

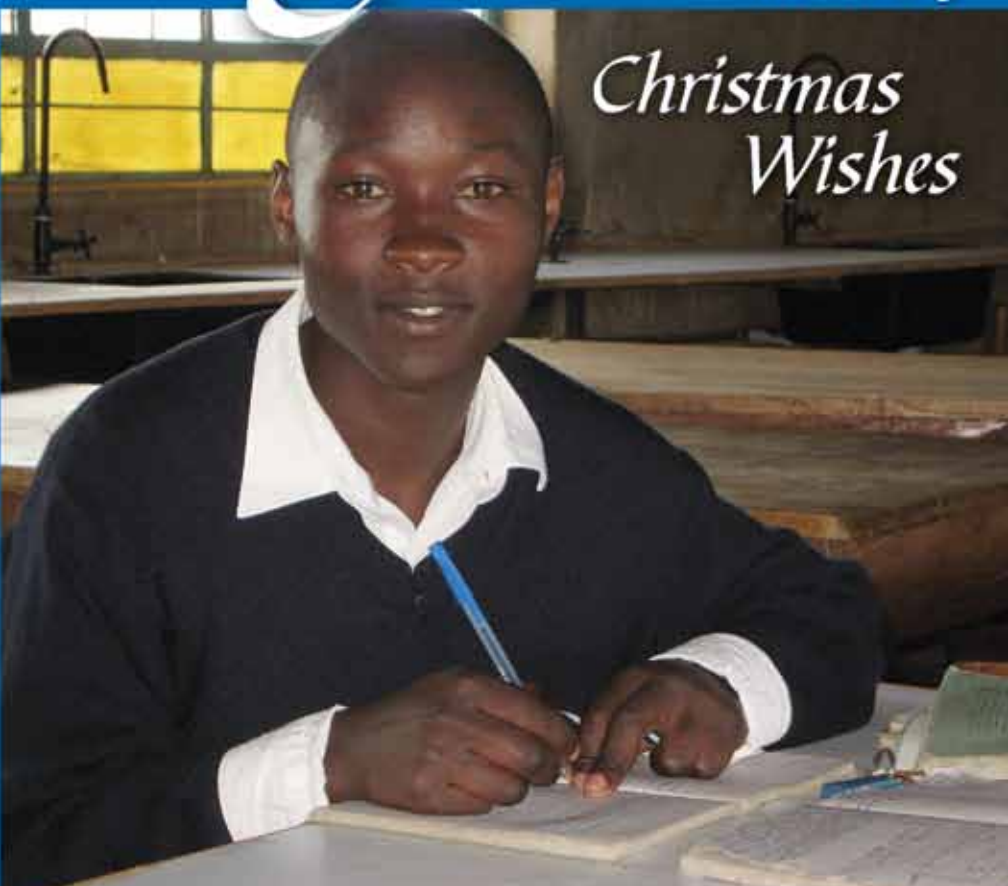
AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

Oblate Spirit



November 2013

*Christmas
Wishes*



We have a dream



Do you remember your Christmas wish list as a child ... or your children's Christmas wish lists? Remember their excitement when the Sears Christmas catalogue arrived? Many pages were usually marked, far beyond Santa's ability to comply.

Today, many children in North America have visions of iPods, iPads or other electronic goodies dancing through their heads. The less fortunate would settle for full stomachs and a safe place to lay their heads.

The children with whom we are connected through the Oblates fall into the latter category. Students in Kenya dream about stable desks and chairs, and someone to cover their school fees so they can actually attend classes.

Children in the high mountain ranges in Bolivia are happy to receive a snack and a small toy. And in the true spirit of Christmas giving, they've asked for yogurt to share with their parents and siblings.

As Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI, in Peru continues to build houses and beds, a heavy warm blanket would be a wonderful Christmas present. Or let us not forget the malnourished babies at the Santa Clotilde hospital in the Amazon.

While there are many needs in many places, these are a few we've identified that will assist our dedicated Oblates in making a difference in many lives.

May your hearts be warmed by the thought of that child, thousands of kilometres away, breaking into a smile.

