

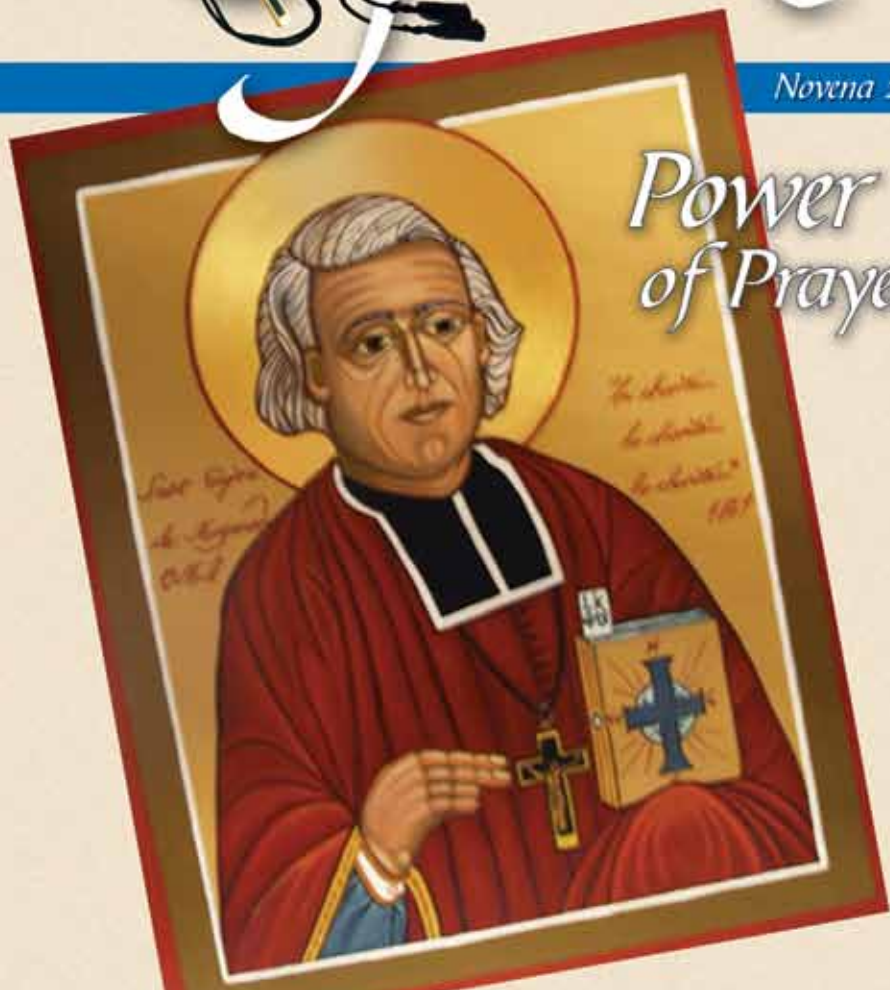
AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

Oblate Spirit



Novena 2011

Power
of Prayer



Many ways to pray



Many people have experienced the power of prayer in their lives. Because we chose *Power of Prayer* as the theme for this issue, we invited a few Oblates and Oblate associates to share some of their experience with prayer. We were both surprised and intrigued with the responses.

Prayer can obviously take many forms, including artistic production such as the icon of Oblate founder St. Eugene de Mazenod that appears on the cover of this issue.

Iconographer Suzanne Massie Manchevsky, an Oblate Associate from Arnprior/Galilee in Ontario, created the icon to celebrate the 150th anniversary of St. Eugene's death after a conversation with Jack Lau, OMI, the Animator of Spiritual Life at the Galilee Centre in Ottawa.

"She asked if there was an icon of St. Eugene, and I said there was only one of a young saint, but that it did not look like him," explained Lau. "When I mentioned the 150th anniversary of his death/birth into heaven, she expressed interest (in developing an icon).

"We went together to the provincial archives at St. Paul's University in Ottawa and looked at photos, books and DVDs. Then the Holy Spirit went into high gear and she was inspired. We both felt an older Eugene was coming forth that expressed the passion of mission while at the same time one who experienced the hardships of life."

"God works in wonderful ways," Manchevsky said. "The mystery of iconography can speak to the heart and take you to a quiet place. We're doing that with a paint-brush in our hands."

