The Star of the North Donor Newsletter | Winter/Spring 2024

the Star of the North LUMINARIES

A Special Invitation

Friends of The Star! We invite you to attend a special occasion at the Chateau Lacombe, Edmonton, on Thursday evening, May 2, 2024, when we will celebrate the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and their contributions to Catholic and Christian communities through parish and retreat ministries throughout the dioceses of Alberta. Now is time to honor our Oblate brothers and priests, who offered ministries of presence with the poor in spirit (the humble), our neglected and marginalized sisters and brothers.

In the December issue of *OMI Information*, the Superior General, Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso OMI, eloquently illustrates the continuity of the Oblate charism past and present when he quotes Father Vincens OMI (Secretary General) in a letter dated February 15, 1860: "We are made for the poor; the heart feels at ease among them. ... It does us much good to be missionaries with them. It does us much good to hear the Gospel from them in a new way. It does us much good when we make our communities a home for the poor, and the houses of the poor a home for Jesus, thus bearing witness to his Kingdom."

In this issue of Luminaries, we express our gratitude to donors and benefactors who have been moved to generously support the Star through the years, inspired by the living out of this same Oblate charism.

Along with our invitation to the Oblate Gala Tribute:

- We share how a team of women walked the 2023 Star Camino in support of the annual Women's Wellness Retreat – a full weekend with accommodations, meals, and healing workshops for 25+ inner city women. This retreat is made possible through the generous donations from religious institutions, parish CWL councils and many caring individuals like you.
- We recognize the tremendous generosity, consistency, and commitment of our faithful benefactor and retreatant, Christine Berger, in a donor profile.
- We relive the beautiful evening and delicious banquet celebration marking the 70th Anniversary of the Star.

The Star of the North Retreat Centre as the host of the Oblate Gala Tribute, acknowledges in "Cor Unum" (One Heart), the gift of the Oblate charism, a gift that keeps on giving, from the very beginnings of this province into our day; a gift that promises to serve moving forward, giving us hope for our times.

Lucie Leduc
Executive Director at The Star of the North

CELEBRATING STAR OF THE NORTH – 1953-2023

STAR 70TH ANNIVERSARY

by Geneva Lander, Star Board Director

It was some Birthday Party!

During the evening of December 7th, the Star of the North Retreat Centre hosted 110 dear friends at a joyful celebration of our 70th anniversary. As always, the Star knows how to throw a party. The fun began as the first guests arrived to hear seasonal favourites being played on the Hearth Room piano.

It was a homecoming for many, including six Oblates and dozens of long-time retreatants. The strong sense of fellowship couldn't be missed, the sincere engagement, laughter, chatter, hugging and happy exclamations of recognition. One guest said it felt like lifelong friends coming together. That's exactly what it was. And as always new acquaintances were welcomed and introduced to longtime friends.

It felt right that the party took place precisely where this blessed ministry of hospitality began 70 years ago. The founders might have had little experience, but they did have faith, hope, courage, imagination, an eagerness to try new things and most definitely enthusiasm. Those qualities continue to guide the Star in shining brightly for new generations of seekers.

Every party needs good food and drink and, as we've come to expect, the Star's chef and kitchen staff outdid themselves. Steaming platters of baked salmon and pork loin, roasted vegetables, baby potatoes, wild rice and bowls of salad began arriving at the tables once guests were seated. Each table was centered by bottles of red and white wine. In keeping with the spirit of the evening, with family and friends together again, everyone served themselves and their companions.

Grace was offered in Cree by Fernie Marty from Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples before the meal began. Then, eight delightful young women from St. Albert High School cheerfully and expertly provided table service throughout the evening. With open smiles and helpful suggestions, they were attentive to each person in their sphere, serving the food, bringing countless jugs of water, and noticing when anything needed replacing. Of course, there were cakes, lemon and cream, blueberry cheesecake, chocolate confections and a gluten free offering as well.

Between dinner and dessert, a slide show covering all 70 years played on a large screen, showing black and white photos from the earliest days through colour shots taken recently, demonstrating how times have changed and how the Star has responded to the changing needs of retreatants.

Accompanying the photos we heard the Story of the Star, with speakers remembering the past, calling to mind the present and looking to the future with confidence. Each speaker was introduced by Archbishop Emeritus Sylvain Lavoie, the Star's Chaplain, and friend to all.

Sandra Prather, the Executive Director from 1990 to 2012, spoke about the Star's early days of pioneer Oblates, their vision and work for spiritual growth and formation in the Diocese. Sandy offered three words that define the lay retreat movement: creativity, hospitality, and perseverance. She recalled how, in the beginning, the Oblates ministered through using preachers, mission teams and twilight retreats, using slide projectors and images and music. She noted that St. Eugene de Mazenod said that new needs required new means.

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STAR 70TH ANNIVERSARY 1953-2023

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Regarding hospitality, Sandy remarked that while welcoming to all, the marginalized especially find a home at the Star. Perseverance, an Oblate value and one of their vows, as a lived expression for Oblates and Oblate Associates, is how, despite a multitude of ongoing challenges, the Star continues to shine.

