

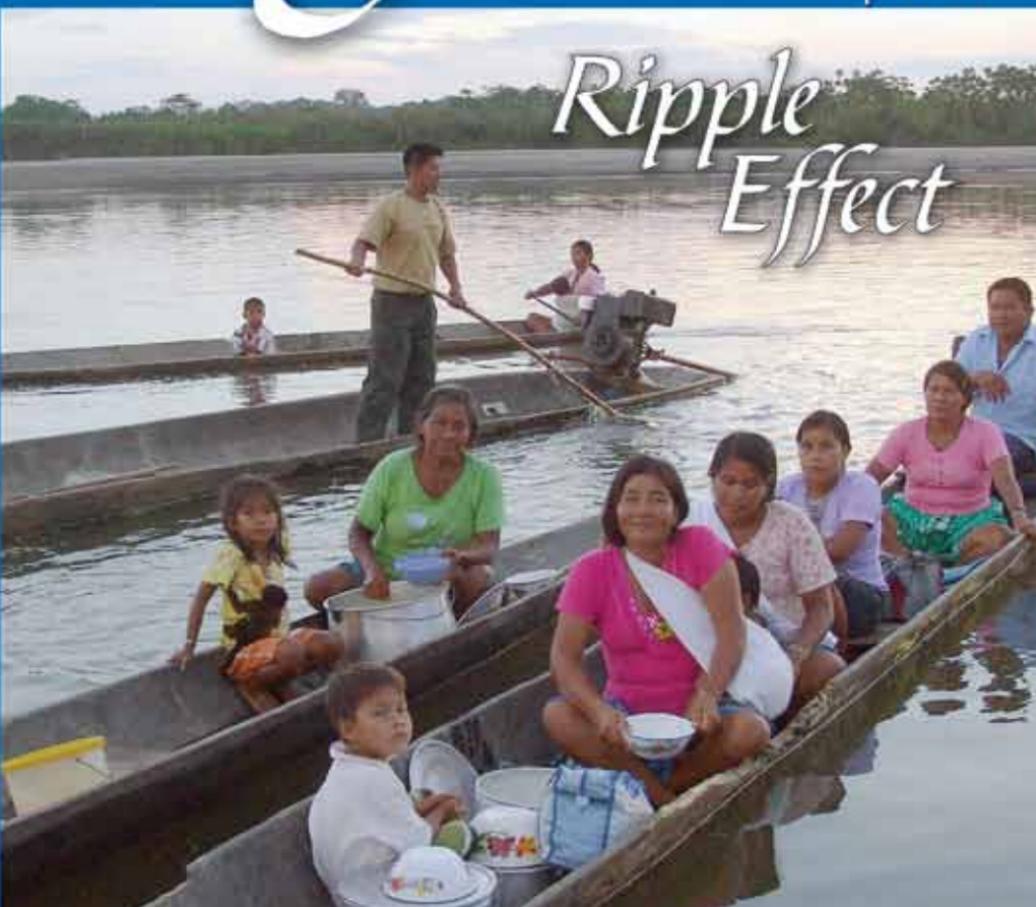
AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

# Oblate Spirit

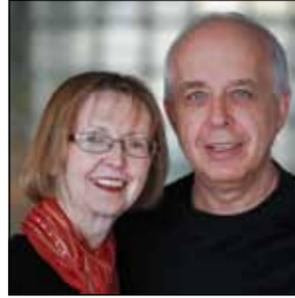


April 2012

Ripple  
Effect



# Random acts of kindness



One of our favorite movies of the last decade was a show called *Pay it Forward*. It had a simple premise. When someone did something good to/for you, you in turn would perform three random acts of kindness. In a perfect world, these random acts of kindness would rapidly encircle the globe.

But we don't necessarily live in a perfect world. Injustice, poverty, greed, cruelty ... they all still exist in our world. Throw in unfortunate acts of nature, and you have a recipe for disaster for those whose circumstances don't allow them to battle back.

That takes us back to the theme for this issue of *Oblate Spirit* – the Ripple Effect. It was so simply and eloquently described by Moe Schroeder, OMI, in the following story. This is what the Oblates are all about, and the seeds of hope they sow around the globe. This is the good will Cristina Rodriguez spreads when she visits the mountainous villages of Bolivia, be it medicine, surprise Christmas packages or a lesson in catechism for the children.

