



**Oblate Missions Report**  
**May 6-8, 2008**





*AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI* is the heart of fundraising efforts being made for the missions and ministries of the OMI Lacombe Canada Province.

*“The world we are called to love and minister within is radically changing. Like Jesus walking along the borders of Samaria, we too are standing before different understandings of culture, ethnicity, religion and gender, invited into a new conversation. The world no longer works in the same way. Old borders are breaking down even as new boundaries are emerging. Our task is to be missionaries... where, like Jesus, we are invited to ‘cross over’... so as to enter more fully into the life of the other, particularly the lives of the poor.” (34<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, 2004)*

The Oblates throughout most of Canada have been experiencing a lot of changes during the past few years. Some of these changes are more easily seen, such as the forming of one new province named OMI Lacombe Canada from the five previous provinces of St. Paul’s, Grandin, St. Mary’s, Manitoba and St. Peter’s. Other changes go deeper and affect the Oblates and their associates in several important ways: how we live community, the direction of future missions and ministries, the participation of lay persons as partners in very new ways and new forms of shared leadership.

Another signpost of newness is that four previous Canadian Missionary Associations have now become one: *AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI* based in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan under the guidance of a Coordination Team.

One of our first challenges has been to encourage, promote and strengthen the members of the former associations and the Oblates themselves, to widen their hearts and broaden their loyalties... to see the larger reality in supporting other Oblate missions and ministries. We are meeting this challenge through continued communication via publications, mailings, website and personal contact through the personnel of our office and the Oblates of OMI Lacombe Canada.



Canadian Oblates Walter DeMong, Louis Hoffart and Tony Schmidt

A second challenge that we face relates to sensitivities around bilingualism (English and French). One of the former associations had a strong francophone community. To honour the culture, we conscientiously continue to be aware of the tension that exists and respond by distributing our promotional materials according to the language preference of the member.



MAMI Member Nellie Woznica  
~ one of many faithful partners  
in mission

The Oblates in Canada are aging with very few candidates joining. The mission associates, members of *AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI*, are mostly elderly. In order to expand our membership of supporters, efforts are being made to reach new and younger people. In 2006, we had 2,147 new members with 2007 seeing an additional 486 new supporters. In 2007, these new partners in mission made up over 20% of our total dollar amount in donations. We are in the planning stages to continue the momentum and are exploring various possibilities including the formation of a travelling team of Oblates and laity who would be interested and available in offering day retreats on “Called to Being Missionaries” across Canada and encouraging people to support the Oblate missions and ministry through prayer and financial gifts.

We are also interested in setting up an advisory committee of people from various walks of life throughout Canada to generate some new ideas and perspectives for raising awareness and funds.

Every year we offer an Annual Novena where the Oblate mission associates of *AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI* are invited to be active participants by sending us their personal intentions. Our office then distributes these prayers to Oblate communities within the province who place these offerings to God in their chapels. This year’s Novena begins on May 13 and concludes on May 21, the feast day of St. Eugene. During this occasion, hundreds of people, both mission associates and Oblates are praying together as one family. Each day during the Novena, a special Mass is offered by our missionaries for the members and their loved ones. All are asked to pray for the women and men engaged in carrying out the works of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate around the world.

In 2007, we raised over \$ 1.27 million dollars through the generosity of over 2,700 supporters. We especially recognize four members who named *AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI* in their Last Will and Testament. Their gifts provided the Oblates with more than \$ 129,000 to care for our sisters and brothers around the world. Last year we funded almost 70 projects totalling \$ 970,703.<sup>73</sup>.



Oblates Aloys Kedl and Richard Wolak

## *A Glimpse of Our Ministries...*

### *Canada*

† Oblate Mike Dechant and laity are the energetic Youth Ministry team members reaching out to young people in the Edmonton, Alberta area. The training of youth leaders provides a faith experience encouraging empowerment in embracing a fuller spiritual life and facilitates youth ministering to youth.

† Oblates Louis Andreas and Alfred Hubenig are joined by others who travel around Canada leading intense parish missions. Like St. Eugene, the team shares the love of God in unique ways enabling transformation in hearts and souls while reaffirming vibrant community life.

