



Robert Filion, OMI

Eldest son of a family of humble Christian Quebec farmers, Robert joined the Oblates in Richelieu, took his vows at 17, and continued farming for 5 years as an Oblate brother at Point Bleue QC. In need of a farmer in the mission of Wabaska, Northern Alberta, he was assigned May 28, 1953 to the Grouard Vicariate and will make his final vows on December 8, 1955. The occasion was marked with a certain solemnity in this small village when he received the Oblate cross, the scapular of the Immaculate

Conception and the book of rules along with the accompanying words: "Hoc fac et Vives -"Do this and you will live", with the Indian children of the mission chanting the French hymn "Sacrifice d'Amour" and finishing with the Te Deum and the Magnificat in latin - of course with the help of the Sisters and Oblate brothers. On June 2, 1963, he will visit his brother priest leaving for his mission to Brazil. That is perhaps where Robert gets a glimpse of a call to the priesthood. In the ensuing years, after 16 years of farming he heads out for Fort Vermillion as maintenance man at the hospital and pursues his studies saying: "I know it will be difficult but I put my trust in the Lord who will show me the way if I am generous". With his home base at Grouard he takes courses at AVTC and Kisemanito Centres and, always active and helpful, continues to lend a hand in the missions of Fox Lake, Jean d'Or and Garden River while gaining pastoral experience at the mission of St. Charles. Finally, on July 28, 1975 he was accepted at Newman College where his call to the priesthood is confirmed by Newman professor Sr. Lina Gaudet SP. Fr. Camille Dozois OMI also affirms: "Robert is not an academic, he has completed his 10th grade and English is not his mother tongue, but he is a solid man, everybody likes him, he works well, is always ready to lend a hand. He is a good man, is faithful to his spiritual exercises, to his religious vows, has spiritual maturity and will do good wherever he goes. He lives the message of Christ". Fr. Gerry Weisner OMI on writing his report on December 20, 1979 says: "Robert's third semester as a member of St. Charles Community is that he is a very good man and makes a

positive contribution to the oblate community and to Newman College as well. He has good positive personal qualities, is approachable, is open, has good judgement and common sense, is pleasant to deal with, is prayerful and generous. He is a good religious and integrates theology well in his personal life. I strongly endorse him". On December 31, 1979 Robert receives his indult from Rome and is ordained to the priesthood in his home village of St. Robert Co., Richelieu. A chosen verse at his ordination reads: "This is how all you will know you are my disciples, your love for one another", (Jn 13,31). Robert then receives his assignment for Grouard with responsibility for Gift Lake and Atikameg all the while pursuing his studies. On September 7, 1984, the provincial sends him to the parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel in High Level with the consignment to "Preach Jesus Christ". He serves the missions of Meandre River, Eleské, Paddle Prairie and Keg River. In 1989 he is asked to take the responsibility of the parish of St. Henry in Fort Vermilion. Having lived many years in their midst as a brother, they are overjoyed to welcome him now as their priest and in 2000, on the 10th anniversary of his ordination, the faithful hold a special celebration to honour him saying: "We pray for Fr. Filion in thankfulness for his service to our parish and for his dedication and love for all". In September 1994, he heads to the parish of Ste. Rita in Valleyview, serving the missions of Sturgeon Lake and Crooked Creek to return to High Level in 1999, serving the missions of Meandre River, Paddle Prairie and Keg River. In 2005, on his 25th anniversary of ordination, Fr. Filion receives from High Level Chamber of Commerce the distinguished honour of Citizen of the Year. In well chosen words they acknowledge that Fr. Filion "Has devoted his whole life to the service of others". They mention his qualities as a "kind, compassionate, joyful person available to all and encouraging the First Nation people to preserve their culture and strengthen their communities. They recognize that "through his commitment to God and others, has contributed enormously to the growth of their community and met the needs of countless individual".