It is that spirit of the Oblates that resonates around the globe. We can help them build a better world. We can *Pay It Forward!*

*John and Emily Cherneski*  
Communications Coordinators

# Ripples through time

BY MOE SCHROEDER, OMI

PERU – The ripple effect is a term used to describe a situation where, like the ever-expanding ripples across water when an object is dropped into it, an effect from an ini-

tial event can be followed outwards incrementally.

Our years in health work in the Centro de Salud Santa Clotilde is full of ripples. I'll tell you about just one of them.

**Initial Event:** In 2007 an American college student, Nathan Schenkman, was 'exploring' South America, alone. He was in Ecuador coming down the Napo River into Peru at Pantoja (still a full day's journey north of us) when he awoke one morning with a painful corneal ulcer in his left eye. By the next day he was in great pain and met some fellow travellers, also American college students, who, Good Samaritan style, got a boat and brought him to Santa Clotilde, arriving at



nightfall. We hospitalized him and began an aggressive treatment for his corneal infection and made contact with his mother, a Marshfield, WI, obstetrician with whom we arranged his evacuation and return home a couple of days later when he was better able to travel.

**Ripple 1:** 2008: Dr. Katherine Kaplan, Nathan’s mother, said they’d like to do something for our clinic and asked if we could use the services of an obstetrician for a couple of weeks. Indeed we could. In 2008 Dr. Katherine, her husband and two sons came to Santa Clotilde and worked with us.

**Ripple 2:** In 2010 Dr. Katherine came back to Santa Clotilde, this time bringing with her a fellow obstetrician, Dr. Joe Welter. They both did gynecologic work in the clinic for two weeks.

**Ripple 3:** About this time we were forming the non-profit organization PANGO in an effort to give sustainability to our work for the future. (A large ripple from Dr. Kerry Telford’s initial event in 2001, but that’s another story). When

I consulted our lawyer, Dr. Jorge Bravo, about the legal aspects, he offered, “I met Dr. Katherine Kaplan here and heard her story. If she can do that, I can volunteer as your third board member.”



Dr. Jorge Bravo

**Ripple 4:** One of our young contract Peruvian doctors, Pilar Abarca, was in her third year with us in 2010. She met Dr. Joe Welter and developed a friendship that flourished.

**Ripple 5:** In August of 2012 Joe and Pilar will be married in the U.S., with Fr. Jack McCarthy invited to officiate.

**Ripple 6:** On March 3, 2012, Dr. Katherine returned to Peru for her third volunteer campaign. With her she brought two new colleagues, Drs. Tom (rheumatologist) and Rebecca (ophthalmologist) Bartow. Dr. Rebecca is the ophthalmologist who took over Nathan's corneal care in 2007. She is currently working on a list of some 90 patients from the Napo region who are receiving eye attention and performed 29 surgeries in five days.

**Ripple 7:** Due to his experiences in Santa Clotilde, first as a patient and then as a translator for his mother and her colleagues, Nathan has completed premedical school courses and has applied to medical school. He is waiting to hear back from the admissions committees and wishes to pursue a medical career with a major third world country component.

**Ripple 8:** We are waiting for it.

The picture on Page 15 of the February 2012 issue of *Oblate Spirit* was Faustin Litanda, OMI but was identified as Joseph Magambo, OMI. Joseph is stationed in Meru, Kenya, as part of the formation community.



Joseph Magambo, OMI

# Taking care of creation

*Missionaries Edgar Nolasco, OMI, and Roberto Carrasco, OMI, are responsible for the Recrearte project for the youth of the Napo River basin.*

SANTA CLOTILDE, PERU – The Peruvian Amazon rain-forest continues more than ever to be the object of the ambitions of foreign investment. In 2011 Peru had an economic growth rate of seven per cent. It is hailed as a good year. They call it a growing economy with good prospects to confront the economic crisis. The state executive speaks of a policy of social inclusion. A powerful petroleum industry is overshadowing the whole Napo River basin.

On the other side of the coin, the concerns of the native communities who call it home are different: contamination of the rivers from oil spills, the growth of narcotics-trafficking, the ongoing illegal deforestation, the wild-cat gold panning on the river, the refrigerator boats that take huge amounts of fish from the lakes, the absence of teachers in the schools at all levels. There is a palpable sense of state abandonment of the Amazon region. And they talk, but only talk, about social inclusion, with no real policies to carry it out.

In this context, for the fourth consecutive year, Our Lady of





the Assumption Parish in Santa Clotilde on the Napo River in Loreto has opted to work for the formation of boys and girls, native youth and señoritas of the Kichwa-speaking communities through a project called 'Recrearte' (re-create yourself).