† The Province of OMI Lacombe Canada has several retreat and renewal prayer centres located across Canada that are committed to providing sanctuary spaces of stillness, hospitality and beauty. Star of the North ~ St. Albert, Queen's House ~ Saskatoon, Qu'Appelle House of Prayer ~ Fort Qu'Appelle and Galilee Retreat Centre ~ Arnprior welcome all people seeking healing, solitude, spiritual growth and formation. One truly encounters the Divine in these sacred places.



*Parish Missions*



*Oblates ministering in Northern Canada*

† Teams of Oblates and laity minister in various areas of the North. The Arctic has changed. Vast distances, isolation, high cost of living, intense cold, language and closeness to the land remain. Growing problems have arisen with alcohol, drugs and violence. It is impressive to observe the sincerity of the missionaries ~ the depth of their faith and courage ~ their patience to work in what is sometimes a very difficult situation, offering hope and solidarity.

## Bolivia

† Aimé Aubin is an Oblate originally from Manitoba who has spent the past 55 years as a missionary in Cochabamba. Having served mostly in prison ministry, he is also involved with several houses providing care for homeless and needy children ranging from infancy to late adolescence.



*Children of Latin America*

† Originally founded by a former Oblate, the CCCI (Indigenous Peasant Cultural Centre) provides basic necessities, education and training for families in need. From serving school breakfasts to 250 students, sheltering abandoned children, offering computer training and promoting health and nutrition, the centre offers hope and a chance to improve life situations.

† Working in Bolivia since 1963, Oblate Gérard Leclaire, originally from Manitoba, has primarily served through parish work, preaching retreats and counselling of religious and laity. Father Leclaire is drawn to helping the homeless and the physically and mentally challenged.

† As a volunteer couple, Canadians Louis and Armelle Molin experienced missionary life with the Oblates in Bolivia by helping with the care of orphaned children and offering shelter and rehabilitation to street children, youth and women in need. Moved by the Bolivian reality, the Molins continue to inform friends and family of financial needs that are prevalent ~ medical services for the ill, homes for the severely handicapped and the education of children.

† Cristina Rodriguez is a close friend of the Oblates. A professional lawyer, Cristina dedicates her time to day care centres, originally founded by the late Oblate Claude Falardeau, for poor families unable to pay for child care while the parents work. Cristina provides nutritious meals, health care and a safe place for the children. Cristina also organizes annual Christmas hampers for isolated children.



Aimé Aubin, OMI



Cristina Rodriguez



Gérard Leclaire, OMI

## *Brazil*

† Saskatchewan Oblate Paulo Ehle has worked in Brazil since 1978 with his most recent efforts being focused on providing safe, good quality water for human consumption through a traditional solution of using a rain water system. The cistern project has opened avenues for community building and is an instrument for evangelization in the local parishes.



*Cistern Well Project for families in Brazil*

† Jim and Iêda Hellman are long-time partners with the Oblates, living and working with the poor in Salvador, Bahia. The Hellmans can be found physically hauling materials to repair a home which is a mere dilapidated shack, delivering food hampers and clothing, leading a bible study program, transporting a frail elderly woman to a nearby clinic or journeying with lepers and their families.

## *Guatemala*

† Gérard Le Strat and Jacques Johnson are Oblates from Canada who are working with the people in Guatemala. The Faith in Action project gathers people through prayer and community building while educating the indigenous and responding to human suffering. Young men are being moved by the lifestyle of these missionaries and are drawn to explore a vocation as a Missionary Oblate.



*Baptism in Guatemala*



*Oblate Gerry Le Strat with missionary candidates in Guatemala*

## Kenya

† Unlike the other foreign missions that we support, the Province of OMI Lacombe Canada is directly responsible for the Oblate Mission in Kenya. A team of Oblates and laity, presently numbering nine, have come from Canada, Australia and the Congo to serve within the Diocese of Meru, Kenya. The group has assisted in enhancing the spiritual, emotional and physical life of the Kenyan people.



*Local Bakery Project in Kenya*

† Through the presence and charism of the Oblate team over the past ten years, many young men are presently studying and discerning their vocation to religious life as a Missionary Oblate.



*Mount Kenya Water Project comes to life bringing water to 2,300 households*

† The team has played an integral part in bringing a major water project to life, providing water to over 2,300 families, assisting in education, health care and local self-sustaining initiatives of a bakery and duka (lumber shop).

† Plans are underway for Oblate involvement responding to the HIV/AIDS crisis by developing an HIV Centre and Health Clinic.

