board of the faith-based K of C Blackstrap Youth Camp (BYC).

BYC board member Blair Carruthers said that the Knights of Columbus serving on the board welcomed the suggestion that the stations of the cross be re-located to the 40-acre camp on the shore of Blackstrap Lake.

“There was a small group of us — Fr. Doug, Ron Schira, myself, Ron Denis, Dave Harder, –and we spent some time looking at several potential locations,” Carruthers said. “We decided on a spot that is close to the chapel. We are going to get this moved and we are going to develop that area even further as more of a faith-based spot, not just for youth, but for all of our Catholic community.”





Fr. Edward Gibney stands beside the statue of Mary he carved

Another piece of artwork commissioned by the Knights of Columbus for the Queen's House grounds is a statue of The Blessed Virgin Mary, holding a sheaf of wheat. Carved by local artist Fr. Ed Gibney before he was ordained a priest, the statue is going to St. Paul's Hospital.

"I think it is a great place to put it, a good place to continue its relationship with the community," said Gibney.

Check out our Facebook page:



Lacombe Canada MAMI



**Lacombe MAMI
Oblate Missions**

Website:

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



Three weeks to a new home

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

CHINCHA ALTA, Peru – It takes only three weeks to change a life.

Sadly, it is easy to find people in need of safe shelter so, happily, we have begun again to build small homes for destitute families.

Working with two four-man crews, we can complete a home in three weeks. Each designated family has to help by being involved in the construction and contributing what they can materially. But before they start the work, I get them bags of food because their physical condition is not all that good.

Two of the crew members are studying to be civil engineers and have good marks. The other workers are from poor families, including one young fellow who is caring for his ailing paralyzed father. Most of the men don't have a proper edu-

cation and work at any job they can find.

The total cost of a home, including labor and materials, is \$4,860. While we are building one house, we prepare another family for construction.

The house is actually nothing more than a big room, five metres wide by 10 metres long. We basically give them



Rebar cement closeup



Putting on the roof

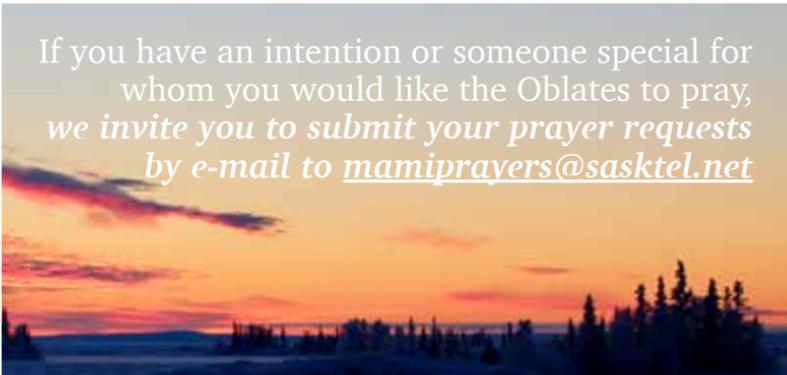
a decent start, and eventually most of these once-homeless people improve their dwelling by putting on a second floor. Depending on the size of their property, they can extend their dwelling.

Over the years, we have constructed 1,500 small houses, 30 classrooms, 16 chapels, a retreat centre, and seven concrete playground floors for school children. We have provided 8,000 blankets, 10,000 scribblers and many school supplies.

Building homes is one great way to bring God to these families, and the dear children will never forget to think about the generosity of the Canadian people and the Canadian missionary that came to their aid.

In Christ and Mary, lots of love and a heap of thanks!

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*





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

70 years an Oblate

BY KEN FORSTER, OMI

VANCOUVER – We were blessed to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of Fr. Andrew Takach’s first vows on Nov. 4 here in Vancouver.

Fr. Andy’s ministry in Peru, as chronicled through his newsletters from 1979 to 1988, reflects a profound commitment to pastoral care, social justice and community development amidst challenging socio-political and economic conditions. His journey began with cultural immersion and language acquisition, enduring the initial shock of transitioning into a new environment. Settling in Comas, Lima, he adapted to the local climate and customs, and engaged in excursions to historical sites like Cusco and Machu Picchu. Retreats and community meetings deepened his spiritual resolve.