In January, 34 native Kichwa communities were represented in Santa Clotilde with 51 boys and girls accompanied by a team of young and professional people. The general theme was 'Youth taking care of creation.'

The project included group work, workshops in design and painting, puppet shows, song workshops, encounter-with-Christ catechesis and workshops in native Kichwa values. Of course there was recreation, sharing, living together and reaching out to the neighborhood. Every participant had a medical exam at the Santa Clotilde Health Centre.

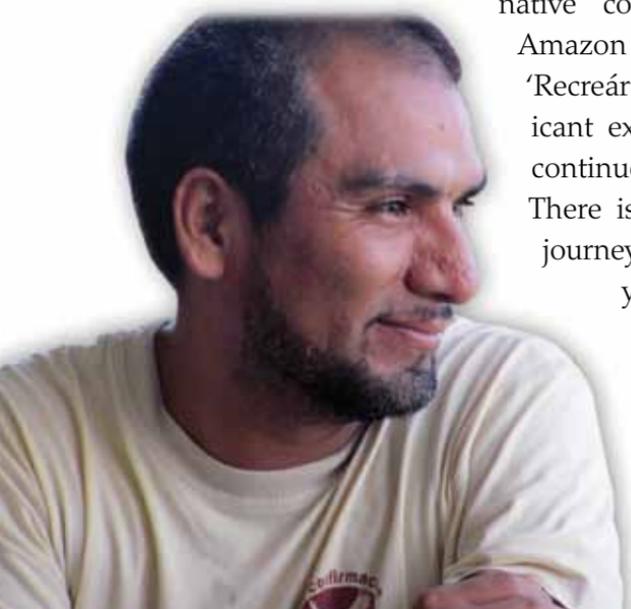
At the same time, another group of 25 young people from the upper and middle Napo received pre-university enforcement courses at the St. Eugene de Mazenod pre-university preparation centre. This is the third consecutive year of preparing students who have completed high school for the entrance exams to the university in Iquitos.



Combined with their academics were sensitivity-raising courses on oil-spill contamination, illegal deforestation and the growing cocaine trade in the area. The concern is evident in their faces and commentaries.

It was rewarding to see the first two Kichwa natives from the Upper Napo gain entrance to the university, one in nursing and the other in pharmacy.

The Oblates are making a significant contribution to the native communities of the Amazon and believe that 'Recreárte' is valuable significant experience that must continue to be developed. There is much to learn by journeying with the native youth.



Edgar Nolasco, OMI

# The life of an Oblate

BY JOE DEVLIN OMI

PERU – Some of you have known me personally even before I came to Peru in 1963; others know something about me and many other Oblates thanks to the *Oblate Spirit* magazine that you are now reading.



Joe Devlin OMI

I began my missionary experience in the parish of Our Lord of the Miracles in Comas, 13 kilometers north of the City Square of Lima. Most of the 40,000 parishioners lived in matted bamboo shacks. There was no running water, nor electricity in the area, and the streets were not leveled.

In 1967, a project to provide water and sewage for 60,000 people was initiated. Within a year, 14 sectors of about 220 families each were organized to form the “Union of Organized Sectors” (USO). In October of 1968, about 1,000 people showed up with their picks and shovels. That day they dug a ditch that was at least one kilometre in length, they laid and tested an eight-inch water pipe connected to a water line, then they filled in the ditch.

The water pipe, worth \$16,000, had been purchased on credit, and we had to pay for it the following month. We had no money, but the following month I received a cheque from the Canadian government for \$100,000. By 1974, the streets had been leveled and every home had water, sewage and electricity.

In May of 1970, just before the earthquake that killed 70,000 people in Peru, I participated in the first Charismatic retreat given in Lima. The retreat began on a Monday morning



with nine people and by Friday evening there were about 60 participants. The Charismatic Renewal has spread throughout Peru and at the closing of the congress for the leaders of Latin America in 2010, about 50,000 people participated in a university stadium. There are several other movements bringing life to the Church, but unfortunately, the majority of Catholics do not even go to church. There is an urgent need for Catholics to practise their faith and to evangelize.

After working 48 years in parishes, in January I moved from the jungle parish in Aucayacu to the Oblate pre-novitiate in Lima. Young men who want to join the Oblates live here and study philosophy for two or three years before going to the novitiate. I am accompanying Cesar Taipe, OMI, who is in charge of the pre-novices.