Clinton Porritt, the Star's Program Coordinator, spoke of the present offerings and ways the Star provides life for the Christian faith community. He drew on three areas of spiritual care, formation, and growth. The Star is committed to contemplative prayer, to reconciliation by providing space for listening, learning, and healing, and to fostering a culture of encounter with people and creation, all within Pope Francis' dream of forming us all in an integral ecology. He reminded us that our Star motto mentions both awakening and transformation, contemplation, and action. Through the hard work of our incredible kitchen team, our welcoming hospitality ministers, the green thumbs who keep our year bursting with beauty, and our gifted spiritual directors, staff and facilitators, the Star continues to thrive as a place for awakening and transformation.

Lucie Leduc, the Executive Director since 2012, spoke with positivity and warmth of the future of the Star. She wove together the underlying themes of the first two speakers, faith and hope and assured us that the future of the Star is full of hope. She expressed thanks to God for blessing us with the gift of the Star through the wisdom of the Oblates past and present. Through its ministry the Star can help retreatants see life in new ways, with gratitude, recognizing grace, thankful for the past, present and future gift of life. She encouraged us to look to the future saying "Our hope is assured. The Star of the North is our Mother Mary's Star, and she has one desire only, to bring all the children home through her Son, Jesus."

Weeks after this wonderful event someone new to the Star shared that her greatest takeaway from the evening wasn't remembering the laughter, the food, the marvellous time people were having, but what she had learned about the interesting and intriguing history of the Star, the story of its founders, its humble beginnings and its unwavering commitment to the community and its peoples throughout the last 70 years.

Upcoming Spring/Summer Programs

Star of the North offers retreats series and weekends, evening and day sessions, personal and group retreats to deepen our insight, perspective, and relationship with God for our journey of faith meeting life.

something for everyone!
starofthenorth.ca/programs

MARCH 14	Rembrandt's Jesus: Reflections for Lent
MARCH 14	Twilight Recovery Evening (monthly)
MARCH 15-16	Les femmes et la résurrection retraite
APRIL 9	Coping With Loss: Bereavement Support
APRIL 12	Aurora Living Spring Module: New Creation
APRIL 12-14	Unravelling Revelation Scripture Retreat
APRIL 24	Artful Reflection Evening: Spring Wreaths
MAY 8	How to Grow: Meeting God in the Garden
MAY 23	Reconciliation Through Justice Evening
MAY 31	Pathways to Reconciliation Public Lecture
JUNE 7-9	Addiction, Trauma & the Family Workshop
JUNE 15	Star Camino Fundraiser
JULY 3-11	"Come Away for Awhile" Silent Retreat

CHRISTINE BERGER

DONOR PROFILE

by Joyce Tutt, Star Board Director **There are people among us for whom caretaking provides a livelihood, and then there are those whose entire way of living is built around being a caregiver.** Star of the North supporter Christine Berger fits into the second category.

Born in Germany, the family emigrated to Canada when she was one year old. After high school, she became a nurse. Christine's career led to her specializing in critical care, where she had a passion for working with patients one-on-one. It was here that she felt she could best serve. That ministry became part of her personal life as well, as she cared for her mother and her aunt in her home for eleven years, until they needed long-term care.

Christine's large extended family is an important part of her life today. She enjoys spending special occasions with her six siblings, and fourteen nieces and nephews.

Her friendship with two nuns greatly impacted her life. In Christine's early years of nursing, she spent the better part of a year in Halifax, where her ministry as a nurse was greatly influenced by Sr. Claire Tramble, a Sister of Charity of Halifax. Sr. Claire was a lifetime friend, and Christine spent many of her vacations away with her in Nova Scotia and Quebec.

On returning to Edmonton, Christine formed a close friendship with Sr. Annata Brockman, also a Sister of Charity of Halifax. As many people in the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton know, anyone who fell under the influence of Sr. Annata could not say "no" to her. It was upon being "asked" by Sr. Annata that Christine joined the RCIA team at St. Joseph Basilica Parish, where she enjoyed many years of involvement in that ministry.

A desire to further her faith development led Christine to study at Newman Theological College as her shifts permitted. Through the College she came to know many of the Oblates who taught there.

Christine believes it is important to support The Star of the North Retreat Centre, because it helped her on her journey, and continues to do so. Most recently, in December 2023, she participated in the weekend retreat presented by Fr. Ron Rolheiser. She believes the programs offered by The Star of the North not only help people grow spiritually, but also help individuals who need counselling, as well as other types of support.

