



LET'S HELP FORT ALEXANDER PARISH BUILD A GARDEN OF HOPE AND RECONCILIATION

ON JUNE 4, 2008, Fr. Augustine Ezediniru, a member of a Nigerian religious congregation named 'Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy' and abbreviated SMMM, arrived in Manitoba from Nigeria, just in time to participate in the annual celebration of Saint Boniface, Patron Saint of our archdiocese, the following day. After this warm welcome, he dedicated himself to his now ten-year role as a religious missionary in Northern Manitoba First Nation communities. He shares: "I feel blessed and enriched by my experiences with the people I serve. Certainly, there are difficult challenges, such as witnessing the ongoing effects of residential schools on their families. My work has been guided by simple, but powerful words which came to my mind through meditation and God's insight: "Forgiveness heals hurt...Love lifts up!"

When we feel loved and accepted, we flourish as persons and as communities. Through unconditional love and acceptance of his brothers and sisters, Fr. Augustine has been building understanding and strong, participative relationships in parishes and communities.

"LOVE LIFTS UP AND FORGIVENESS HEALS HURT!" SERVES AS AN INVITATION TO RECONCILIATION IN THE SAINT ALEXANDER PARISH AND THE OTHER COMMUNITIES HE SERVES.

Fr. Augustine's approach is to become part of the fabric of the community. Through open-armed collaboration, he fosters mutual support between the parish and the Sagkeeng First Nation. As an example of this cooperation, the Council recently replaced the church's microphone and it regularly assists the parish in many other ways.

For some time now, Fort Alexander Parish has been working on a project of reconciliation and healing: **an outdoor meditative space designed especially for people seeking a quiet time with their Creator or searching for meaning in life.** The goal is to complete the project during the summer of 2018. The central piece of this garden, which will bring together Indigenous and Catholic traditions, will be a grotto with a statue of Mary Our Lady of Perpetual Help, chosen in light of the respect given to women by the Indigenous people of the community. The grotto will be built of rocks specially selected by individual members of the community and representing their unique pathway as well as challenges they strive to overcome.

The Fort Alexander Parish has already raised \$4,000 of the \$20,000 required for the various components of the garden, including the grotto, the statue, benches, plants and interlocking bricks. Please follow [THIS LINK](#) and choose **Pastoral work with First Nations** if you would like to make a donation in support of this inspiring project. For more information, please contact Fr. Augustine at (204) 367-2561, at kolbeaustin@yahoo.co.uk or at stalex@granite.mb.ca. The parish would be very happy to offer public recognition for significant contributions to the completion of the garden, for example the gift of the statue or a bench.

FR. AUGUSTINE'S MISSION MAXIM: LOVE LIFTS UP AND FORGIVENESS HEALS HURT!
GOD IS GOOD...ALL THE TIME...AND ALL THE TIME...GOD IS GOOD!

∞ If any surplus funds are raised, they will be used by the parish for other pastoral or maintenance needs. ∞