## *Pakistan*

† Joseph Aloysius Roy, OMI, is actively involved in formation at the philosophy level where individuals study prior to entering the Scholasticate. His presence has strengthened the Oblate community and Catholic faith in Pakistan.



Joseph Aloysius Roy, OMI

## *Peru*

† Oblate Maurice Schroeder, recently named Superior of the Delegation of Peru, and Norbertine Jack MacCarthy are two priests and medical doctors ministering to the body and soul of the poor in the jungles of Peru. The two, along with Peruvian staff members, work in twelve rural hospital stations of Santa Clotilde serving a growing number of people over a 400 kilometre stretch along the banks of the Napo River. Relying on a greater power than their own, the operating rooms, river boats, hospital wards and nearby church are filled with constant prayers to God.



*Oblate Moe Schroeder, MD, performs surgery in remote areas of Peru*

† In other areas of Peru, an entire generation has grown up amid the atmosphere of drugs, corruption, poverty, violence and a death-dealing guerrilla movement. As the country rebuilds from the devastating earthquake of August 2007, Canadian and Peruvian Oblates including Blaise Mac Quarrie, Joseph Devlin and Neil Macaulay are there helping families with the most basic necessities of adequate housing, nutritional meals, clothing, education and spiritual growth.



*Brother Blaise operates a gravel pit making adobe homes for the poor in Peru*

## Structures ~

AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI uses the model of the Province; that of shared leadership. We have a Board of Directors whose membership includes the four executives of the Province: Oblates Andy Boyer, John Malazdrewich, Jim Fiori and Tim Coonen. We had given consideration to having representatives from across Canada as our Board, but decided that the executive team would serve best as they have the larger reality of the province in view. The role of the Board is to give general approval for major directions and final approvals on funding of projects.

The Coordination team consists of Diane Lepage and Oblates Glenn Zimmer and Vaughan Quinn. We have two full-time workers, Roberta Edworthy and Jo-Anne Gow, in the office who process all the donations and assist us with various tasks. Rounding off our team is a part-time communications coordinator, Marie-Louise Ternier-Gommers, who works off site from her home and puts together our publications by gathering articles and photos from our missionaries.



*Coordination Team: Diane Lepage and Oblates Glenn Zimmer and Vaughan Quinn*

## Project Funding Procedures ~

Due to Revenue Canada government regulations and our own sense of accountability and transparency, we have developed a set of procedures and responsibilities for project funding. The Oblate Mission and Ministry community determines the project, for which they seek funding, receives the approval of the local community superior and provides our office with a description and amount needed for the project. Our office then presents the request to the Board of Directors. Once the project has been approved by the Board, the missionary responsible for directly overseeing the project signs an Agent Agreement. Once the project has been completed, the missionary provides our office with a financial report, copies of invoices/bills and photos if possible.



*Staff meet with Brother Blaise on his home visit to Canada  
L to R: Marie-Louise Ternier-Gommers, Blaise Mac Quarrie, OMI,  
Jo-Anne Gow, Roberta Edworthy and Diane Lepage*



*A group of enthusiastic Canadians participate in a Kenya Mission Experience*

The Oblate Mission office in Saskatoon provides the missionaries in the field with quarterly financial reports indicating the total monies received from donors specifically for their ministry works during the past quarter along with the donor's contact information to enable the missionary to send a personal note of thanks directly to their supporters.

We also send reports every three months to all members of the OMI Lacombe Canada Province which clearly identifies Donations Received and Disbursements for the various projects that have been funded so that everyone is well informed.

We presently have 6,822 English and 1,261 French members on our mailing list. Publications are sent from our office five times per year to our members and Oblate parishes. These promotional materials take on different format styles: we have a small *Oblate Mission* booklet featuring a particular Oblate Mission or area; and our briefer format entitled *Connexions* which has short news updates. A general Annual Report is distributed to all our donor members in the spring along with our Novena mailing. Our website features all our publications and annual reports. We are in the planning stages of exploring ways for activities and promotional events within each of the local communities to raise awareness and donations for the Oblate missions.

Standing before a rapidly changing world, we are all called to new ways of missionary service and new understandings of what it means to be Oblates and mission associates. The world is changing, the church is changing and so are we. This newness of spirit does not depend on whether one is young or old, but simply whether one is faithful: *“open to the unpredictability of God’s plan... to set out to a new country that will be shown to us as we move onward in trust...”* (34<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, 2004)



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