



Albert Lacombe, OMI  
1827 – 1916

# info Lacombe



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## *In this issue...*

HONORARY DOCTORATE FOR MO SCHROEDER OMI.....1

JACK LAU RETURNS TO USA.....2

ICON OF BLESSED JOSEPH GERARD, OMI.....4

**NEXT ISSUE OF INFO LACOMBE WILL BE  
JUNE 18, 2012.**

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## **HONORARY DOCTORATE FOR MO SCHROEDER OMI**

Spring 2012 Convocation



The University of Waterloo has approved the SJU's nomination that Dr. Maurice Schroeder, OMI, be granted an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree. I spoke with Dr. Schroeder last week via e-mail and he is honoured to accept the invitation and is able to attend the convocation ceremony at which the degree will be conferred: Faculty of Arts convocation ceremony on Thursday, June 14, 2012 at 2:30 p.m.

SJU and Dr. Perrin, President and Vice-Chancellor of SJU will be hosting Dr. Schroeder during his visit.

A brief synopsis of his contributions follow:

Dr. Maurice Schroeder, OMI

The Centro de Salud Santa Clotilde is a mission hospital in the Amazon Basin of northeastern Peru. The hospital has 30 beds, an outpatient clinic, a pharmacy and public health programs. Since 1986, it has been run by two medical doctors who are also Roman Catholic priests. Father Maurice Schroeder is one of them. Under the active leadership of Maurice Schroeder, the hospital has served more than 20,000 indigenous people who have little or no access to healthcare. The hospital serves an area of 100 villages along the Napo River where the people are very poor. The hospital's annual operating budget is approximately \$180, 000 US funded one-third by the Peruvian government, two-thirds from the church and private donors. In winter of 2008, Father Maurice Schroeder was asked to become Superior of the Peruvian delegation, to which he has brought his wealth of experience and talent.

Dr. Schroeder exemplifies the commitment to global citizenship of St. Jerome's University and the University's Centre for Responsible

Citizenship (Beyond Borders). Quantifying Dr. Schroeder's connection (number of students affected, potential for continuing relationship) to the Beyond Borders program is difficult. As noted in the supporting letter from the Director of the Beyond Borders program which accompanied the original submission, Dr. Schroeder was instrumental in establishing partnerships in Peru, something that is expected to continue and, perhaps, be expanded. Even without the Beyond Borders connection, Dr. Schroeder's significant and long-standing humanitarian aid efforts make him an ideal candidate. His work in bringing in locums to provide medical care in very difficult circumstances, make him a wonderful role model and mentor not only to SJU and UW students, but to other Canadian doctors and to society in general. Dr. Schroeder is a shining example of good global citizenship and a model of leadership that we are proud to recognize.

## JACK LAU RETURNS TO USA





After three full years Jack Lau has been called by his Provincial to the Regional Novitiate in Godfrey, Illinois. He left Galilee Retreat Center on May 22 to return to the USA.

It is with fondness that Jack reviews his ministry at Galilee. “It is the community and the people who live around here that have made it worthwhile. There has not been an Oblate on staff for eight to ten years and this allowed an experience of ministry that was not bound by the parish structures but open to people where they are on their journey.

“As Oblate ministry it can be less structured and meets the needs of small groups of people. The people [Catholic and Protestant] in town have been really supportive.

“The ministry has opened up through the community gardens, our yoga program and

the Richard Rohr webcasts. People have come back to say how good it is to have it here. And then they add, ‘I thought I was the only one who believed like this.’

“Our retreats have invited people into the contemplative life. We have stressed prayer in silence and reflective prayer. We can invite people into the quiet” Then he added, “The parishes do not do that so well.” This is a very important part of the Galilee ministry to respond to this unmet needs. “Each month we have a contemplative mass which does not have a homily but has at least ten to fifteen minutes of silent prayer.” Then looking his own approach to living, “Even though this silence is hard for me to do personally, it is in the simplicity of the Word that we discover our prayer.”