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators



Christmas Wish List

KENYA

School: Desk	\$30
Chair.....	\$25
Fees: Primary.....	\$50
Secondary.....	\$150
Computer	\$150
Toiletries	\$20
HIV Support Group.....	\$200

BOLIVIA

Christmas packages.....	\$30
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PERU

Milk for malnourished babies....	\$15
Beds	\$60
Warm blankets	\$20



Dear Santa, this is Kenya calling... *please don't hang up!*

BY GERRY CONLAN, OMI

KENYA - At a recent seminar for leaders of child support services, I was given an update on *Orphans and Vulnerable Children* in Kenya. Officially, there are 2.4 million orphans, which is five per cent of the population. Of those, 47 per cent are the result of HIV/AIDS-related deaths of the parents. That's 1,128,000 million AIDS orphans, and many would also be infected with HIV.

So, what do we want for Christmas? More important than a nice bottle of red wine, we need scholarships to educate the orphans and vulnerable children in our communities. Some of our schools are also in dire need of new furnishings.

In Kionyo Parish, we also have an HIV support group that would like to restart in order to encourage each other. When another HIV sufferer comes to visit, they are more effective



Three students share two chairs

than priests coming to visit the family. The Oblates can bring prayer, the sacraments and encouragement, but, as Henri Nouwen once said, “the best healer is the wounded healer.” They want to restart the monthly meetings that used to draw people from great distances, and the cost of a meal is about \$200 to feed the expected 300 – 500 who attend.



THE STUDENT SINGS:

All I want for Christmas is a DESK with 4 legs! (\$30)

All I want for Christmas is a CHAIR with four legs. (\$25)

All I want for Christmas is my SCHOOL-OOL fees.

(Primary \$50, Secondary \$150)

THE TEACHER SINGS:

All I want for Christmas is some "necessity packs" for our girls.

(\$20)

All I want for Christmas is a compu-ter or two! *(\$150)*

THE OBLATE SINGS: *(no, we are not very good singers!)*

All I want for Christmas is lunch for our HIV Support group.

(\$200)

Even though you might be hiding under the blankets, the Oblates in Kenya hope you are doing well over there in Canada. We are doing well over here. Even amongst the challenges there are always many laughs. God bless you and thank you for bringing the light of Christ into the lives of our people here!





Christmas packages

BY CRISTINA RODRIGUEZ

BOLIVIA - In the next few weeks we will be celebrating Christmas, the coming of God made small child and powerless. God became one of us and gives us what we need most, the gift of faith, the best gift that we can have this Christmas. Therefore, Christmas is a time to believe, to increase the faith, but also a moment of solidarity, to intensify the witness of charity.

Are there any children in the world who do not dream in

life to have a toy and something special to eat at the feast of Christmas? All children have hopes and dreams, even those with disabilities. And everyone deserves a chance to realize their dreams.

We recall one of the messages of Christmas of John Paul II who said: "Today, I am reminded of all the children of the world: far too many children born without guilt doomed to suffer the consequences of conflicts. Save the children to save the hope of humanity."

The solidarity of generous people like you can change the lives of so many children who, regardless of age, physical condition or the colour of their skin, must do so in the face of adversity.

We in Bolivia are deeply grateful for the benefactors who, through AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI provide generous funding to prepare Christmas packages that offer unfortunate children the joy, hope, and love that Christmas brings.

This year we want to include yogurt in the packages, because last Christmas, in



Cristina Rodriguez



the true spirit of the season, the children asked for some to share with their families.

The difficult part is to arrive at these poor rural communities of Cochabamba, where we develop our ministries. Christmas is the rainy season here, so often the poor access roads truly become inaccessible routes. Travel to these communities involves many hours of travel, some by vehicle and others on foot.

But it is worth the effort. The reward is to meet these children and poor families in their communities, give them a snack and their Christmas packages, pray with them, asking God to reward the generosity of the benefactors, and emphasize the Christmas miracle, that God made man to save mankind.

Each face of joy, the excited cry of children as they descend from the mountains, every gesture of astonishment at the discovery of the toys, supplies and food, helps us forget the fatigue of long trips and fills us with happiness and positive energy to continue our work with them in their communities.

(Cristina is an Oblate associate working in Bolivia)



Peru wish list

MILK FOR BABIES \$15

Does anything tug at the heartstrings more than a newborn baby? How about a baby that is malnourished? Your contribution will help provide milk for malnourished babies at the Santa Clotilde hospital along the Napo River in the jungles of the Peruvian Amazon.