Yes, it is just another way to pray.

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators

Lost and found

BY MARK BLOM, OMI

SOUTHEND, SK – An outstanding response to a prayer of desperation occurred last year.

I became pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish when Raymond Lemay, OMI, could not return from his holidays in Quebec because of poor health. So I did not know about all the office matters and had to figure things out as I went along.

The parish had a seldom-used bank account that had become inactive and was sent to the Bank of Canada as an unclaimed balance. I was in the process of trying to recover the balance that was listed in the name of our parish in the Canada Gazette when I learned the money had been claimed by another party.

The Bank of Canada told me I had to provide proof that we were the rightful owners of the account. One of the problems I had was the absence of any papers that showed the missing account number. Without a bank statement, returned cheque or bank document showing the name of the parish and the inactive account number, there was little hope of retrieving the money.

After that discouraging phone call to Ottawa I leaned back in my squeaky office chair, looked up at the ceiling stained by the smoke of thousands of Fr. Lemay's cigarettes and said this prayer: "Father Lemay, you have to help us!" I should mention that Fr. Lemay had passed away earlier that year at the age of 90.



Mark Blom, OMI



As I helplessly looked upwards for a few minutes I decided to go through all of the old bank papers that were left in the office. As I looked through a pile of old returned cheques I examined a thin piece of onionskin paper with them. It was an old overdraft slip for \$75. On the slip were two bank account numbers, one for our savings account and the other for the dormant chequing account.

Within five minutes of praying for Fr. Lemay's help, God answered!

This single piece of paper was the only document in the whole office that linked our savings account with the lost account. The result was that the Bank of Canada issued a summons for \$9,500 dollars that had been fraudulently claimed by someone else.

Within six weeks we received a cheque and deposited the funds in our bank account. I have never seen the power of prayer occur so quickly and with such a satisfying result. Thanks be to God! That money will help us put new shingles on our church this spring.

Who's praying for me?

BY LAUREL LUTES

ST. ALBERT, AB – Over the years our supper table was the setting where we gathered with our four children and Grandma who lived with us. This was a time to share the activities of the day that were happening at school, in the workplace, in our church and the wider community.

Before sharing food, the family would pause in a spirit of thanksgiving to pray the mealtime grace. It was customary at this time to weave in the names of family and friends we knew who were experiencing difficulties, illness or the loss of loved ones.

One particular evening we prayed for my husband's work colleague who had cancer. Our children knew this man had a young family and it was evident by their questions and

Laurel Lutes (middle right) and her family



concerns that they knew the seriousness of this disease. Over a period of several months we continued to pray for Mr. Currie, who eventually did pass away.

A short time later our seven-year-old son became ill with meningitis. One particular day during his hospitalization he was experiencing much pain and discomfort. In an attempt to comfort him I said, "Christopher, lots of people are praying for you to get better."

Abruptly he demanded to know, "Who's praying for me?"

Sensing his curiosity I began to name the countless friends, parish families, classmates, teachers and neighbours who had told us they were praying for our family and our son's recovery.

Christopher listened attentively to this litany of names and then quietly said, "We prayed for Mr. Currie and now he's praying for me."

I realized in that moment that our son had grasped with childlike faith the beauty and power of our belief in the Communion of Saints that we profess at every Sunday liturgy. Our family and friends who have gone before us do indeed continue to intercede for us. Alive in God's embrace they now witness to Christ's continued healing and loving presence in our journey here on earth. Love never dies.

In time our son was restored to health. Our faith in the Communion of Saints has continued to be a gift in our lives blessing us with hope and love.

(Laurel Lutes is an Oblate Associate and a member of the Brother Anthony community in St. Albert)



Gift Payment Option

We now have the ability to accept donations by way of credit card! Please complete the gift form enclosed 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.