The ministry of icons was a new discovery for Jack. “I had never painted an icon before but it was through the ministry of Suzane Manchevsky [iconographer] that I was taught how to paint an icon. We have had six icon retreats here flowing from this ministry.” Jack’s face bursts into a smile. “This includes the icon of Eugene de Mazenod that we painted here.”

Arriving as an American Jack was ever so pleased by the “local BAC community which welcomed me. It has been super! I feel very much at home here. At the Convocation in Vancouver I never felt like an outsider.

“Another part of the ministry has been the bi-monthly gatherings of the Oblate associates. We meet once a month for Mass and once a month for formation and study. It was here that we shared the Oblate charism with our associates.” There was a pause and a strong affirmation. “This was a community for me.”

“We are only an hour away from Ottawa and we want to be open to receive anyone who is interested in sharing in the Oblate charism.”

As he leaves to go South Jack sees this time as having been very important. “On our part we have managed to balance the books which is not something that many retreat houses can claim to have done. “

In summary of his ministry Jack added: “What has developed in a new and powerful way is a diverse community of creativity and faith. (Once again my definition of faith is ‘the opening of the human heart to love in darkness.’) To be able to journey with each of you has been a gift.”

The interview came to a gentle end as Jack put the final punctuation to his description of the Galilee ministry. “We had an active Oblate ministry here.”

## ICON OF BLESSED JOSEPH GERARD, OMI

Apostle to the Basotho

Iconographer’s thumbnail “portrait” of Blessed Joseph Gerard

For those who may be unfamiliar with the extraordinary life, spirituality and works of Father Gerard, following are some research notes that were compiled for purposes of creating his icon; while not exhaustive, they are offered to both introduce Father Gerard to the viewer and in assist in “reading” the icon.

Selected Biographical Highlights

Blessed (Charles, John) Joseph Gerard was born on March 12, 1831 at Bouxieres-Chenes in the diocese of Nancy in Lorraine, France. He was firstborn of the five children of John Gerard and Ursule Stofflet, a devoutly Catholic, honest and hard-working rural couple. Father Gerard was educated at the village Catholic school and in his youth he herded horses and cattle saying that he felt close to God in the silence of the pastures.

Early in life, he heard Christ’s call to the priestly ministry and, in 1851 while preparing for ordination, he felt called to be an apostle to unbelievers, to the missionary life, and he joined the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, recently founded by Saint Eugene de Mazenod, Bishop of Marseilles. In 1853, at age 21, his diaconate was conferred by Bishop de Mazenod and one month later he was sent out as a missionary to Southern Africa where the Servant of God remained for the next 61 years, never



returning to his family or homeland again, until his death on May 29, 1914.

Following his priestly ordination by Bishop Allard in 1854, he worked and lived among the Zulu in the new Apostolic Vicariate of Natal where two missions were founded. Due largely to the reluctance of local tribes to abandon the cultural tradition of polygamy, the small group of Oblates suffered many difficulties and disappointments for years with no conversions or baptisms. Finally, in June 1860, an elated Father Gerard wrote to Bishop de Mazenod to offer him good news:

“If a child had nothing more than a flower, it would be a pleasure to him to offer it to his father. Well a tiny flower has appeared in this rocky field, covered in brambles and thorns, which we are tilling...A few weeks ago we brought to rebirth in the waters of baptism a tiny baby, aged 9 months, who was ill...”

Bishop de Mazenod replied with encouragement and new directions by letter of September 1860 in which he writes:

“After so many years not a single conversion; it is awful!...(but) You must not lose heart because of it. The time will come when the merciful grace of God will produce a sort of explosion and your African Church will be formed. You ought perhaps to penetrate deeper among these tribes in order to bring this about.”

