

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

Oblate Spirit



February 2011



Making Friends

A taste of Oblate life



It has been 150 years since the death of St. Eugene de Mazenod, the founder of the Oblate movement. Could he have even imagined the impact he would have on the world during that time?

The Oblates have moved from their tiny beginnings in France to a congregation of more than 4,400 members spread throughout five continents. And as usual, you will find them working in regions where the poor are struggling to survive ... places like Kenya, Peru, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. And there always seems to be a need for more service in our country as well ... from the vast north to the homeless on the streets of our major cities.

As part of the celebrations of 150 years since his death, Oblate Mission Travel has organized trips to Kenya and Peru (details on Page 6) to give supporters the opportunity to engage in a missionary experience.

To offer just a bit of the flavour of these missionary excursions, this issue presents some stories of past trips, experiences and emotions recorded by some of the missionary participants.

Emotionally, much can be packed into two or three weeks ... from experiencing the joy of young children in the classroom to the tragedy of a mother sharing a boat ride down the river, struggling to get her deathly-ill infant to a hospital.

It is life lived at its fullest and Canadian Oblates are in the middle of it, following St. Eugene's call. We can only guess if this is how he had envisioned it.

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators

Christmas in Kenya

BY JIM FIORI, OMI

KENYA – This is my first Christmas in Kenya and I am profoundly aware that I am far removed from family and friends. I am more accustomed to celebrating Christmas in the more remote areas of Northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

These last few months have been a time of transition. I am becoming accustomed to the place, the schedule and what is expected of me. I came with the understanding that my principle focus would be formation. We have eight candidates that are asking to join our community. My responsibility is to help them on their vocational journey. They are studying philosophy. They normally stay here for three years and then go to South Africa for their novitiate year followed by a year of theology.

A few days ago I was asked to be the superior of the mission, so once again I am thrust into leadership. We are not a big group (seven) but it is an added responsibility. We don't have the luxury of personnel so I will have to continue with formation.

As I write this we are preparing for the visit of the Provincial





and team from OMI Lacombe Canada. It is an exciting time for us here because our very first Kenyans will make their final (perpetual) vows as Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. This is an indication that we are coming of age. Within the year one of them will be ordained a priest. The other a brother. Next year two others will be following suit. With this influx the mission will grow not only in numbers but also in mission and ministry.

Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus into our lives. We recall the historical event of his birth in Bethlehem, not too far from here. I am aware the surroundings are probably similar. Certainly parts of Kenya are very arid, not unlike Israel. I am aware of the many incredibly poor people, many of whom don't have the basics for life. It was to people like them that He came to allow us to know that we are loved by God, that we too are welcome and wanted in the Kingdom.

I struggle with how to convey this good news to these people. I am in so many ways powerless and helpless. I don't have the ability to change the political system that perpetuates the

situation and in many ways is the source of the problem. We struggle to make ends meet for ourselves. I don't have the ability to hand out cash at the gate. I don't have the money and I am not



sure it is the best way to help the people so it is incredibly difficult to tell a mother with her children who are hungry or sick that I can't help you.

We have over-extended our charity to the point we struggle ourselves. We have almost doubled the size of our garden in the hope that we can produce most of our own vegetables. So far it seems to be working. Actually we are able to give some to our staff who are themselves poor. Our cook, for example, lives in the slums with her two children with no water or electricity, so being able to take home some food is indeed gift. This is certainly a part of my poverty. Every time I go out people stop me, asking for a handout. They believe that all white people have money. Unfortunately I don't.

I am also aware that if I give something to one there will be a long line at the gate. How do you choose whom to help? As I head out to celebrate Christmas this year, I am doing so with people for whom Jesus is all they have. I am humbled by their gratitude and generosity. I still have memories of an old woman who during the collection at mass came up to me and gave the only thing she had, an egg. She certainly needed the egg for herself far more than either God or I, but this was her gift. I received the gift because I had to. My only response was tears. It seems to me these people proclaim the "Good News" to me.

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Oblate Mission travel news

Join the adventure of an Oblate Mission Travel trip in 2011!

For two weeks in July, we will trek across Peru as we explore the work of the Oblates on the coast in Lima, the Andes and on the Napo River in Santa Clotilde. Maurice Schroeder, OMI (Father Moe) will be our spiritual director, host and guide. If you can keep up with him and all his energy, we promise a lifetime of memories and a rich experience in the grounded missionary work the Oblates share in Peru.