A peaceful ending

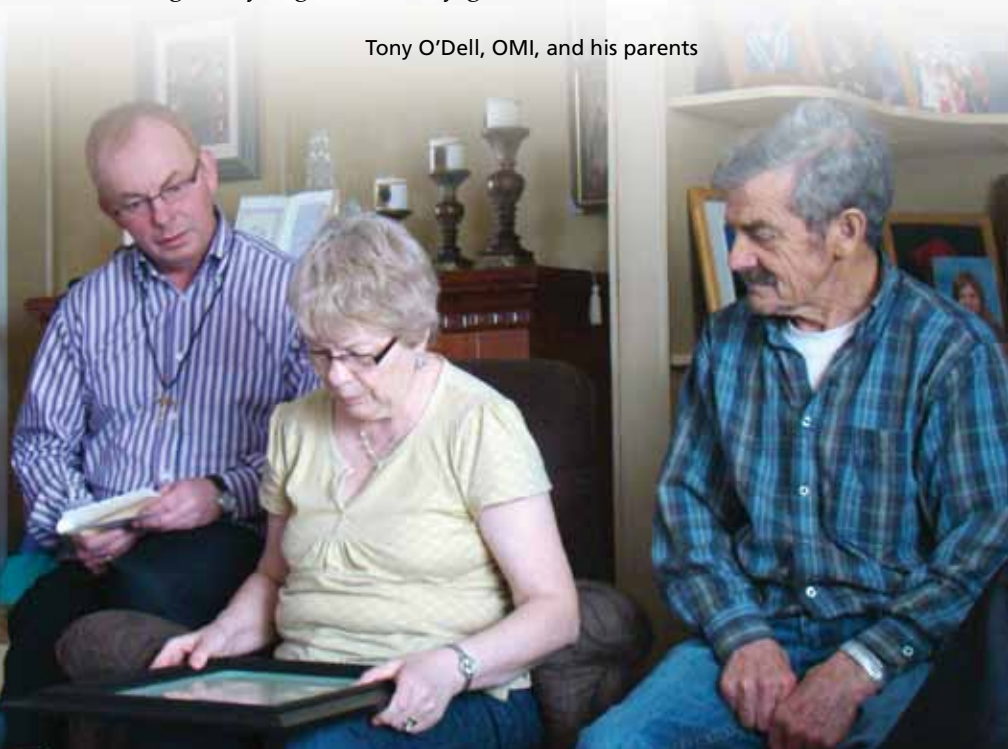
BY TONY O'DELL, OMI

NEWFOUNDLAND and LABRADOR – The power of prayer at work in our world is something remarkable to witness and experience. From a very young age, my parents and grandparents always explained to me that prayer was about communication with God, who really loved me. They encouraged me and my brothers and sisters to always make time in our day to have a chat with God, because we are His children, and it was important that He get to know us and we get to know Him.

My earliest memories are centered on the exemplary witness of prayer and a good relationship with God that my loving family provided.

I am the eldest of six children, born in the small fishing community of West St. Modest, Labrador. I remember spending many nights with my grandma, who lived next door to us

Tony O'Dell, OMI, and his parents



with her two unmarried sons. When they were off fishing I would stay with my grandmother to keep her company.

In the evenings, after the supper dishes were cleaned, it was time for night prayers. Grandmother would sit in a big chair in the kitchen by the wood stove; I would sit on her lap. I must have been about three or four at the time. Often I would drift off to sleep listening to her reciting her prayers. To this day, those memories give me a sense of tranquility and peace. I remember she always ended her prayers by asking God for a holy and peaceful return to Him.

Another significant experience of prayer was that every evening after supper and before the dishes were done, our family would kneel around the kitchen table to recite the rosary. Mom would always finish the rosary with a litany of thanksgiving and gratitude to God, entrusting herself, dad and us children to His care and protection. This has had a profound impact on me. These traditions continued until I left home for college, taking with me a deeply entrenched spiritual connection with our Creator.



Recently, I returned home to spend a few days celebrating my mom and dad's 50th wedding anniversary and, as in days long ago, I fell asleep listening to them praying the rosary from their bed. I thanked God for all that was good and the witness of His love in action in our world.

I recall that around the age of 10 or 11, I was a bit taken aback to learn that my grandmother had to go to the hospital for a few days, as she had the flu. On the day she was to be released from hospital, mom and dad went to pick her up.

They went to her room and found her sitting in the chair by the bed, her suitcase packed, her scarf around her neck and her prayer book open on her lap. She had returned to God.

When mom and dad told me, my first thought went back to her prayers for a peaceful death. God had granted her request and I would never doubt the power of prayer.

These early childhood experiences taught me the value and importance of keeping God as the centre of my life. Over the years, through the good and not so good moments, I have always found strength and comfort in knowing that God was walking with me, offering me the courage and strength I needed at all times.