Fr. Andy’s early experiences included navigating the complexities of jungle life in Aucayacu, where he encountered the realities of poverty, the influence of the cocaine industry, and the challenges of missionary outreach in an unfamiliar ecclesial environment and language. His vivid descriptions of river journeys, natural disasters, and community interactions underscore the resilience necessary to thrive in such an atmosphere. He highlighted the lack of infrastructure, the prevalence of theft, and the necessity of defensive driving, illustrating the daily hurdles faced by missionaries.

Language acquisition in Bolivia even with a competent school was not a breeze to master. Along with that immersion, he also needed to appreciate the local culture and history, gaining insights into the political instability and economic struggles of the region. His reflections on the educational system, health conditions, and social customs helped him to understand the broader Latin American context.

In Aucayacu, Fr. Andy’s ministry went beyond sharing the

verbal and written gospel message to include health concerns, community development, and pastoral catechetical outreach. He collaborated with Dominican sisters and fellow Oblates, addressing health crises, promoting education, and fostering spiritual growth. His newsletters detailed the chal-



Fr. Andrew Takach, OMI

lenges of living conditions, insect infestations, and the emotional toll of witnessing widespread poverty and illness.

Here is a short tidbit from Aucayacu in 1981: "In late March, we just received a fourth sister who will be working with us this year. She is sister Rita, a Peruvian, who just finished her novitiate. She is a nurse and a catechist so we can use her both in the medical program and in our parish program. It will be good just to have another body here.

"We just finished Holy Week and Easter with all their ceremonies. I must say that I appreciate these ceremonies more and more each year. Before Holy Week came Lent, and before Lent came Carnival time. The only form of 'Carnival' that the people participate in here for the three weeks prior to Ash Wednesday is, as you may well expect for a people so used to rain, throwing water on Sundays. The kids, men, women, all line the streets and highways just daring anyone to walk or drive down. They let you have it with a bucket full of water. Sometimes a group of people will load a barrel of water on a pickup truck and drive down the street letting the people have it. Everybody gets soaked and they all have a lot of fun. An especially mischievous trick is for the young teenagers to fill balloons with water and the first well-dressed young (woman) that walks by gets the balloon right on the rump. I remember

on one occasion driving under a bridge when we got splattered suddenly with water. We didn't mind that too much until we looked back. I noticed the beggar had no pail; he had peed on us. But it is nice to see that people can still have so much fun with such simple things."

Fr. Andy's transition to Lima marked a shift to urban ministry, where he engaged with Basic Christian Communities (CEBs), lay leadership formation, and youth catechism. He collaborated in Comas to organize massive religious events, such as the feast of Señor de los Milagros and Holy Week celebrations, which drew thousands of participants. The importance of empowering lay leaders and integrating faith with social action was fostered by the team.

The socio-political landscape of Peru during Fr. Andy's ministry was tumultuous, with rising terrorism from Sendero Luminoso, economic instability, and governmental challenges. He documented the impact of these issues on daily life, including blackouts, violence, and the struggles of marginalized communities. His advocacy for justice and his critique of systemic inequities highlighted his commitment to a truly Oblate ministry.

Fr. Andy's sabbatical year in 1985 allowed him to reconnect with his roots, pursue theological studies, and gain a broader perspective on global missionary work. Returning to Peru, he continued his work in Chincha Alta, focusing on community building, vocational promotion, and addressing the needs of the poor. His newsletters from this period reflect a deepening of his pastoral vision, integrating spiritual care with practical support, in housing projects and educational initiatives.

As many of you know, throughout his ministry, Fr. Andy maintained a strong connection with his supporters in Canada, expressing gratitude for your prayers, financial assistance, and moral support. His writings convey a sense of hope, resilience, and unwavering faith in the face of adversity and everyday challenges.

Fr. Andy's ministry in Peru was marked by a holistic approach to missionary work, blending evangelization with social advocacy, education, and community empowerment. His legacy is one of compassion, dedication, and a profound impact on the lives of countless individuals and communities. Thank you, Andy, for your 70 years of religious life and your gift to our community life and mission.

If any of you would like to receive a copy of his 18 newsletters over the years, please contact me and I will send you an email attachment. It's only by reading the daily encounters and challenges that you can appreciate the gift of his oblation. Blessings!

(Fr. Ken can be reached at kforster@omilacombe.ca)

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:
lacombeissions@yahoo.ca



Sadly missed

LETHBRIDGE, AB – It is with sorrow that we share the passing of Bosco Baptista, a longtime supporter of Oblate missions, on Nov. 8. He, his wife Prisca, and their children Brenda and Daphne, first became acquainted with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate when they immigrated to Canada in 1973.