BED	\$60
BLANKET	\$20

How can one improve a house? By adding a bed, of course. How can one improve a bed? By adding a nice heavy warm blanket. Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI, has added beds and blankets to furnish the houses he has been building since 1981 in Chincha Alta, Peru. For \$60 you can supply a bed or for \$20 a warm blanket for that bed. A comforting thought – some one will rest more comfortably because of your donation.





The Ordination

Stephen Kiogora Muriungi, OMI

BY JIM FIORI, OMI
Kenyan Mission Superior

KENYA – It was a significant event in the life of Stephen Kiogora Muriungi, OMI, and another major transitional step in the life of the Oblate Mission here in Kenya. We now have two Kenyan Oblate priests.

The Oblate community gathered in Nkubu, Kenya, for Stephen's ordination. Nkubu is a small town at the bottom of the mountain from Kionyo, the eastern slopes of Mount Kenya, the site of our parish.

Those who have visited the mission will remember its busy



Stephen Kiogora
Muriungi, OMI



market. It is on the main highway (there is only one) between Méru and Nairobi. The Pius X minor seminary is nestled at the northern edge of the town.

As we followed the people to the rear of the property we discovered thousands gathered for the ordination of 12 men from the Diocese of Méru. Added to this group of 12 was our own Stephen Kiogora Muriungi, OMI. Presiding was Méru Bishop Salesius Mugambi, a good friend of the Oblates. It was the bishop of Méru who invited the Oblates to come to his diocese so it is quite fitting that he should ordain our men.

Significant moments in this celebration were when Stephen was called, by name, to the order of priest. In a strong voice and without hesitation he responded "I am willing with the help of God." The men took their places on a raised dais. The event was held outdoors as there is no church large enough to accommodate such a crowd.

After the bishop's homily the candidates prostrated themselves before the altar and we prayed the litany of saints, asking the entire body of Christ and the communion of saints to join us in this most precious moment. The bishop then laid hands on each, followed by all the priests present. There were in excess of 75 priests so this took some time. With our hands raised the bishop invoked the Holy Spirit to ordain the chosen men.

This was followed by the anointing of their hands with Sacred Chrism, the hands that will dispense the Body and Blood of Christ. At the offertory their families presented the chalices containing the bread and wine to the newly-ordained priests, who then gathered at the altar with the bishop and for the first time consecrated the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

As is the local custom, there were many speeches at the end of the service. I was honoured to speak on behalf of the

Oblates and was privileged to be one of the principal celebrants. The service took close to five hours. While this seems like an exaggeration for us in Canada, the Kenya people are quite happy to spend this time in prayer. They would feel cheated if it were otherwise.

After the ordination we journeyed to Kionyo for a reception at the parish. This was a time to gather particularly with the family and friends. Not unlike the biblical wedding banquet, a meal was served to all. Again there were more speeches, this time from the family and the parish leadership.



The following morning Fr. Stephen celebrated a mass of thanksgiving. The church was packed to overflowing. There was inspiring singing and dancing that in so many ways moved ones heart and soul. Even God cried!

It is unusual at this time for it to rain but rain it did. The people said it was a blessing. There is no doubt in my mind that the Lord was present. As I told the people when I spoke, "I'm sure I saw Jesus in the midst of the dancers rejoicing that Stephen is one of his priests."

Again at the end of mass there were speeches from the parish leadership. They expressed gratitude that one of their sons was a priest and an Oblate. They encouraged the young people to think seriously about becoming Oblates. Another feast was held.

We have not put our party clothes away. There is more to come. Brother Dionisius Ananua has just been called to the transitional diaconate. We are in the process of organizing his ordination. He, too, will be ordained to the priesthood. We





Oblates Stephen Muriungi and Jim Fiori with orphans

also have Brother Joseph Magambo who is a perpetually professed brother. Currently we have two men in the scholasticate (seminary) and one novice. We also have one pre-novice who has graduated with a BA in Philosophy and will enter the novitiate in February. As well there are five pre-novices and four postulants. It will not be long before the majority of Oblates in this mission will be Kenyan.

We are very mindful that this glorious event is in fact the fruit of the many people who have generously contributed to the formation of the Oblates. This is really the fruit of your generosity. We are grateful for your generosity. As God will never be outdone in generosity know that you will be profoundly blessed. Each time these priests and brothers touch the lives of others, God will know that you are a part of this Amazing Grace.