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 new 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.

Prayer chain for our new leader

BY TONY O'DELL, OMI

LABRADOR WEST – In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the death of St. Eugene de Mazenod, the Friends of St. Eugene, an Oblate associate group from Labrador West, have undertaken a special year-long prayer project as a sign of support and encouragement for our new Superior General and Council.

Beginning Feb. 17, Fr. Lougen will symbolically visit many homes in Labrador West as his picture and a prayer card are passed from one Friend to another. Each associate will be in charge of the picture and asked to offer a daily prayer for seven days. At the conclusion of the week, the Friend of St. Eugene who has offered these prayers will send Fr. Lougen a card with a heartfelt note of encouragement and prayerful support for his ministry and administration of the congregation.

God has indeed richly blessed the holy charism of St. Eugene de Mazenod and his sons and daughters down through those 150 years. Today we are the ones who have been graced and blessed to hold the candle, the light, the flame that radiates from that charism. We are the ones invited and urged to pay it forward – “it” being the love, the goodness, the good news message so that hearts and lives will continue to be touched by the holiness of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Members of our faith family in Labrador West will be well aware of the Friends of St. Eugene prayer project as each Sunday they will witness the passing of the prayer card and the picture at the conclusion of our liturgy. It is our hope that parishioners



Tony O'Dell, OMI, and
Yvonne Tucker

will, through these exchanges, learn more about the charism of our founder and the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The heart of St. Eugene de Mazenod continues to beat strongly in this cold, northern climate far from the docks of Marseille where he once reached out to the poor and marginalized in his own unique way.

This prayer chain for our Oblate Superior General and Council will continue until February 17th, 2012.

O God, our merciful Father, assist and protect our Father in Christ, the Superior General of our Congregation. Look on him with love and strengthen him with every blessing. Open to him the storehouse of your wisdom, that he may bring out from it treasures both old and new. Help him to fulfill his obligations as our father and guide. Grant that through his ministry we may remain faithful to our mission and ever grow in that unity of mind and heart which our Founder wished for us. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Friends of St. Eugene



Encouragement and hope

BY JOANNE CHRONES

SASKATOON – I have always had a bit of a conflicting view about prayer. For instance, in the Gospel of Matthew (21:22), the writer says, *“If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”* I truly believed that. But I also have wondered many times why an all-loving God would look with favour on someone who prayed, or was being prayed for, and take no notice of one of God’s other children who had no one to pray for them. It didn’t make sense to me.

My inner conflict about the mystery of prayer became very real early in 2007. We were eagerly anticipating the birth of a new grandchild, due in mid-June of that year. We were shocked when my daughter Hillary went into early labour, and on March 18, gave birth to a two-pound, nine-ounce 14-inch beautiful redheaded baby girl, Alexandra Louise. At 28 weeks gestation, she was a ‘micro-preemie.’

As delighted as our family was to have this precious little one, we were all well aware of the complications facing a child born so early. One of the first things I did just before, and in the days following Alexandra’s birth, was contact my brothers and sisters in our community of faith to ask for prayers for her, her parents, and our whole family.

As I received email notes, cards and phone calls, I copied all the words of prayer, encouragement and support, and gave them to her parents to read as they kept vigil with Alexandra. We still have every good wish and prayer that was sent along, and read them (somewhat teary-eyed) from time to time.

Alexandra’s weeks in the neo-natal intensive-care unit were not without difficulties. Shortly after she was born, she had two setbacks common to premature babies. She had

a heart problem, which could have resulted in surgery (quite scary for such a small baby) but it was resolved with medication. She also had a brain bleed, but after a CT scan, it was found to be a low-grade bleed, with long-term results unknown.

On May 18, 2007, two months after her birth and still one month away from her actual due date, my daughter

Hillary and her husband Kevin welcomed home their growing baby girl. She weighed four-pounds, eight-ounces the day she was discharged. Alexandra has a tenacious spirit that has served her well. She has cerebral palsy in her legs, a result of the brain bleed. She has spent many, many hours at physiotherapy and in leg braces. But she can walk, and there are absolutely no other complications from her prematurity. She is very bright, articulate, feisty, and an absolute joy in our lives.

I still am confused at times about prayer. Did God intercede and look favourably on her because we were praying, while letting another baby, perhaps in the next incubator, not do so well because no one was praying for him or her? I don't think so.