There is a parish church nearby, and we help out with masses and confessions, especially when the pastor is away. I have been invited to a small community that meets weekly in a home, and also to a monthly mass for a large Marian group that meets in another parish.

I just read an article in the newspaper saying that in Peru

there are about a half million children under the age of five that are undernourished. I know several people, especially widows and unwed mothers, who cannot make enough money to feed their children, give them an education, provide medical attention, or pay rent. If they get behind in paying the rent, they are put out of the building without their own belongings until they pay the rent. They end up sleeping in the parks or on the streets.

The money I receive through MAMI and from friends in Peru for social assistance is quickly distributed. I spend much of my time attending to people in need who live in the poorer areas of Lima. When we meet the Lord as judge, hopefully we will all hear Him say "I was hungry and you fed me...." Mt. 25: 31-46.

## 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?

With the tax law introduced in 2006, you can now 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.



# The face of need

BY JOE DEVLIN, OMI

PERU – We introduced you to Juana Maria Petit Bobbio and her granddaughter Alessandra in the November 2009 issue of *Oblate Spirit*. Alessandra has been raised by her grandmother since she was a young child after her mother died in a car accident. Juana worked as a secretary in a bank for many years, until it was closed by the president of Peru. She has been unable to pay her rent and now her belongings are piled up and deteriorating out in the open until she can pay several months of rent. She sometimes sleeps on a chair in an overcrowded house, and during the day has nowhere to go. Her granddaughter is staying with a friend, but wants to be with her grandmother.



# She needed help

**BY JOE DEVLIN, OMI**

PERU – I want to introduce you to another family I have been helping.

Yuliana Cuba is an unwed mother I have known since October 2009. She is now 32 years old, her son Jerry is 11 and her daughter Angeli is 3. She lives in a shack about 12 kilometres north of Comas.

Fortunately, the father of her children doesn't know where she lives. About a year ago he found her at the marketplace, beat her, kicked her in the head and probably would have killed her if the people nearby hadn't come to her rescue.

As a result of being kicked in the head, she had a blood clot and needed an operation. However, without an ID, she could not be admitted to the hospital, nor could she denounce the man who beat her up.

Before she could get her documents, when she was climbing up the steep hill to her shack, she fell into a sewage ditch

and banged her head. She then had two blood clots and she needed medical attention urgently. We helped her get the documents and she had the operation in March, 2011.

In her old shack Yuliana had no stove. She cooked between the rocks. When asked where the washroom was, she pointed to the bucket in her hand. Later, a candle caused a fire and the shack went up in flames. The family had to sleep on the rocks, covered with a sheet of plastic. After wood was purchased to build another shack, a thief attempted to steal the wood at night, thinking there was no one around. He stepped on Yuliana. She woke up screaming, and neighbors came to the rescue.

Yuliana, with Jerry and Angeli, are standing at the entrance of the newer shack. The shack doesn't give much protection, but she now has water and electricity and a washroom.

Yuliana, with Jerry and Angeli, standing at the entrance of the newer shack



However, she owed money to the association of property owners, and she was given a date to pay or leave. That problem was also solved, thanks to the people who have helped me to provide some assistance.

After providing a stove, Yuliana started baking and selling apple pies. It is still a struggle for her to make a living and provide an education for her children, but she is happy to have a place to stay, a small home that has a stove, beds, water and electricity.

## 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: [lacombemami@sasktel.net](mailto:lacombemami@sasktel.net)

**NEW**

## Gift Payment Option

We now have the ability to accept donations by way of credit card! Please complete the gift form enclosed, visit our website at [www.oblatemissionassociates.ca](http://www.oblatemissionassociates.ca) 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.





## Three years later

BY GERRY LESTRAT, OMI

GUATEMALA – In January I had the joy of visiting Guatemala again after being away for three years and was pleased to find some progress despite the hardships these people face.

I found that not much had physically changed in the City of Guatemala and the interior of the country. January is a good time to visit because the rains and the hurricane season are over and everything is still beautiful and green in the countryside.

Violence, however, remains a large part of their lives. With the tragedy that it generates, people are tired and afraid. They feel the violence seems to be increasing. The causes are gang and drug related. Because of lack of employment and poverty, there is much robbery, kidnapping and outright killing for insignificant reasons. When I was there a priest was murdered on the highway because he bumped a pickup truck that stopped in front of his car. No damage was done but a short argument occurred, then the two in the truck shot the priest

cold-blooded. They were later arrested because the whole scene was videoed by a service station on the side of the road.