If an African adventure is calling instead, perhaps you would be interested in a September safari (Swahili for “voyage”) to the slopes of Mount Kenya, where the Oblates have been missioning for more than a decade to the tea growers and workers of the highlands. In this lush countryside, you will experience the joy of the Kenyan people, who, in their poverty, have the faith that it is the love of God that sustains them. Our spiritual director, Ken Thorson, OMI, (vocations director for OMI Lacombe Canada), will lead a group of lay missionaries from the rural Meru lands to the slums of Nairobi on this three-week mission experience.

Is the Holy Spirit calling you to Peru or Kenya? For more information, please contact Neysa Finnie at 604-736-3972 or nmfinnie@yahoo.com or Teresa teresa@nfinnie.com.



Gift Payment Option

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On the way to Nairobi

BY CHRIS RUSHTON, OMI

When Robert Laroche, OMI, and I were in Kenya, we had a great visit at our pre-Novitiate house in Meru. The compound is comfortable. The chickens tend to over-run the area, but that's nothing, because the cow tends to dominate. She is very necessary ... she provides milk for breakfast. So we had a great meal and a meeting in our house. Because it was winter, we had to muffle ourselves – with blankets, and scarves, and mittens. But I think this helped the meeting because we were kind of “muffled”, which meant that we couldn't really speak out too much!

We woke early the next day to get back to Nairobi. Our noble Superior took us to the market to get a taxi, and as a true Oblate he bartered for the cheapest (at 5 in the morning, the cheapest is not always the best choice!)

So we four Oblates took off in the dark but what we didn't know was that there was another taxi driver who wanted to take us, the more expensive one. Revenge can be so sweet! We were travelling, enjoying the scenery as the sun was coming up, when we were stopped by the police. They wanted to see our papers. I was rather indignant. Why would they want to see my papers? I hadn't done anything.

We were told there were four foreigners without proper documentation and every taxi was being searched. It appeared we might be the ones. At one point the police chief, after much scrutinizing of our documents, asked about our occupations. I said we are Roman Catholic priests. The chief threw up his arms and immediately apologized for “inconveniencing” us. We may have looked like rogues, but this man was so gracious. He apologized for the inconvenience.



Chris Rushton, OMI and Alfred Groleau, OMI

Later, we discovered that it was indeed revenge. The other taxi driver wanted to drive us and by calling the police, he slowed our driver down so that instead of five trips to Meru from Nairobi, he would only be able to make four.

Our trip was otherwise uneventful, but beautiful. To see the rising sun over the mountains, to watch the children walking to school at 6 a.m. with shoes in hand so that when they arrived at school their shoes would be clean ... to see people out in the fields in just dawn light, was so amazing. But I think the greatest experience was the welcoming, the hospitality. Wherever we went, there was always a meal, always a welcome, and it did not matter how many were in the family. Everything was shared.

Kenya is a beautiful country, but more importantly, so are the people. I was blessed to have been there and to have experienced such openness and hospitality. It was a true gift to have been sent by our OMI team and to have experienced the warmth and welcome of the people of Kenya.

Our men in Kenya are really stretched. We have nine pre-novices and with four in the scholasticate God is truly looking after our future. But at the moment that means our professed men have many demands on them. Please pray for our mission, and all of the members.