KISAJU: A new ministry for the Oblates in Kenya

BY JIM FIORI, OMI
Kenyan Mission Superior

KENYA – In 1841 Saint Eugene De Mazenod, at the request of a Canadian bishop, sent Oblate missionaries to Canada. This was the foundation moment of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate as an international congregation. From this initial expansion the Oblates have been in mission in some 67 countries. In 1996, at the request of the Bishop of Méru, the Canadian Oblates established a mission in Kenya.

Since then we have been successful in attracting vocations and recently ordained our second Kenyan Oblate priest. Our personnel are increasing and we are now able to expand our horizons.

Oblates Gideon Rimberia
and Seamus Finn





From 1996-2002 the Kionyo parish was the sole Oblate presence in Kenya. Young men began to knock at our door seeking to become Missionary Oblates. As a result in 2002 we opened a formation House in Méru. In 2007 we opened a second formation house and administrative centre in Nairobi. While there is some external ministry associated with the formation houses, the Kionyo parish was our sole parish and focus of our mission and ministry.

In May 2012 we ordained our first Kenyan Oblate. In June 2013 our second Kenyan Oblate was ordained. Another will be ordained deacon and priest in the coming months. The Oblate community is growing and we must expand our ministry.

In January 2012 the mission community met to discuss and discern our future. What's next? While there were many suggestions and possibilities, the community overwhelmingly favoured taking on a second parish, preferably close to our formation house in Karen (Nairobi). Initial overtures were made to the Archdiocese of Nairobi. With no positive response we approached the Diocese of Ngong. We have been welcomed. The bishop is ecstatic. At Christmas we visited one of the parishes that was being offered to us. It certainly met all our criteria but one; it is not close to the formation house. The bishop then suggested we look at another place that is much closer. We have said yes to Kisaju.

In the process of discernment one has to be truly in touch



with the Spirit. While we were disappointed in not being able to get a parish in Nairobi, it becomes very clear that this is not where God wanted us. Ngong diocese is probably the largest diocese in Kenya. It is also one of the poorest both in terms of finances and personnel. There are approximately 29 parishes in the diocese, most of which would have 20-30 outstations. In the parish we visited at Christmas it took us three and a half hours to get to the parish centre and then another two and a half hours to get to the furthest outstation. The people are poor, poor, poor. The Oblate mission is to be with the poor and those least touched by the church. It is becoming clear that if the Oblates belong anywhere in Kenya this is the place. I know our Founder would be very happy with this development.

At a meeting in Kitengelia on May 23 the bishop introduced us to the new parish committee and we were invited to begin ministry immediately, even if the parish was not officially erected.

On the morning of June 11, Mario Azrak, OMI, left for Kisaju. While his leaving was not marked by any significant fanfare, it was a significant and historical moment in the life and ministry of the Oblate Kenya Mission. We have expanded! We have begun a new undertaking in a new area of Kenya. The New has been born.

Kisaju is about an hour and 40 minutes southeast of

Nairobi. It is about the same distance from the Tanzanian border. There are no signs, no markers, and no buildings to identify the spot. The reality is we start “with nothing.” Oh, there are many people. At the place being proposed as the parish centre there isn’t much, a very small chapel that was intended as a kindergarten and a tin shack they use for the kindergarten. That’s it! It is semi-arid land. Like Jesus, there is no place for the missionary to lay his head. There are six or seven outstations that are intended to be part of this parish but only one of them has a church. There is no water or electricity.

It is clear this is where the Oblates belong. Many of the people are Maasai, one of the tribes that is least touched by the Gospel. There is much evangelization to do.

The first priority will be to build the Christian community.

A house has been found in Kitengelia that we can rent. With a place to stay the Oblates can come together as a community and begin the great work of making known the Good News.

There are many, many humanitarian needs, most of which have yet to be identified. Preliminary assessments indicate that

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



Gideon Rimberia, OMI,
assistant priest at Kisaju



there will be many needs. There is no infrastructure. We will need to construct a parish centre, church, offices, rectory and prayer houses.

In so many ways this is the poor helping the poor. We, the Oblates, do not have the financial resources to undertake this mission. At this time the Kenyan Mission has no source of income. While we are actively trying to become self-reliant, we are a very long way from achieving it. It will be many years before Kisaju will be able to be self-reliant. We will again have to depend on the generosity of Christians helping Christians.

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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.

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