So it was that in 1862, Father Gerard went to Lesotho to start missionary work and he was courteously received by King Moshoeshoe I. Soon, the first Catholic mission was founded, called “Village of the Mother of God” in today’s Roma Valley. Within three years of the arrival of Father Gerard and the small

group of Oblates, the entire nation of Lesotho was consecrated to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in 1865! Saint Eugene’s letter of encouragement seems to have been based on prophetic insight!

Father Gerard lived among the Basotho, eating their food, learning their language, preaching and translating the Gospel and Church history for their evangelization. A true Man of God, full of love and zealous for souls, he was entirely united with Christ in his suffering and undaunted by danger, hardship and the African sun, he would travel for miles by foot or horseback to visit the sick in the most wretched conditions. He called himself a “line fisherman for souls”. He never abandoned his beloved Basotho and in his many disappointments, he resolved to love them all the more. Even in wartime, trusting in God’s providence, he risked his life to stay with them, besieged on mount Thaba-Bosiu, as their servant and broker of peace. Over the years, Father Gerard also ministered to farm workers throughout the Orange Free State and founded the Missions of St. Monica and St. Michael’s. Returning to Roma in 1898, he worked tirelessly until his death at age 83.

By the time of his death in 1914, through the foundational works of Father Gerard and this small group of Oblates, there were already 15,000 Catholics in Lesotho (by 1988, this number had grown to over 675,000 of a total population of 1,200,000) and many Oblate priests, brothers, seminarians, schools, hospitals and clinics. In 1952, the Church of Lesotho was blessed with its first indigenous Bishop, Emmanuel Mabathoana (the great-great-grandson of Moshoeshoe I).

About Icons

“Icon” is the Greek word for “image”. Icons are produced in a variety of media, for example, painted on wood, mosaic, fresco, glass, metal, bas relief sculpture, etc. Icon subjects are visual narratives, essential summaries of Scripture, theology or the lives of saints; as narratives, icons can be said to be “read”.

Traditionally produced following a canon of specific colors, symbols and geometry, icons differ from other sacred art not only in their exaggerated style but especially in their intent; they are not created solely for adornment, but rather for prayer, catechesis and theosis. While icons are often rendered in mosaic and/or fresco in Roman Catholic Churches, they function as an integral component of Orthodox liturgy. Icons also provide a focal point for personal prayer and devotion and invite us into the Mystery. Icons seek to visually depict the glorified, transfigured universe from the divine, not human, perspective and are sometimes called windows and/or ladders to heaven.

Icons date from earliest Christianity and Saint Luke the Evangelist (patron saint of artists and iconographers) is considered to have been the first iconographer. By tradition, he painted over 60 paintings of the Blessed Virgin Mary and these remain the prototype image of the Mother of God for iconographers today.

Creating the Icon of Blessed Joseph Gerard, OMI, Apostle to the Basotho

The process of designing and creating an icon begins and ends with prayer. Through prayer, readings of Scripture and reference materials and contemplation, the iconographer seeks to enter into relationship with the subject, to

walk with them, to be in communion with them and to “get to know and love them” and pray that the Holy Spirit will inspire an essential, visual summary of their life, story, and faith.

The 8” x 10” icon of Blessed Joseph Gerard is painted in acrylic with 23 carat gold leaf on wood. It is an original work, written by an Oblate Associate in Arnprior, Ontario, Canada in 2011.

#### How to Read this Icon

The icon depicts Father Gerard as a young missionary in Southern Africa. He wears his black cassock, the distinctive Oblate crucifix and wire-rimmed glasses. His dark eyes gaze directly and unwaveringly at the viewer. His ears are exaggerated denoting one who listens for God’s voice. Physically, he is strong and sturdy and with very powerful hands for doing the Lord’s work. A prayerful and holy man, his left hand holds his prayer book close to his heart. His right hand is extended to the viewer, even protruding into the border and cradled in his palm is a single Protea, the national flower of South Africa. The flower represents a baptized soul, offered in love to the Father and perhaps will challenge viewers to ponder our own offerings and witness.



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