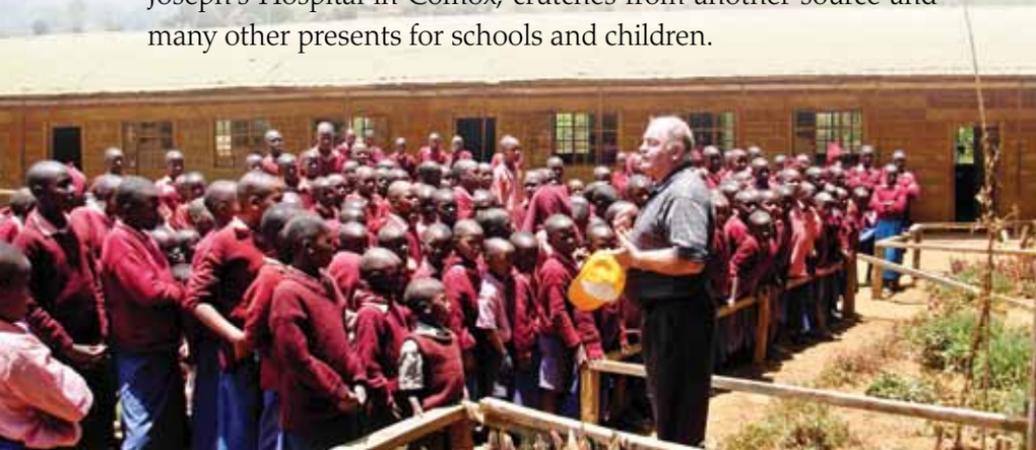
Returning to Kenya

BY KEN FORSTER, OMI

Oblate Mission Travel afforded a group of Canadians a brief opportunity to share the life of the Kenyan people. I was especially eager to participate as it was my first chance to visit my Oblate brothers and Merian friends since I left the Kenyan mission in 2006.

We experienced the great hospitality of the mission in providing very tasty and fine foods. Martha, my former cook at Igandene, is now the cook at the parish center Kionyo. She said with pride that she had even taken "Food Preparation Courses" in Meru town. Her salads with beautiful fresh vegetables were always a delight. We were especially grateful as we realized in other parts of the country a serious drought, as I had never experienced in my decade in Kenya, put great pressure on food prices and threatened the lives of millions of people.

This publication is now called "Oblate Spirit". Thanks to the great men serving in Kenya that Spirit was very evident. The good work is continuing both in formation work with young candidates as well as in pastoral, education, health and development efforts. We were received at our Formation House in Nairobi and it felt like old times, carrying 150 pounds of gifts through customs – a couple of microscopes and an instrument sterilizer from Providence Health Care in Vancouver; medical supplies from St. Joseph's Hospital in Comox; crutches from another source and many other presents for schools and children.



I was pleased to see how competent our new Congolese Oblates, Didace and Faustin, are in Swahili. They are also growing more fluent in English at the same time. How I envy the gifts of others! To prove that I wasn't totally a failure in language I attempted to connect with a few short sentences and prided myself in still being able to preside at the mass in the Kimeru language.

The people are being fed spiritually. A new prayer house is about to spring from the growth and there was even talk of splitting into two parishes.

What a joy to see the continued development of the mission! Now one of our Merian candidates is professed as an Oblate Brother sharing in the ministry. The water project was completed after nine years of struggle. The work is still before them to improve the water flow to all members but it was very rewarding to me to visit the Giumpu Tank (the last tank of Kaburia Line, 10.5 km from the intake) and be greeted by the song and laughter of the residents of that area; to see the water flow into the tank and to witness the vegetable gardens planted all over the hillsides.

We visited the schools, the HIV/AIDS centre. What a joy to visit the bakery and find that Jane Simon is now the manager of the CWA (Catholic Women's Association) Bakery. The women are now competently managing the co-operative enterprise.

In a short visit I was unable to see all those I hoped to meet, but was grateful none the less.

I thank Douglas Ikunda for the tea and a fine visit. Here we have this man in his 30s, filled with nothing but gratitude and hope. He received a loan from the Oblates 10 years ago to buy tea seedlings for the land he inherited from his uncle. The loan is now paid and Douglas will make about \$2500 this year. He is hoping to buy a cow.

These visits really do put our lives in perspective.



Douglas Ikunda

The stuff of dreams

BY JO-ANNE ALLISON

PRINCE GEORGE, BC – A trip to Kenya to visit the Oblate Missions was a childhood dream come true. I was one of 11 Canadians that had the privilege of travelling through Kenya with Neysa Finnie of Oblate Mission Travel and Ken Forster, OMI, who was returning to Africa for a visit.

Anyone who has travelled knows the difficulty of obtaining glimpses of life as locals live it. However, because we were there with the Oblates, people were more than generous. They opened their hearts to us, allowing us to discover what everyday life is like for the Kenyan people.

The Oblate priests and seminarians took the time to explain their mission in Kenya and their hopes for the future. We were wholeheartedly welcomed into their community activities. The spirit of solidarity expressed and lived by the Oblates in Kenya is diffused into all they do and towards everyone with whom they work.