Centering Prayer following the Benedictine tradition is an important part of Christine's spiritual life. She is currently participating with a group of people involved in Centering Prayer at The Star of the North and hopes to build awareness of this form of prayer as a contemplative approach in our personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Ron Rolheiser Retreat

Reconciliation with Noah MacDonald

Claiming God's Love Evening

FUNDRAISING WALK 2024

STAR OF THE NORTH CAMINO

By Josee Marr, Star Board Director **As I write these words, we, in Edmonton, have just come out of an arctic vortex that had us hunkered down in our homes for days as temperatures hovering -40 to -50 held us hostage indoors during a frigid week in January.** While confined to walking on the gym's treadmill, my thoughts rolled into daydream mode where sights, sounds and smells of outdoor walks in summer's long daylight and warm breeze filled the air. Then, entered the pleasant memory of the Camino walk for the Star of the North traditionally held in June.

In June 2023, a group of women in my condo building gathered to walk in support of the Star's "Women Wellness" program designed especially for women living in the inner city. The program offers these women a weekend retreat in the beautiful and peaceful environment at the Star Retreat Centre where they can experience a sense of belonging through insightful presentations and creative activities. Our women group, the WILLOWS (Women Intentionally Living Lives Of Wellness), felt particularly motivated to support this program through our Camino walk.

Josee (center bottom) on Star Camino with friends

This is one example of the many and varied programs available at the Star, serving a vision of hope and possibilities, awakening the Spirit and transforming the world.

2023 was the fifth anniversary of the Camino fundraiser event in support of the Star. Many walked solo or in groups to thank and pray for patrons, supporters-sponsors, and friends of the Star, an oasis of peace and healing to many pilgrims on their life's path. While most pilgrims pause once they reach a milestone on their journey, they will not stop there. They will keep going with steadfastness and confidence; they will continue faithfully onward to greet what is around the bend, different vistas, surprising encounters.

**"Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name." — Psalm 86:11**

This year, on Saturday, June 15, the Star invites new pilgrims to embark on the journey and encourages current pilgrims to stay the course, follow the path and move forward with the Star.

The Star Camino (*"the way"* – in English / *"le chemin"* – in French) is a fundraiser with a spiritual dimension of prayer for all those who walk through the doors of the retreat centre looking for rest, personal growth, renewal and a reassuring sense of belonging.

On the designated Camino weekend (Saturday/Sunday, June 15-16, 2024), participants may join the Camino walking group starting at the Star of the North on Saturday at 9:00 am. Alternatively, they have the option to walk on their own or with friends at a time and route of their choice. The distance may range from 3 km to 15 km, as the walkers set out to do. Information and registration will be posted on the Star of the North website at **staroftheenorth.ca/star-camino** as we approach the event.

**"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God." — Micah 6:8**

SAVE THE DATE — REGISTER EARLY

STAR CAMINO ON SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 2024

We invite you to join us for a sacred walk in the spirit of The Star's mission, to support The Star and to pray for The Star's and your intentions. Cost: $50 individual/ $80 for team or family. Register at **www.staroftheenorth.ca/star-camino** or by calling 780-459-5511, and stay tuned for more details!

JOIN US ON THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2024

Oblate Gala Tribute Dinner with Keynote Speaker Ron Rolheiser, OMI

IN SUPPORT OF THE STAR OF THE NORTH RETREAT CENTRE — AN OBLATE MINISTRY OF OMI LACOMBE CANADA —

AT CHATEAU LACOMBE

5:00 PM COCKTAILS • 6:30 PM DINNER

TICKETS $250 • TABLE OF 8 - $2,000

AN OPPORTUNITY TO BOTH THANK THE OBLATES AND TO MIX & SOCIALIZE WITH PEOPLE WHO SHARE OUR FAITH

STAROFTHENORTH.CA/OMIGALA OR CALL 780-459-5511

ENDOWMENT FUNDS

ESTABLISHING YOUR LEGACY

Your faith is an important part of your life. You have supported your favorite charities for decades and would like to continue to do it forever – and you can!

One way to accomplish this is by establishing or contributing to endowed funds. Endowment funds provide stable, long-term funding – both at the time the gift is made and for generations to come. Donations can be made through direct or deferred gifts, gifts received upon the death of the donor, or both. Support for the charity comes from interest/income earned from the fund.

Donations may be added to an existing endowment fund, such as those in support of operations or programming. Alternatively, the donor may establish and name an endowment fund. With this type of fund, a minimum amount of $10,000 is required, as each fund must be maintained separately. An individual endowment agreement is set up and signed. The benefactor does not need to donate the entire amount to start the fund but may make annual contributions of $1,000 or more every year for a period of 10 years – after which, they may continue contributing over and above the minimum donation once it has been reached. At the Star of the North, the endowment can be set up with an initial donation along with the donor's verbal commitment to see it completed.

In keeping with Canada Revenue Agency requirements, endowment funds must be invested for a minimum of 10 years. Often with legacy gifts, however, the donor may direct that the fund be maintained in perpetuity. This would need to be specified in the agreement as well as the purpose of the fund. Endowment funds can also be set up through your Will.

Whatever option you choose in setting up your legacy fund, please contact Lucie Leduc, Executive Director, at (780) 459-5511, to confirm that:

- The Star of the North can fulfill the purpose of the funds as per your intent, and
- the endowment agreement can be set up according to your wishes and that the terms establishing the fund are clear.