They became parishioners at St. Patrick's Parish in Lethbridge, AB, where they met Oblate Fathers James Carroll, Jack Sullivan and Ken Forster. Bosco and his family soon developed a close relationship with the Oblates, who fostered a warm, welcoming and active parish community.

These Oblates, and those that followed in ensuing years, took a genuine interest in each parishioner and provided compassionate spiritual care. These kind priests, aware of the Baptista family's loneliness as new immigrants, even invited the family to spend their first Christmas with them at the parish rectory.

Two years later, the family felt blessed when Fr. Carroll baptised their youngest son, Savio, with water that he had brought back from the Jordan River. Some years later, when overseas visitors were planning a visit to Lethbridge, Fr. Bill Macdonald, OMI, generously offered rooms at the rectory for their visit.

The Oblates always welcomed visitors and those in need of spiritual guidance and physical help. Bosco and Prisca fondly remembered Fr. Macdonald making peanut-butter sandwiches for those less fortunate who would arrive at the rectory door hungry.

Their strong relationship with the Oblates has continued over the years. In the late 1990s, when the Oblates started their

mission in Kenya, Bosco and Prisca were delighted to support the compassionate and spiritual work being done in the country of their birth.

While they had immigrated to Canada in 1973, they have always looked back with gratitude and nostalgia for their time in Kenya.

Bosco was born in Eldoret, Kenya, in 1943, the sixth of seven children. A devout Catholic, Bosco altar served, attending daily mass with his mother and siblings at 6:30 a.m. He remembered Eldoret fondly as a place where time seemed to stand still and the air was pure.

Bosco's childhood was spent in many parts of Kenya over the years, due to his father's occupation. Besides Eldoret, these included Isiolo, Thika and Kapsabet, with the bulk of the time in Nairobi.

Bosco and Prisca's two older children were born in Nairobi and the family's departure in 1973 was bittersweet, as they left many friends, family, and happy memories. It was, therefore, with great joy when they learned of the great work being done by

the Oblate Mission in Kenya, and they became lifelong supporters and advocates.



Savio's baptism with Fr. Carroll, OMI, family and godparents

Bosco was very impressed with the level of support at the mission, which included caring for those in need, and supporting local initiatives such as farming, water supply, a lumber shop, a maize mill, a seminary, and a bakery cooperative. Valuing education highly, he was excited that a school was built where children were able to access a good quality education, and as an accountant, he appreciated being able to see how donations have been utilized.

One of Bosco's final acts of support and gratitude to the Oblates and to Kenya was for Prisca and their children to request that donations be made in Bosco's memory to MAMI Lacombe's Kenya mission. Bosco would be gratified to know that he has continued to help the people of Kenya through his decades-long friendship with MAMI.

(Story compiled by Prisca Baptista, Brenda Walker, Daphne Sander, and Savio Baptista)

Angel of Hope Rosary

Find inspiration through the intercession of the Angel of Hope. The centerpiece of this meditative rosary is an image of the Angel of Hope. The Angel of Hope is dedicated to people dealing with illness. The glass beads are purple, a symbol for cancer awareness, and pink, symbolizing breast cancer awareness. The Our Father beads are delicate flowers and the crucifix is accented with hearts. Limit one per member.





Kenya

NOTEBOOK

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

OCT. 11

NAIROBI, Kenya – It has been the conclusion of an amazing and mutually rewarding visit by a group of our MAMI brothers and sisters from Canada who do so much for us. We are grateful and happy. A special note of thanks to those who did a lot of work behind the scenes preparing and guiding the trip.