However, I believe the prayers of so many were there to give encouragement and hope to our family. We felt so supported and cared for by a wide community of faith. At the



Alexandra's pre-school photo,
taken in September 2010

same time, I hope that the wider community praying for her was reminded of God's great love for all people.

As it says in Paul's letter to the Ephesians: *"Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."*

Our prayers for Alexandra's well being were certainly answered.

(JoAnne Chrones is an Oblate Associate in Saskatchewan)

Praying the rosary is a contemplative method of prayer. As a special gift we would like to offer you a Pope John Paul II rosary and booklet describing the 20 mysteries.

Pope John Paul II Black Bead Rosary

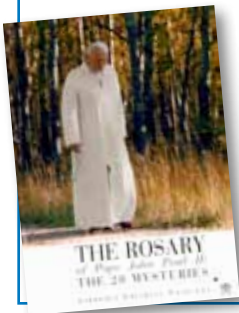
This distinctive commemorative papal rosary features a raised image of Pope John Paul II on the front of the centerpiece and his personal coat of arms on the back. The intricate silver-tone crucifix is modeled after the Pope's personal crosier, carried by him on his worldwide travels throughout his years as shepherd of his flock.



The Rosary of Pope John Paul II: The 20 Mysteries (accompanying booklet)

The Holy Father's devotion to the Blessed Mother was an inspiration to all who would join him in prayer. Two texts are given for each "mystery": one from Scripture and the other from our Roman Catholic faith.

Quantities are limited. Please indicate your request on the enclosed gift form.



The joy of running water

BY ROBERT LAROCHE, OMI

OTTAWA – In the late 1990s I was named as a pastor at St. Theresa Point, a remote mission in northern Manitoba.

The story I would like to relate is about an intense moment of

prayer in the winter of 2003 in St. Theresa Point. While there I was privileged to work with Sr. Claire Boucher, a Grey nun.

Sr. Claire had suffered a Skidoo accident while crossing the lake to attend a Sunday service. After the accident, she needed a three-month rest in the Montreal area before returning to the mission.

Being the dead of winter and with nobody living in her house, the water line froze. Anticipating her imminent return, I worked for two weeks trying everything I could think of to have running water. Living in an isolated area often means you don't have the tools or know-how to fix things. Plumbing 101 was not one of the courses taught at the seminary.

I remember being filled with anxiety while praying and asking the Good Lord to help me find a solution to our frozen water line before Sr. Claire returned. Every day I went to work on this project. I asked for advice and what I received was not encouraging.



Robert Laroche, OMI, is on the core leadership team for the province of OMI Lacombe

Finally, Sr. Claire's plane arrived and there was still no running water in the convent. By then I was desperate and depressed. What to do? Another week went by and still no success. Finally in desperation, I said to God, "Lord, just think of running water and we will have running water. Please Lord, think of running water." That night I went to sleep, discouraged.

During the night I had a dream on how I could fix the problem. Upon awakening the next morning, I not only remembered the dream but I was filled with renewed hope. After a quick breakfast I followed the intuition I had in the dream. Then we waited and the hours passed.

On the seventh hour, Sr. Clare was in her kitchen somewhat discouraged and yet she prayed: "Lord, if it is Your will that I have no running water until next spring, so be it. I am ready to accept Your will."

At that very moment she heard a strange gushing sound, and out came water into the kitchen sink. It was instant JOY.

As she was relating this story to me I had a lump in my throat and was on the verge of tears. Thank you, Lord. Thank you. The Lord told us he would never abandon us and no matter how great or small the problem, He is always by our side to answer a simple prayer.

Robert Laroche, OMI, serving in St. Theresa Point, MB



An answer to prayer

BY JOE DEVLIN, OMI

PERU – The first record I have of Indira Gonzales Quispe is dated July 11, 2006. At that time, she was 31 and her four children were 15, 13, 7 and 3.5 years old.

She had diabetes and had been going to the hospital three times per week during the previous two years. She had been living in Comas, which is on the North side of Lima, and had to travel for more than an hour to get to the hospital.

When she owed three payments of rent and was unable to pay, she found a place close to the hospital and moved there with her children. They had no furniture, so moving was not a big problem. However, in order to continue her dialysis treatment, she had to pay a monthly quota of 120 soles to keep up her insurance.

