

*We are called to be men and women of ceaseless hope,
because only tomorrow
can today's human and Christian promise be realized;
and every tomorrow will have its own tomorrow,
world without end.*

*Every human act, every Christian act,
is an act of hope.*

*Yes, we are indeed called
to be men and women of the present,
to live this moment*

*— to really live it, not just endure it —
because this very moment,*

*for all its imperfection and frustration,
is pregnant with all sorts of possibilities,
is pregnant with the future, is pregnant with love,
is pregnant with Christ.*

Walter J. Burghardt, SJ

Christmas 2007

Dear family and friends,

Greetings and best wishes from our house to yours! If this becomes a Christmas letter it will be a first in several years. I've written more New Year's letters than Christmas ones I believe, as I tend to be so involved in work and pre-Christmas activities that the Holy Day is here before I realize.

Jim and I are looking back on another year with more new developments and discoveries. We have been living in Humboldt for two years now and believe it or not, we both feel very much at home. We enjoy the small community, appreciate our new home (well, new for us), and enjoy an ever growing circle of connections and social activities. There is a lot here to keep us busy and challenged!

Jim had a very good year gardening at *St. Peter's Abbey* (www.stpetersabbey.ca). Besides growing seeds for sale (www.prseeds.ca) he also grew a lot of vegetables for the Abbey kitchen. The Benedictines are known for their great hospitality and their meals got a renewed local taste this past summer. Many groups and individuals come to the Abbey to hold meetings, to get away from a busy schedule, to spend quiet time in nature, or to get a taste of monastic life. As Jim has discovered, the monks do not leave the

world and remain apart from it. Rather, the world comes to the monastery and engages both monks and visitors in holy conversation, silence and work.

In August Jim held his first *Field Day* at the Abbey to show off his 30 varieties of old wheats he had planted there (see the Abbey website under Organics/Ancient Wheats). This resulted in some interesting media coverage, and a subsequent 20 minute feature on *Tapestry*, a CBC national radio program on Sunday afternoons. Another, less positive, result from this media coverage was a letter from the Canadian government ordering Jim to stop offering for sale varieties of old wheats which are not licenced. This issue is still not resolved.

While Jim is no longer chair, he remains an active board member with *Seeds of Diversity Canada* (www.seeds.ca). The preservation of seeds and in particular old and/or heirloom seeds is becoming more of a political issue as large multinationals like Monsanto are attempting to control the seed production worldwide, making farmers dependent on buying their seed instead of saving their own. This development is seriously affecting farmers in developing countries.



Field Day 2007 at St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster, SK



Illustration in an article on Jim in "Prairies North" magazine

As for me, I have traveled a fair amount this past year. Within Canada, I was in Winnipeg to attend an Oblate fundraiser for mission projects in Africa. In Jasper I co-facilitated a workshop on providing support services for families in crisis in rural areas. In Ottawa I participated in an Oblate conference on communications. Then last July I flew to Fort Good Hope near the Arctic Circle! I traveled with *On Eagle's Wings Ecumenical Ministries* (www.oneagleswings.org) to spend a week teaching Summer Bible School with some 35 children ranging in age from 3 to 13! Going that far north was certainly a first and an unforgettable experience.

All of October found me outside Canada, visiting family in the Netherlands and visiting Oblate mission projects in Kenya. I thoroughly appreciated the 10 days in Kenya, finally visiting all the people and sites I had only known from articles and photographs which I publish in the newsletters (www.oblatemissionassociates.ca). However, my stay in Kenya was cut short by a week due to the fact that my mother was seriously ill in a



Arrival in Fort Good Hope in a Cessna four-seater plane



Visiting the Bakery in Kionyo, Kenya, started with Canadian Oblate funds

hospital in the Netherlands. I was deeply grateful that I could spend so much time with my father, my brothers and their families, my cousin Marie-Pascale and my aunt Jeanne while I visited Mom in the hospital every day. I also took the opportunity to reconnect with old friends in the Netherlands; the term old is starting to have more than one meaning! As of today, Christmas 2007, my mother is still in hospital but will soon be moved to a nursing home.

In November we celebrated the 90th birthday of Jim's mother with a family supper at Betty & Doug's new house just outside of Saskatoon. Yes, you read that correctly. They too have moved away from the farm in Cochin, leaving only Judy, Tom and children there now. We still all own our land out there and have not made any decisions about what to do with it, other than express the hope that it remain in the family.

My second book was published early in 2007 and seems to be doing well in sales. You can read several book reviews on my website: www.malotg.com As of November 1, 2007, I have two half-time employments. Besides doing the publications for the *Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate* I am now also working in pastoral ministry in the local RC parish (where I completed a very successful internship last spring), with responsibilities for all aspects of adult faith development. I am very happy with this opportunity; the work challenges me to be creative in the use of my skills and gifts and I am part of a great pastoral team. Besides these two jobs the *Sisters of St. Elizabeth* have asked me to assist them in writing the history of their religious order in Canada. This project will take a few years and I have great help from committee members Ivan and Don in this endeavour. And the very best part of all this is that, after 17 years of long-distance commuting, I am no longer on the highway!



My brother Eugene and I visited the house in the Wagenaarstraat, Tilburg, where we were born over 50 years ago!!



Believe it or not, but **Rachelle** has settled in Saskatoon (but not for long she assures us) after her nearly two-year stay in the Netherlands and Portugal. She is mighty busy with her university classes (now in second year), perfecting her knowledge of Spanish (hola!), German (bitte sehr), nutrition, kinesiology, and soon she will learn about Greek and Latin roots of the English language. She has discovered the most fun activity in the world (according to her) – ballroom dancing!! She goes dancing at least once, if not twice, per week, with every Friday at a Mexican restaurant in Saskatoon to dance Salsa, Meringue and other Latin American favourites. Not only does it keep her slim and in great shape, she also meets the most interesting people, literally from all over the world, like Columbia, Mexico, Germany, New Zealand and lots of interesting Canadians too! She is entering the new year hoping to be accepted for *Canada World Youth* in order to satisfy her thirst for traveling once again.

Daniel is very content with life in Saskatoon. He is extremely busy in his job with Wal-Mart, often traveling to other stores throughout the province. Daniel helps coordinate all the staff in the *Loss Prevention Department*, as well as apprehend shoplifters and look after the security systems in the stores. When he's not working (and that's not very often!) he likes to hang out with his friends, accept his sister's invitations to eat her wonderful cooking, and go for bike rides in the summer.



David and **Kathryn**'s lives are as busy as ever, with some new developments to report. In November Kathryn started her training with the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police* in Regina. Although she's really enjoying it, the training is demanding and she does not get to go home very often. So David is bach-ing again ... It's a good thing that he's been very booked with DJ commitments over and above his regular full-time job at the furniture store. David has been quite settled in North Battleford for many years now (ever since high school graduation in 2000), but that might change in 2008. While their future place of residence remains uncertain (Kathryn will receive her first assignment at the completion of her training in June 2008), David is considering developing his photography hobby into a new potential career.



Wishing you all the blessings of new life in 2008

Jim

Marie-Louise