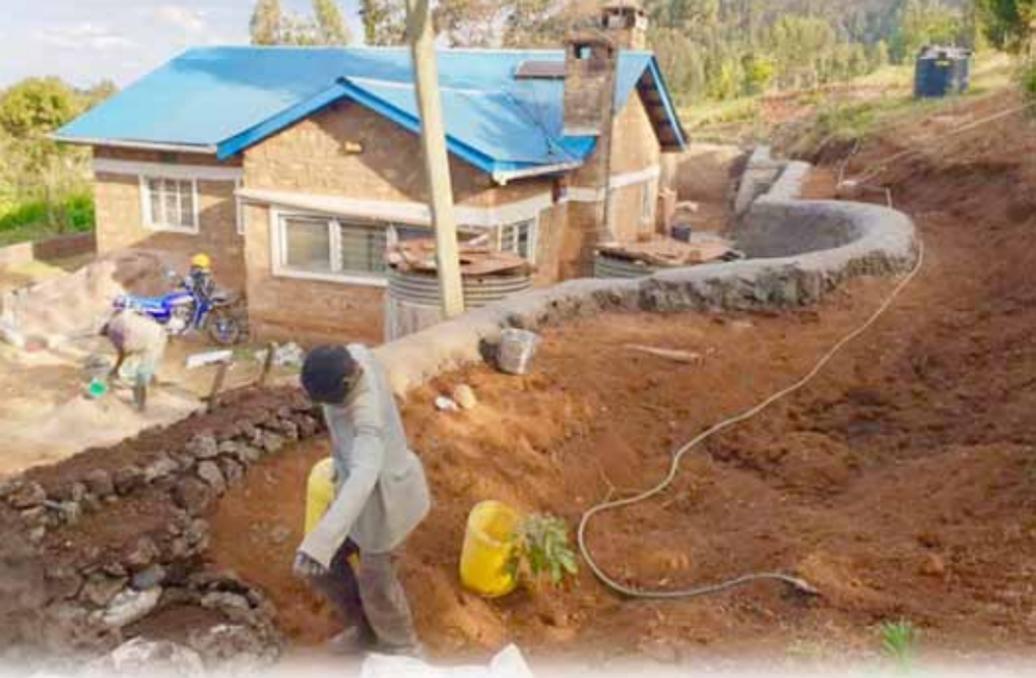


Gerry Conlan, OMI



Canadian visitors receive a warm welcome

At Kiirua Farm, we continued on the retaining wall and integrating the hard uncut stones at the bottom to give greater stability, and wedging in small hard rocks to fill gaps and reduce the cement consumption.



Working on the retaining wall at the Kiirua farm

OCT. 18

We warmly welcomed the arrival of Fr. Jean Philippe Mwari Sukari, OMI, who is here for English study and counselling courses for two years. He is well versed in IT, so we are hopeful that can help us.

Fr. Fidele and I had a chat with the bishop about his request for us to host one of his young priests in our community to attend Tangaza and study youth ministry. We shared the

Canadians visit the deaf community



challenges we have faced with men from Southern Africa relating to Oblate community life and lifestyle. So, we gently tried to suggest some alternatives. But he said he has checked them all and they are full. Finally, we said we can try, and the bishop assured us he has not caused any headaches for him since he was ordained in 2019.

OCT. 25

We celebrated Fr. Bill Stang's anniversary (59 years of priesthood). A founding member of the Kenya Mission, Fr. Stang is definitely a hero for the people of Kionyo. It was fitting to remember his contribution to the mission on Mashujaa Day, a public holiday to honor heroes.

I went to Banda International School and collected a few boxes of books for the Alfajiri Kids Art Centre. I had asked if anyone had books to put in the slum libraries. Jane at Banda School responded and I had a great conversation with her

when I arrived. She asked if they could help with other items like laptops, clothes, etc. I suggested I take her and the school art teacher to visit Alfajiri, to which she agreed. I hope they might make a partnership (OK God, I hope you are listening).

Canadians visit
the slum



Two others responded to my request, so I visited Jill, a poor dear who is only 62 and wheezing like she has emphysema and looks much older. She had a few shelves of books and gave me bags to pack them. She was quite talkative and made a lovely cup of tea.

NOV. 1

A big fund-raiser was organised for St. Paul's School, the parish Catholic primary school in Njogune. Former Governor Kiraitu arranged for many powerful people to come, including the new governor who has been quick to build/repair many roads including the broken tarmac road to Kionyo from the main highway.



A cow is moved at Kiirua farm

Fr. Greg and I made a quick trip to Méru to review the Kiirua farm. I had a long conversation with farm manager Euticus while Fr. Charles showed Fr. Greg around the 20 acres. He was impressed with our forest! We agreed to purchase

another four beehives as that is working very well and bringing some good income. We also requested we increase the number of fruit trees, but scatter them around a bit so if one gets diseased, they will not all perish.

NOV. 2

Fr. Fidele (Nairobi) and Fr. Daquin (Méru) both celebrated masses for the deceased members of our MAMI family.

NOV. 15

We ended the week a little sad by the deaths of two important people: the mother of Fr. Gideon passed away after suffering ill health for some months. May she rest in peace.