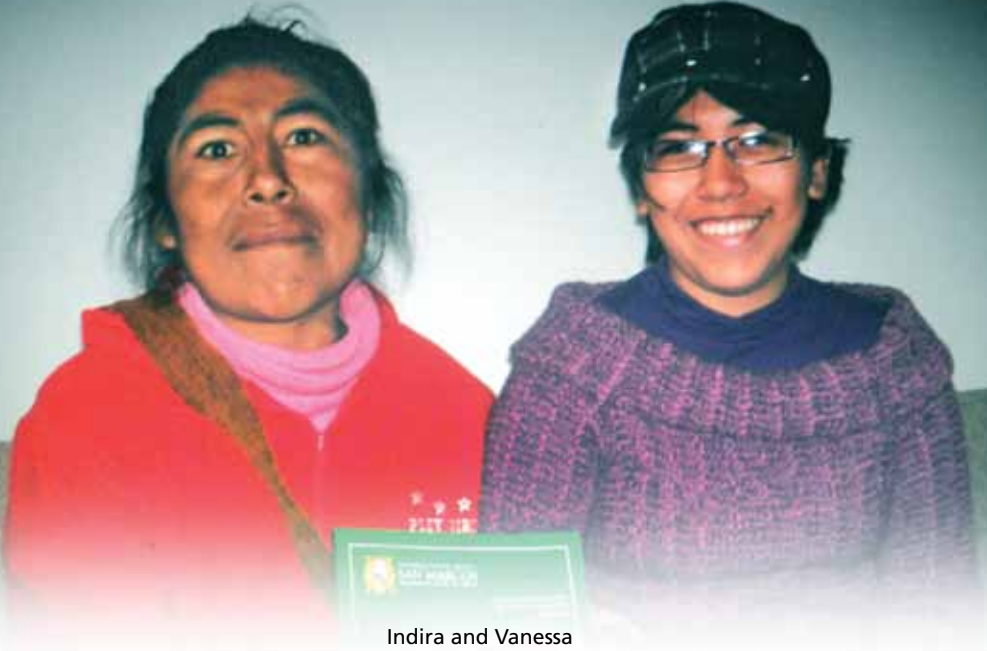
Her only source of income was from selling plastic bottles and paper she gathered at night from garbage bags on the streets. If the watchmen or garbage collectors caught her, they would confiscate what she had collected.

Because of the donations I received from benefactors in Canada, I was able to pay the insurance until July of 2010 when Indira had a kidney transplant. The new kidney did not function for seven days and Indira had to have her dialysis every day to keep her alive. The doctors were about to give up.

Indira went to the window and called down to her daughter. She told her daughter to phone me and ask for prayers.



Indira Gonzales Quispe



Indira and Vanessa

This was a real emergency and I took it seriously. The kidney reacted and the blood began to flow. Indira gave her testimony at a mass I celebrate for a prayer group in Lima every month.

In spite of the extreme poverty of this family, Indira's oldest daughter, Vanessa, was one of the few students admitted to a state University because of her high marks. She is working part-time to cover some of the costs of her studies. Indira still calls me occasionally when there is a special need.

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

Thoughts on prayer

BY PAUL M. HOWARD

MARKHAM, ON – Many of us began our prayer life as children in a typical way. Whether it was night prayer beside our bed, the family rosary, or grace before meals, all of these forms had the note of regularity. It isn't unusual that as we grew up we found this form of prayer less satisfying and we were easily distracted with a wandering mind. People either took a vacation from formal prayer, or searched out new modes.

Priests are not immune to distraction. Those who recite the Divine Office could easily find themselves reciting it with little attention, distracted or rushing to "get it in before midnight."

Fast forward to where I find myself now. Leading parish Scripture studies I am appreciative of a new "prayer" lease on life, by focussing on Scripture. As one deepens an understanding of Scripture through additional readings of scholar-commentators, I realized that many of the passages of the New Testament found their way into the Gospels and the letters of Paul, as liturgical hymns or prayers that evolved in the early Church. Some of the most familiar passages of Luke, the Benedictus of Zachary, the Magnificat of Mary, and the Nunc Dimittis of Simeon preceded Luke's Gospel by decades and were used as the community's prayer and in the mass form of the day.