In Kionyo, a small village on the slopes of Mount Kenya, we became a part of the community. We visited the Catholic Women's Co-op Bakery, we met with the local HIV/AIDS support group, we

visited day schools, dispensaries and the new HIV/AIDS clinic.

We spent a delightful afternoon visiting Anastasia, talking about life, about our children and about our hopes for the future. Boundaries of race, culture and geography were truly bridged that day.

When I recall my trip, I can almost smell the dusty Kenyan air. Kenya was going through one of the worst droughts in its history and the rusty red clay soil was a fine powder that covered everything. For missionary travellers like us the beautiful sunny days were a joy, but the clear blue sky was not such a delightful sight for residents who were praying for the rainy season to commence.

When I think of Kenya I think of a kaleidoscope of colours – the red earth, the blue sky, the yellow sun, the tangled brilliance of the clothing people wore, the green of an irrigated garden, and the purple flowered jacaranda trees we saw on the drives to and from Nairobi. And I think of music in all its forms – the pulsing radio music on the matatus (public transportation), the welcome song the boys sang for us at the Theralynn Orphanage in Meru, students singing in schools, women singing as they walked down the road, and voices raised in joyful praise at mass. And the silence – the calm of prayer, the deep stillness of the misty mountains at daybreak, and the peace of all the grace-filled moments we shared with the Kenyan people. Kenya is all these things and much, much more.

Thanks to the Oblates and Oblate Mission Travel, I have much to dream about – I have been to Africa!

Talking to strangers

BY JO-ANNE ALLISON

PRINCE GEORGE, BC – Recently, a CBC Radio program delved into the ‘lost art’ of talking to strangers. Sure we read and contribute to blogs, heed web advice and listen to live streamed programs, but when it comes to conversing with someone we don’t know – in person – most of us go to great lengths to avoid it. As I listened to this radio program I remembered my mother and her exhortation to “talk to all the lovely people out there.”

My Mom was a French Canadian living in a very Anglo part of Montreal. Her heavy accent might have prevented her lively and good-natured personality from brightening the day of many a stranger had she let it. But she believed in community and in community building – one conversation at a time. So as a child I endured many delays in what I wanted to do because my mother was busy talking to the milkman, the newspaper boy, the bus driver, the check-out clerk, the woman sitting next to her at the Doctor’s office, etc., etc. Sometimes



I was embarrassed at my Mom's attempts to converse, especially when she was brushed off by a snooty woman on the bus or by the waitress at Woolworth's lunch counter. To my Mom, though, these weren't occasions for being dispirited. She just kept trying to engage the next person she met in a conversation. It was her way of connecting, of letting people know they mattered and of affirming that we are all in this life together.

I experienced the power of conversing with strangers in a special way when I went on an Oblate Mission trip to Kenya. One day we toured the Oblate parish of Kionyo. We were visiting schools that Ken Forster, OMI, had been associated with during his 10 years in Kenya. This was Fr. Ken's first trip back after returning to Canada and I think he was a bit worried that the kids wouldn't remember him. But it was the same at every school. As we drove up we heard excited shouts of "Father Ken!" They remembered him and he remembered them!

As I watched Fr. Ken wade through the kids – greeting each one like an old friend – I was moved by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thinking of my Mom and her unwavering faith, I felt compelled to wade in too. I soon found myself shaking hands and enjoying the many questions students had about Canada. Later, the principal remarked "These children are very lucky. You have no idea how important it is to them to know that someone in Canada cares about them."

But, I was the lucky one. Talking to those children taught me that I was part of a brother/sisterhood that transcends culture, race and language. Once you start talking (and laughing) no one is a stranger! I also learned that a hand extended in friendship has the power to bring humanity back into a world awash with unconcern and indifference.

My Mom was right and because of her I was on the receiving end of smiles, stories, warm handshakes and friendship on the far-away slopes of beautiful Mt Kenya, talking to strangers. Thanks, Mom!

(Allison is the archivist in the Prince George diocese)

A taste of joy

BY TRINA BYSOUTH

I was one of the 13 fortunate people who had the honour of travelling to Kenya with Fr. Ken Forster, OMI. I had never been on a mission, so this was a learning adventure. The people that greeted us were so joyful. I never once saw one sad Kenyan.

In Meru, I had the privilege of visiting the slums, the prison, orphanages, and an all-boys group home.