We also mourn the passing of Maria at Kisaju, our beautiful

Fr. Fidele's All Souls' Day mass to pray for intentions submitted by MAMI members





Fr. Gerry with Maria and her husband Leo

friend who did so much good as a nurse and manager of the Urafiki Medical Centre next to our postulancy. They helped many Maasai people (especially women) in the interior from Kisaju. Many came for free services. Leo and Maria were very helpful when we constructed the postulancy house and helped with protection of the materials and even some great advice on the soak pit. She was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer in June. May she rest in peace.

During the week Br. Zachary and Br. Makori successfully organized the vocations workshop in Larmudiac Parish. Twelve men came. Br. Zachary, Br. Makori, Fr. Faustin and I interviewed each person for nearly an hour each, then met and compared notes. Six were approved.

Frs. Praveen, Faustin, Greg and Fidele held the formation committee meeting so the council can recommend how to proceed with each postulant, pre-novice and scholastic.

NOV. 22

It has been quite a week, and a bit emotional with the funeral for Maria at Kisaju, where I ended up leading the mass.

We were happy to welcome Br. Elias Mwangi back to Kenya from Cedara. He has grown spiritually, intellectually and physically! He has completed his formal studies for religious life and priesthood.

Then we had the news that Fr. Susai Jesu, OMI, has been appointed Archbishop of Keewatin-Le Pas. I always have mixed feelings when this happens: the church benefits but the Oblates lose a good person with experience.

I'm very happy and inspired by the initiative of our Br.

Maria's funeral





Nairobi youth group

Charles in the pre-novitiate. It really makes a difference when we have young men with some skills (he has a certificate in electrical work). He has been connecting various hot water units to the solar power for daytime heating and reducing grid power overnight.

NOV. 29

The week started with the funeral for Fr. Gideon's mother in Kionyo. Fr. Greg, the postulants, Br. Makori, Br. Zachary and I travelled for the funeral. Bishop of Méru, Salesius Mugambi, and many priests of the deanery also attended.

We celebrated a Christmas party for our staff, and Kisaju Parish celebrated its 11th anniversary of being established in 2014.

Flew to London for the General Finance Committee meeting. It was good to spend three days catching up on work for the Kenya Mission and meeting up with the Oblates in London.

DEC. 6

Our meeting in London was fairly straight forward although we are facing a concern in Rome with some foundation issues.

DEC. 13

Back in Nairobi. We celebrated the 30th anniversary of St. Eugene being made a saint and also had a lovely celebration in the Kisaju Postulancy for the Immaculate Conception. Fr Greg and Br. Benjamin (with the postulants) did a great job. We had nuns and parishioners, the teachers who helped the postulants, and all the Karen Oblates and pre-novices.

DEC. 20

Fr. Greg lost his document bag with two passports, but thankfully he had a tracker in it and our security company found it in a supermarket. Thank God.

Br. Makori was busy most of the week moving around western Kenya visiting the candidates who might join postulancy in 2026. It's not easy jumping on buses and camping overnight in strange accommodation. One of the parish priests he visited for a reference check was living in a simple tin house.

DEC. 27

As you can imagine, Christmas has been a little busy but

eventually we could relax by lunchtime Christmas Day. I was informed all the parishes celebrated well for the feast days: Fr. Jean Pierre and Deacon Moses baptised 16 babies in Kionyo,

Sixteen were baptised at St. Stephen's parish in Kionyo



while Fr. Phelix celebrated for the Kisaju Bethsaida Elder Care Centre for disabled or abandoned elders.

JAN. 3

We started a new tradition of New Year's Eve mass at Holy Spirit. I tried something new by starting outside the church and crossing over the threshold to start mass as a sign of crossing over to a new year.

JAN. 10

We started the week on a high note, with the first vows professed by Br. Emmanuel, OMI, as he completed his novitiate stage, experienced in Lesotho since December 2024. We are happy for him and of course the mission as it slowly grows.

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/>

AMMI Lacombe Canada
MAMI is pleased to
support our Missionary
Oblates serving the poor
around the world through
spiritual and humanitarian
works – feeding the
hungry, caring for the sick,
clothing the naked and
bringing the love of God
to those most in need.

*We support Oblate
missions and ministries in
areas such as:*

Angola
Bangladesh
Canada
Congo
Haiti
India
Kenya
Lesotho
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Sri Lanka
Ukraine





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.*

*Oblate
Spirit*

**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*

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

Phone (306) 653-6453

TOLL FREE:

1-866-432-MAMI (6264)

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

AMMI Lacombe MAMI
Canada