That led me to *Lectio Divina*, (sacred reading of Scripture) and the focus and resting on a short passage. The key is not rushing it, but stopping on a phrase, word, or thought and staying with it, before moving on. No matter what level of expertise or



comfort, Scripture has a way of touching all of us. God's grace visits both the scholar and the novice.

At the risk of being too technical for some, I enjoy listening to and praying the readings of the day, daily

meditations, and the Divine Office via websites such as www.divineoffice.org. As one's comfort level rises with this form of praying, the next step is to move on to pod casts (think of them as taped or delayed radio programs) that flow from these websites. I find them helpful while walking, driving the car, and sometimes at night when I am unable to sleep. Sites like these allow me to keep the momentum of the liturgical life of the Church.

To sum up, prayer should have the note of daily regularity. Think of the ideal in exercise, of walking, cycling, or going to the gym on a regular basis. We likely make rounds of the various machines, not staying with one device for an hour workout on a daily basis.

Whatever form of prayer is helpful and satisfying is the goal. Don't be reluctant to explore different venues and methods. Whether you use a rosary, a favourite book of prayers, the Sacred Scriptures, daily Mass, Taize prayer, religious music, gazing on sacred art, there is joy in the form.

(Paul Howard is an Oblate Associate in Ontario)



Paul Howard at the Western Wall, Jerusalem

In your words:

A prayer of thanks

BY JANE OSWALD

CALGARY – I support the Oblates because of my life experience with this dedicated group of Christ’s servants.

As a child of six, I remember going to midnight mass at Queen’s House of Retreats in Saskatoon. My father had an uncle, Ed Lequiea, OMI, who was the director of Queen’s House for many years.

Fr. Ed and his mother (my great grandmother) would join us for Christmas dinner. He was a tall, large man, with sparkling eyes and a big, warm smile. My mother and father, Marg and Chuck Boskill, were retreat captains for the married couples retreat. I remember my parents spending many hours on the phone inviting and encouraging couples to participate in these weekend retreats. Even as a child I sensed that this was important work. And I thought Fr. Ed was really special because he was the head of the retreat house.

We attended St. Joseph’s Parish in Saskatoon and I fondly remember many Oblate priests there. However, Alex Shahun, OMI, stands out. I was a teenager in the 1970s when he served there. My mother had cancer and was sick, off and on, for five years. She died at age 48 when I was 17. Fr. Shahun

Fr. Shahun, OMI and my father, Chuck Boskill, watching a Stampeders Roughriders football game in Oct 2010



and Fr. Kuckartz, OMI, would come to our house with Holy Communion for my mother. They showed such kindness, compassion and understanding. Fr. Lequiea, Fr. Shahun and Fr. Kuckartz concelebrated my mother's funeral mass. They helped me see the hope, light and eternal happiness that waited on the other side of physical death.

Later in the 1970s I moved to Edmonton to study nursing. Guess who came a few years later? Fr. Shahun was building a church in a north Edmonton parish. In the early 1980s I followed Rob, my husband-to-be, to Calgary. Fr. Shahun and I again crossed paths. He was a pastor in our new parish of Holy Spirit. For the 22 years since then, I have been in awe of Fr. Shahun's dedication, humility, compassion, perseverance and unwavering service to others.

Fr. Shahun celebrated the 60th anniversary of his ordination as an Oblate priest two years ago. I'll never forget the love and pure joy expressed for Fr. Shahun at the celebration. Everyone who knows him loves him. Despite his age (he recently turned 90) and own health issues, he has continued to minister to the elderly and sick at the Colonel Belcher Facility. He serves the First Nations people on the Tsuu T'ina Reserve on the outskirts of Calgary, saying mass each Sunday, and also celebrates weekday masses at Holy Spirit Parish, St. Gerard's Parish and the Beverly Nursing Home. He celebrates funeral masses on the reserve when called upon. His week is full, giving to others ... and always with a smile on his face.

Fr. Shahun is one of the most giving, humble, holy, determined human beings I will ever know. His very presence brings comfort.

This is what the Oblates do. This is who they are. This is their mission and their ministry. This is why I am a supporter of the Oblates. Their love, kindness, service and example have made a difference to me and countless other souls.

May God bless Fr. Shahun and all the Oblates around the world in a very special way!

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Oblate Spirit

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