The most memorable moment came when our group walked into a classroom for younger children. I had smiled at one student sitting at his table having a snack, and to my surprise he got up from his table, shook my hand and stood beside me the whole time we were there. How do you not love someone God created? It was incredible the joy these children had as they sang for us.

Some of the residents invited us into their homes. With the light from the door you could make out a very small living room with a bed, coffee table (with chicks under it) and a couch. Toward the back was a dirt floor with fire, no chimney, no proper venting. There were cracks in the walls and roof for the smoke to escape.

The all-boys group home was another amazing facility. My ears had not heard so many sweet voices singing as they did that day. It is sad to see the living conditions of some of these places, rows upon rows of bunk beds without blankets or pillows. I am thankful for this facility as they take the boys who are from the streets and give them a meal, a safe place to sleep and the opportunity to attend school.



In Kionyo, the people opened their homes to us and shared how they survive on a daily basis. Some of the women let us help with the preparation of the food. They shared stories and asked questions about our country. We even had the pleasure of them singing to us while they cleaned up after the celebration was over.

When we went to St. Eugene's Secondary School we were greeted by students lined up in the field. There was no need to introduce Fr. Ken – they all knew who he was. I remember watching my mother getting surrounded by a group of girls; they seemed to love her hair. All of a sudden many were touching my hair, eyebrows, necklace, earrings; it was an amazing feeling. Even a few of the braver boys were touching my hair, so I in return rubbed my hand over their head – they were so shy and full of laughter, and I was so full of joy.

We had the pleasure of going to Kitui, where we met the Kitui family that my family had been sponsoring for the past couple of years.

To meet the students we sponsor, Ruth and Joseph and their mother Magdalene, was a dream come true. It was emotional for me. To know that I am making a difference in someone else's life halfway around the world, so they can better themselves, is an incredible feeling.

We saw their home, a tiny place where five people live in a small room. There was a separate building with a fire pit to prepare the food.

It upsets me to see people live like this, when we live in such a world of excess. These people are so joyful, they appreciate what God has given them, and every day is a good day.

We in Canada have so much to be thankful for, but we take so much for granted!

One foot in the grave

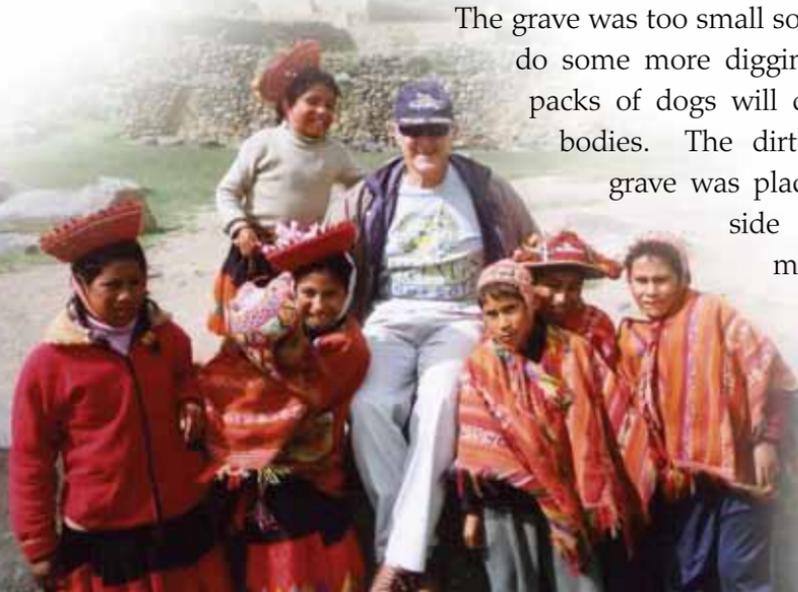
BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

PERU – It was a beautiful sunny afternoon and I was in an area where many homeless families were living in shacks. I went to visit an ailing man and to my surprise found the poor man dead as a doornail.

I went first to the police and reported the man's death. Early the next day, and with the pickup truck, I went looking for some men to help me remove the body. We had to go to the morgue to pick up a box. It was heavy, made of iron and the stink was enough to drive a mule crazy! Blood stains were everywhere and God only knows whether the box was ever washed.

We left the box on the truck and transferred the body by using a dirty bed blanket from the poor man's bed. It seems the blanket had not been washed ... since the "Flood"! I got permission to have the poor fellow put into a hole in an area for the poor. No one knew his name. He was just an 'unknown' ... but not to his Creator!