Another aspect that did not change is the friendliness and warmth of the people. Of course the majority are good people; they are a jolly people despite the poverty and the hardships they have to endure. The churches are full and the participation in the liturgies is fully alive.

I visited our Oblate missions in the city and in the El Quiche. I arrived at Cunen, my first mission, and the reception was fabulous. A college was built there with the help of Canadian donations. They now have 450 students in that high school where they train students to become teachers. It is a beautiful place set in a valley by a small river. They have decorated their college of 15 classrooms with beautiful Mayan colors and flowers. The students and teachers are very happy there and are so thankful for the Canadian support. They graduate 50 students every year and have been in operation for 10 years.

I found the municipality of Cunen did change over the years and the director of the college said it is because all those young teachers, men and women, have been working as teachers in the remote villages and return home to help the economy of the family. Small hotels, restaurants and new homes have been built in town. Vehicles or motorbikes are used to travel to the schools or for home businesses. There are new fleets of vans for public transport, replacing the old big chicken busses that



used to compete on the country roads for more passengers and every so often caused accidents.

During my three weeks in Guatemala I had the chance to visit my old parish of Chicaman. I was pleased to spend the night in a beautiful room of the new priest residence. The building of a new house was necessary because water was coming through the roof of the old one that was built 50 years prior. When I was there we had 70 villages in that parish, and now there are 76. The population is growing constantly at a high rate, and half the population is under 20 years of age.

I also had the joy of visiting Playa Grande in the northern part of Quiche. It is in a jungle area. Three Oblates are assigned there, and three congregations of sisters also work in that parish. There are 125 villages formed by a variety of Mayan people speaking different languages. There is a clinic run by the Sisters of Charity, a large social pastoral centre, a radio station and a centre for training catechists. This area is also conducive for the production of drugs, so this brings on another aspect that the church ministers have to deal with.

It gives me great joy to say the Oblate family is growing in Guatemala. We now have three young Guatemalan priests active in the missions. Ten Oblate seminarians from Guatemala are studying in Mexico and shortly one more will be ordained to the priesthood. Others are in the noviciate, still others are in the pre-noviciate and there is also a group preparing to enter pre-noviciate. I thank the Holy Spirit and the Oblates who are attending to this development of new missionaries. Hopefully, in

the future, some of these Guatemalan Oblates will ask to come and minister in Canada to spread their joy and the Gospel among us.





# Etched in our hearts

BY CRISTINA RODRIGUEZ

COCHABAMBA, BOLIVIA – I thought it important to share with you the experience of social work conducted in 2011 thanks to the financial support of MAMI Lacombe and the generosity of all of you.

The places where we have concentrated our work are Tapacarí, Arque, Tacopaya and Bolívar. These frigid places are located more than 3,800 metres above sea level. Access roads are unstable, especially in the rainy season when the precarious roads are impacted by landslides. Travellers are permanently confronted with stones and earth, so travel to these regions can be long and tiresome.

The population living in these rural communities is set on the mountains and very scattered. They lack access to potable water services, electricity and health care. The houses are built of stone, adobe, straw and earth, and the conditions in which they live are very depressing.

The only income they can generate is by selling potatoes and sheep rearing, activities that are not permanent because



Cristina Rodriguez

they also depend on the weather. They have no irrigation and minimal rain to develop agriculture.

As in previous years, we have provided these poor families with health and food aid. These actions help decrease the rate of stomach and lung diseases, allowing children to have better health. Every three

months these families receive medicines, cereals, foodstuffs, warm clothes, phosphorus and candles for evening lighting, sandals for children and plastic containers to catch rainwater for consumption.

The project for Christmas packages brought much joy to more than 700 children who received something new and special. Their shouts of joy echo through the mountains as we share the gifts of toys, candy, cookies and cereals. Their sun-burned faces radiate joy during a very emotional experience.

We can say with great satisfaction that in 2011 we have strengthened the care and support to poor rural families with children who are blind or have other disabilities. Attention to the disabled population has demanded much more effort and time, but it was not impossible. The purpose is to ensure that these children achieve autonomy and have better living conditions.

The regular trips to these places build trust with families, making it a little easier to find people, especially children, who suffer from disabilities. Unfortunately, because of the low level of education, these poor people consider the disability to be a punishment for them. By not having access to specialized centres for help, these children are kept in inhumane conditions. We can find children with disabilities tied together with sheep,



hungry enough to resort to eating sheep droppings. These are very dramatic scenes to which we are exposed.

