

GREETINGS FROM CUPERTINO – NOVEMBER 2007

Thanks to Brother Paul Fennelly, I left San Jose on schedule early Wednesday morning, October 3. Check-in was easy and I had a smooth flight to Dallas and on to Dayton where Brother Don Neff was waiting patiently for me. We had a pleasant ride to Mount Saint John where I joined the Meyer Hall community for dinner and my usual early retiring. The next morning, after Morning Prayer I took my favorite walk around the property, admiring the carnations still in bloom at the grotto and making my reflective stroll through the cemetery. It was a balmy 85 when I began my visits with the alive, first Father Bob Backherms who continues his remarkable recovery in nearby Sycamore hospital then across town to Mercy Siena where I saw a number of the Brothers, including Father Charles Bergedick, a fellow Hamiltonian, and Father Cy Middendorf with whom I was ordained.

Before returning to Mount Saint John I stopped at Saint Leonard's to visit my frisky 96-year-old cousin, Mrs. Gen Sakotnik, then celebrated Mass in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi with the Meyer Hall community and Father Bert Buby who had come out to visit. The next day I joined in spirit with the Cupertino Marianists to celebrate Brother Elmer Dunsky's 90th birthday, finalized a report for the Provincial Council and visited the North American Center for Marianist Studies. In the late afternoon I was happy to see old friends as we gathered for the annual weekend meeting of the directors of Marianist communities at Bergamo. Brother John Haster came in from Cupertino with the report that Brother Elmer was delighted with the birthday gift of a new bed. Later, however, we learned that Elmer had a relapse and was hospitalized briefly.

The meeting of the directors was a time to share information and experiences. The weekend got off to a great start thanks to Sister Angela Ann Zukowski's inspiring talk about mindfulness, reminding us of the importance of quiet in the midst of the intense activities of our lives. The weekend schedule allowed me to walk before dawn. It was not a typical autumn weekend, however, and I believe we hit an all time record of 92 on Sunday. Monday was another day of visits with the shut-ins at Mercy Siena including Brother Ben Laurinaitis with whom I entered the SM in 1944 and Father Eldon Reichert, a special friend since our years together in Fribourg. I also had chats with the oldest Marianists, Brother

Frank Deibel and Father Ed Rhodes. I was again celebrant for the community Mass and the next day Brother Joe Barrish took me to the airport for the flight to Saint Louis for the monthly meeting of the Provincial Council.

The day I arrived Brother Tom Payne invited me to join him for the monthly meeting of Marianist "Theology on Tap" which featured the international Marianist outreach. On Oct. 11, we remembered the arrival of Father Chaminade in Zaragoza, Spain, on the eve of the great feast of Our Lady of the Pillar; it was also the anniversary of the opening of Vatican II in 1962. I celebrated the feast of Our Lady of the Pillar with the Marianist community at Maryland Avenue and later that morning we learned of the death of Brother Franklin Pao in Honolulu. I appreciated Brother Art Cherrier leading us in the chanting of psalms and I am also grateful to him for taking me to the airport. During the meeting of the Provincial Council the staff had prepared a welcome luncheon for the new members.

Guests at Maryland Avenue included Father Bill Christensen who was concluding a long and successful fundraising visit on behalf of the International Institute for Rural Development (IIRD) and Brother Phil Melecher, who has been working in Peru since the 1970s. In St. Louis there was a gentle transition from late summer to autumn with crisp and colorful leaves falling steadily. Brother Francis Heyer keeps the property clean and attractive.

I was back in Cupertino in time to join with Brother John Haster in reporting on the meeting of directors and adding some notes from the meeting of the Provincial Council while bringing greetings to the Marianist Community from our confreres in Dayton and Saint Louis. On Tuesday, October 16, we had a memorial service for Brother Franklin Pao, designed as a "Holy Hour of Thanksgiving" for all that God had done for him and through him during his long and remarkable life as a Marianist.

Several Marianists who have died recently were members of the former Province of the Pacific: Father Ed Johnson, Brother Jim Roberts, Brother Clarence Chew, Father Don Bracht and now Brother Franklin. Each, in his own right, could be called one of the legends of the Province of the Pacific, but only Brother Franklin made his first profession of vows in the new Province that had been created from the former Province of Cincinnati in 1948.

Brother Franklin entered in 1955, the same year that we began what is now called Chaminade University. The rest of the week was a whirlwind of personal meetings along with the usual e-mails and phone calls. I left Cupertino very early on the morning of Monday, October 22. The adventure that began that day is recounted in a separate report entitled Pilgrimage to Rome via New York.

As you can see I was in Cupertino for only a few days in October, but they were pleasant and peaceful autumn days. Brother Elmer had returned from the hospital; Father Jim Imhof was also hospitalized briefly, during which I took his place as Eucharistic minister to the shut-ins. On Sunday, October 21, there were seven who were not able to come to chapel for Mass, but did follow via the closed circuit TV that seems to be functioning much better now. After my departure, Father Joe Stefanelli took Holy Communion to the sick until Father Jim was able to resume his usual faithful service. The Honda that Father Jack Rielly used to drive is now in the hands of Roy, one of our workers. The little shrine of statues that was in the Honda stayed with the car. While I was away the community celebrated the Marianist World Day of Prayer on Sunday, October 14. Father Jack Rielly had arranged for a special Mass with our Marianist affiliates and friends and invited Father Joseph Stefanelli to preside at that Mass.

There were two celebrations for Halloween. First on Saturday, Oct. 27, for community, staff and families. This is always a big event and Father Larry Mann, after many years as a bishop came to the celebration as pope. On Oct. 31 there was a tamer celebration for the community. But before and even now, Brother Joseph Nuuanu has his own Halloween motif in and outside his room. On Oct. 28 the community had an evening prayer service celebrating the beatification of the Marianist Martyrs of Madrid that had taken place in Rome on that date. The community also celebrated the feast of All Saints with a concert by Nathaniel Evans and then devoted much of November to the remembrance of the departed.

That night – actually early Saturday morning, November 3, I returned from Rome.

Be assured I am with you in thought and prayer – ever grateful for your interest, encouragement and prayerful support.

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