The grave was too small so we had to do some more digging because packs of dogs will dig up the bodies. The dirt from the grave was placed to one side and the men placed the body on top of it.





Meanwhile, kids and dogs showed up. The children were watching the process when suddenly the left arm of the dead man flung out of the blanket. The kids and dogs took off like a rocket. Even the men digging got scared.

We put the poor fellow in the grave covered with his blanket, said a prayer and buried him. One of the men made a little cross from two pieces of wood found in the trash. Then we returned the iron box to the morgue with some added blood stains. I had to pay \$3 for the grave and that was that. Once home, I took 14 showers ... just in case!

Another day I gave Holy Communion to a dear lady in her late 80s. I noticed a high black trunk in the corner of her room and said to her, "I see you are packed for your trip!" She answered, "Yes, I am ready to go." She went to her real home two days later.

Another day I got a call from a young nurse asking me to go see her father – a doctor. I knew the man. He was my doctor – never charged me one red cent and he was very kind and good with many people, especially the poor. He had a hard time breathing but he could hear very well. And what did we talk about? Why death, naturally!

Being a doctor he had seen many patients die and he was being realistic about his own death. I made several visits to his bedside and found him in good cheer. Within three days he went Home!

A word to the wise should be sufficient..."don't invite me to your home!"

One day the president of a senior citizen's group asked if I would give a 'talk' to them.

"What will be the theme?" she asked.

I said, "I don't know but once I get there the theme will come to me." And it did!



About 80 elderly women and men were present. I saw faces that express a certain history of their lives as each face is priceless. Then I announced the theme - Death! They all looked at me in a questioning manner. I started by mentioning that most of us present already have a foot in the grave – including myself – and they all burst out laughing.

Their half-built centre is only three blocks from the city graveyard. While speaking, my theme was ‘interrupted’ by a big brass band. Glory be to God! Here there were two funeral processions slowly on their way to the graveyard and the music was so sad to one’s ear.

I spoke of the golden years, when human life is ending and a time to make amends, to pardon those who may have wronged you and to ask pardon for the wrong one did. God is giving us ample opportunities to make good use of the little time left.

I stayed with this group for 90 minutes and before leaving I said: “I, too, have a foot in the grave but because I am forgetful, I don’t know whether it is the right foot or the left one!” Laughter!

I enjoyed being with this group, their sense of humour, their approach to their natural ending and not being afraid of death. One should not wait for death but rather death should wait for us. Be happy. After all, we are going to our real Home ... hopefully!

It works!

BY ROSEMARY LUTTER

On our final day in Peru, I offered Joe Devlin, OMI, my remaining Peruvian money. He accepted graciously.

“But Father,” I said, “it’s only \$100.”

He replied, “In Peru, even a hundred dollars can make the difference between life and death.”

That same evening, while we were relaxing and socializing, Fr. Devlin, without a word to anyone, went out into the fog-filled Lima night, to give the money to three families in need.

I was deeply touched when he mentioned this to me later. I really felt that not only was my money in good hands, it went directly and immediately to people in need. This works for me.

(Lutter was a member of the Oblate Mission Travel trip to Peru)

Struggling to survive

PERU – Joe Devlin, OMI, shared a story about Jacky Alanoca. He said she earns about \$5 a day selling candy on buses and works long hours. She has been taking care of her two sisters and brother (pictured) since their mother abandoned them.

“When I first knew her, she was three months behind in paying the rent and was about to be evicted. She was fortunate enough to find a house to occupy without paying rent, but committed to minding the place and paying the water and electricity. What she earns is barely enough to feed the family. Her sisters and brother are going to school and need money for bus fare, clothes, books, etc.”



Joe
Devlin,
OMI

Peru visit

BY RANDY SMITH

HINTON, AB – My wife Ginnie and I decided to participate in the Oblate mission trip to Peru, feeling it would be a great experience, and it definitely was a calling from God.

During our planning stages we contacted Fr. Maurice (Moe) Schroeder, OMI, in Peru and he mentioned that the hospital at Santa Clotilde was in need of mild painkillers, vitamins, mosquito nets, etc.