There are feelings and situations that cannot be captured with a camera or a camcorder, nor can be described in all its magnitude. But all this is recorded in the depths of our being.

The work with disabled children has made us infinitely thankful to God for our eyesight, the ability to walk and run, to be able to move from one place to another, to laugh, talk and mourn, and especially grateful to feel called to be bearers of a message of hope and Christian charity.

I am also sure that our missionary friend, Fr. Claude Falardeau, OMI, who died more than five years ago in Bolivia, is pleading before God for continuing social work with the poor.

I insist that all this social work would not be possible without financial support from you and especially without the help of the Good Lord from heaven who looks after the needy. So thank you once again for your generosity and know you are always welcome in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

We remain united in prayer and commitment to achieve a more just and humane world for all.

*(Cristina Rodrigues is a long-time friend and mission partner of the Oblates)*

# Choices

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

PERU – A few nights ago after the evening mass, I saw this tall, thin man standing at the main doors of the parish church. Boy was he smelly!

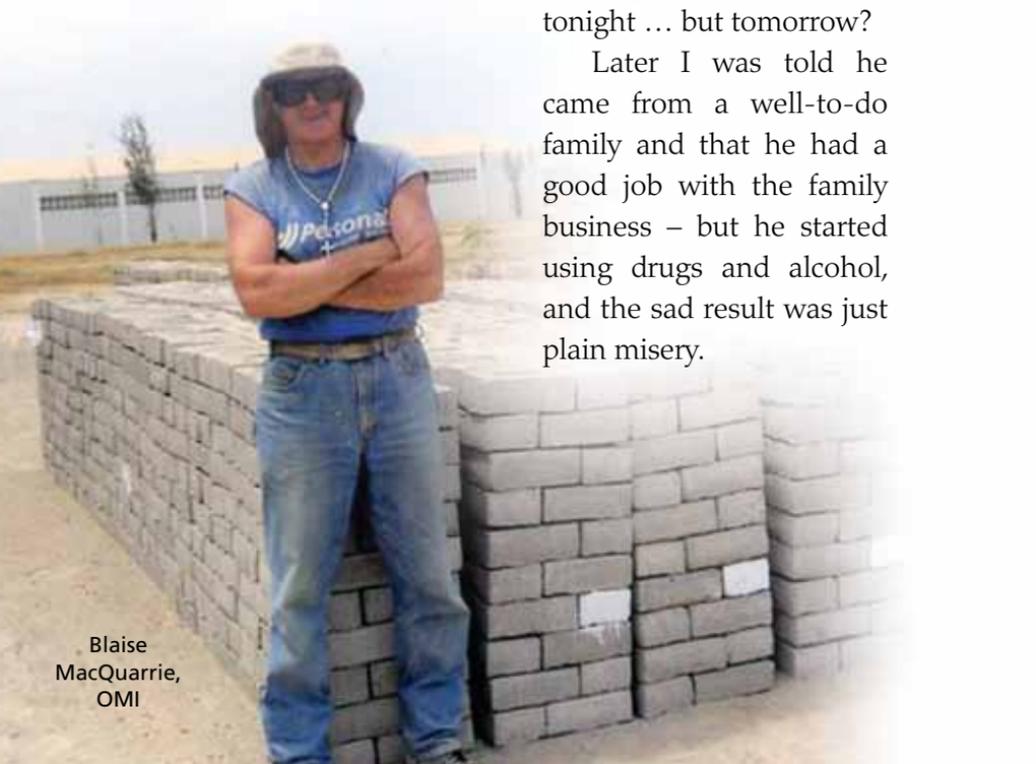
I gave him a little money but seeing that he was so hungry looking I asked him to follow me, which he did, using a stick for a cane.

I took him to this nice restaurant that only opened to the public a week before. We entered and I asked the poor man to sit at the table. I ordered a big plate of food for him.

I knew the restaurant people were not keen to see this dirty and ragged man sitting at the table and stinking to the highest heavens. While the poor fellow ate I went to the owner and his helpers and chatted with them.

After speaking a few words they did show compassion because they gave the man extra food. The poor man had his fill tonight ... but tomorrow?

Later I was told he came from a well-to-do family and that he had a good job with the family business – but he started using drugs and alcohol, and the sad result was just plain misery.



Blaise  
MacQuarrie,  
OMI

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