

# FATHER GILBERT BERTRAND, OMI SPIRITUAL ADVISOR

**Sharon Harland**

Life Member and Organization Chairperson of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta Parish Council, Halifax

**G**ilbert Bertrand was born in Thessalon, Ontario, the eldest of seven children. In 1964 he entered the order of Oblates of Mary Immaculate and took final vows as a brother in 1973. In his capacity as brother, he served in Ancastar, Ontario, as bursar then as superior of the Springhurst Residence in Ottawa for nine years.

Following completion of his Master's degree in theological studies in San Antonio, Texas, Brother Bertrand was assigned to the First Nations communities near Fort Frances, in northwestern Ontario, where he served seven communities. Some communities were accessible only by water in the summer and ice bridge in the winter. One community could only be reached by bush plane. After 24 years service as a brother he was called by the elders to become a priest and ordained on August 27, 1988.

Father Bertrand came to Nova Scotia in 1990 to serve as pastor of St. Catherine's Church in Indian Brook. After six years there he was called back to Ontario for service at the Galilee Mission Centre for one year. At his request he returned to the Maritimes and to pastoral ministry at Saint Peter's Catholic Church in Sheet Harbour where he served until 2001 when he was appointed pastor of St. Stephen's Parish, Halifax. In 2005, the communities of St. Joseph's Church and St. Stephen's Parish were joined to form the North End Catholic Community. He was named pastor and carried out his ministry in both churches. In 2006, the newly formed community with a single place of worship was named Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta Parish by Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S.J..

Father Bertrand's mother was a long-time member of the League, so from childhood he had become knowledgeable of the League. While serving at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Fort Frances in Couchiching First Nation, Ontario, he was instrumental in the formation of a parish council. He is not sure whether it

was the reactivation of the council or the formation of a new one.

In Nova Scotia Father Bertrand served as spiritual advisor to St. Peter Parish Council in Sheet Harbour and had great admiration for the many works accomplished by the women not only in the church but in the community. He admires the work of the League as an organization in union with the church, observing that the League stands up for issues and seeks solutions.

He referred to the annual meeting with members of the federal government as a positive indication of the importance of the League's work and influence. He mentioned the support given to the parish priest and the camaraderie of the members as other positive aspects of the organization.

His concern, as with most of us, is the need to continue to build the League, to increase membership, and to let the community know of the work it does.

We of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta Parish Council appreciate Father's support, words of encouragement, sense of humour and appreciation of all of the efforts of the members. May the Good Lord, allow us to retain his ministry for the next few years. †