Paula Nolan, a fellow parishioner at Our Lady of the Foothills in Hinton, AB, decided to join us and our priest (Fr. Brian) insisted we give presentations to inform the parishioners where we were going and what they could do to help the mission trip.

During my presentation at mass I mentioned what was requested, and during the three-week period before we left the people of our church community donated \$4,200 dollars in cash. Two medical clinics in Hinton donated several cases of Tylenol, vitamins and cough syrups. One of the local dental offices donated 80 toothbrushes and toothpaste and dental floss. A local pharmacy donated \$800 dollars worth of bandages, surgical gauze and tape.

We were overwhelmed with the response. My biggest concern was how we were going to get all of this to Peru. We had two large suitcases donated to carry the supplies.

We weren't sure what to expect upon arriving in Peru, so we prayed that first we would be safe during the travels and second that we be open to whatever was to happen. During the time we were there we travelled to all the Oblate missions across the country. We had long days and put on many kilometres by van, plane and train.

The part of the trip that touched me the most was the adventure into Santa Clotilde to visit the hospital where Fr.

Maurice and Fr. Jack McCarthy have been working for several years.

We flew from Lima to Iquitos and then boarded a small boat to travel on the Amazon for an hour, then boarded another boat to travel five hours up the Napo River.

On the way on the Napo we stopped at a small medical outpost to visit for short period of time. Father Moe and our group were well received. When we started this adventure we thought we would just be going to the hospital to visit it, stay for a couple days and then head back to Lima. Not so.

At the outpost there was a 10-month old boy that was very ill. The nurses there contacted the hospital in Santa Clotilde and they were told that the boat carrying Father Moe and the Canadians would be there shortly and that we could take the child to the hospital. So our quiet trip to visit the hospital was turning into a boat ambulance trip carrying a sick child and his mother.

On the boat the oxygen tank fell over and broke, and the intravenous stopped working. Fr. Moe was constantly checking on the child and learned from the mother that the young boy had not been baptised. Fr. Moe asked me for my drinking





water and baptised the child ... a very touching moment.

An hour and a half later we arrived in Santa Clotilde and stopped so the medical staff could take the child and mother to the hospital. A short time later we went to tour the hospital and were welcomed with applause. A small welcoming event was followed by drumming and dancing, after which we made a presentation to the hospital of the medical supplies we collected in Canada.

The next evening two boat loads of local people came to our home and served us dinner, and we presented the cash our parish donated to Fr. Jack for the hospital.

When I look back at our trip to Peru, I marvel at all the good work the Oblates have been doing and praise God for letting all this happen. I will continue to pray for Peru and all the people we have met and especially for all the work and that it is able to continue for years to come.

We were able to see first-hand what happens on the rivers and the hospital and medical outposts. We were able to see what the medical staff deals with every day. Unfortunately, the young boy passed away three days after we transferred him to the hospital. I pray that the young mother and father are blessed with God's love. I also pray that the hospitals and clinics in Peru are able to receive appropriate funding to continue doing their great work.

Life lessons in Peru

WATERLOO, ON – As president of St. Jerome’s University in Waterloo, David Perrin, OMI, has an intimate view of the Beyond Borders program.

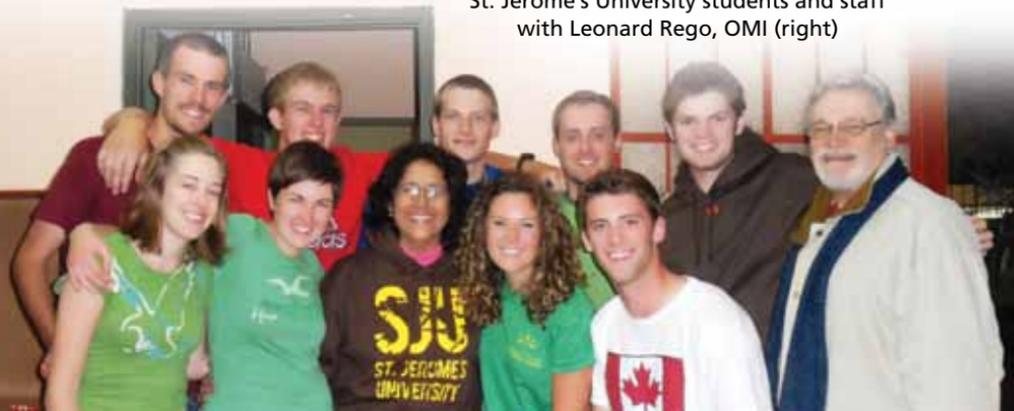
As part of the program, a group of students from St. Jerome’s recently completed a service-learning trip to Peru, where they visited several Oblate missions. The objective was to provide students with an exposure to a number of issues relevant to today’s global society.

“The Beyond Borders program opens the students to new ways of seeing the world and how other people meet the daily joys and challenges of life,” said Perrin. “Having an extended cross-cultural experience ultimately opens up the student to difference ... a different way of viewing the world from their own, a different set of values, and a different appreciation of what is important in life.

“This typically leads to a self-assessment of one’s own values, ways of doing things, and cherished pre-conceptions about life. We find that, in the end, the student ends up doing a lot of soul-searching – sometimes painfully so. They are challenged to dig deep and think about the big questions of life.

“Students assess for themselves what is important in life and take that learning into their own future in a myriad number of ways. A lot of our students return with a profound sense of freedom about who they are and what they have to offer the world.”

St. Jerome’s University students and staff with Leonard Rego, OMI (right)



Beyond Borders, a three-credit program, promotes living life in a way that is both meaningful and valuable as an aspect of responsible global citizenship. The program is designed to help students develop leadership skills for a changing global society, become aware of social justice, and gain valuable experience volunteering with development organizations at home and abroad.

Mission to New Orleans

BY MIKE DECHANT, OMI

EDMONTON, AB – The major initiative of the Oblate Youth Ministries Team for this school year is the formation of the Mission Teams to New Orleans. It was an exciting fall as we met weekly with teams from the two Catholic High Schools in St. Albert.

The Youth Ministries Team will accompany a Missionary Team of students and staff and parents to reach out to the parishioners and neighbours of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, an Oblate parish in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The trip will include some physical work to respond to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, working in an area where 70 per cent of the families lost their homes. While Katrina has fallen from the media, the need to rebuild is great.

Sharing will be a primary theme. The groups will share faith through the Sunday liturgy of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, share stories during visits to the neighbouring schools, share food in the Cajun traditions and culture of Louisiana, share friendship with strangers we haven't met yet and share 'hearts' because we enter into a space of blessing and goodness and grace.

École Secondaire Sainte Marguerite d'Youville (ESSMY) left for New Orleans on Feb.5 – the beginning of the second school semester. St. Albert Catholic High School goes during the Spring Break.

(Dechant is a member of the Youth Ministries Team)

Imagine Project

BY KEN FORSTER, OMI

VANCOUVER – Last year we launched a new initiative to reflect what our Catholic ministry should or could be in the inner city of Vancouver. We have engaged a greater number of people in our efforts and have seen significant progress both toward community building within the parishes and our goal to develop an old school as an intergenerational family centre.

Functional and active committees have been established for service within the church community and also for outreach. Our social committee has worked hard in planning community events (garage sales, bake sales, etc.) to assist the fund-raising. We have raised \$40,000 just from within our small parishes, through events and mail-outs.

A second independent effort at fund-raising for the centre's renovation has brought our total to \$140,000. This is about a third of what we need. The building experienced extensive water damage. More than \$50,000 has been spent in demolition and putting on a new roof. The non-functioning old boiler has been removed. Renovations are especially needed in the basement auditorium including electrical, plumbing and a heating system for the whole building.

We also need a well-equipped kitchen if the facility is to serve well. We are very encouraged by the response to date and know that it is possible to develop a



centre that will enable us to become a welcoming community in the neighborhood and partner with different organizations to have programs available to support family life and individual spiritual growth as well.

I am still involved with promoting Metro Vancouver Alliance, a broad-based alliance encompassing all faiths, unions and non-profit organizations. This alliance will exercise a power to move our society to respond to the needs of the marginalized. We hope to hire a trained organizer in 2011.

We held our third annual Gourmet Dinner to assist the Kenya Mission and sent almost \$10,000 to MAMI. We offer heartfelt thanks to all who support this effort.

(If you would you like to be part of the goal to create a Centre of Welcome in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, cheques can be designated "Sacred Heart Church Imagine Project", 525 Campbell Ave, Vancouver B.C. V6A 3K5. You will receive a tax receipt for the gift you give.)

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Oblate Spirit

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