

MARIANIST CULTURE, FAITH AND COMMUNITY

ALIVE

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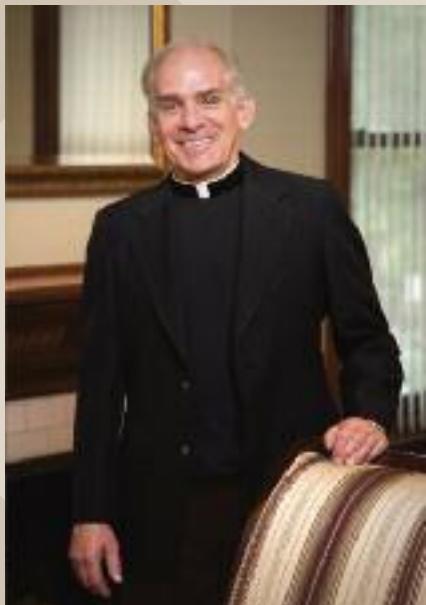
An experiment in inner-city community building attracts Marianist involvement, page 4.

A MESSAGE

from the Provincial

Dear Friends,

When I arrived in Honolulu recently to attend board meetings at Chaminade University and Saint Louis School, both Marianist-sponsored educational institutions in Hawai'i, I was met at the airport by Brandon Paluch, a second-year novice in the Society of Mary.



Father Martin Solma, SM

As we drove back to the campus, I was struck by the vast difference between Brandon's experience of the novitiate and my own.

When I joined the Society of Mary in July 1966, there were more than 40 members in my novitiate group, almost all 18-year-olds straight out of Marianist high schools. Our novitiate was located in Marcy, N.Y., and during that year we were totally removed from most outside influences: no daily mail, no movies, little TV, visits with our parents only once during the year, and large doses of baseball, basketball and soccer to engage our youthful energy. This intensive program of classes, prayer and brotherhood prepared us for the profession of first vows one year

later. We were mostly middle class, high school educated, with little life experience. The Second Vatican Council had just concluded in Rome, and the renewed celebration of the liturgy had just begun.

Today, there are seven young men in the Marianist novitiate in Dayton, Ohio. Only one is from a Marianist high school. One is originally from Vietnam, one from Kenya, one from Cuba, one from Hawai'i. Brandon, who is 28, is from Chicago and first met the Marianists at the University of Dayton. All of them are college educated, many have had successful careers, and the youngest is 24. The Second Vatican Council ended long before they were born.

These men come to the Society of Mary with signif-

icant life experience and many are passionate about service to the poor and marginalized. They spend one year together at the novitiate and then become involved in a Marianist ministry for several months. They profess first vows at the end of their second year.

The differences could not be more dramatic.

On our drive back to the Marianist community, Brandon told me he desired to grow closer to Jesus and to give his life in service. It occurred to me that despite the external differences, perhaps our novitiate experiences were not all that different. Even in 1966, many of us desired the same thing: to give ourselves to Jesus and to live a life of service. We prepare young men differently today, but the meaning of the life, the setting of a deep religious and Marianist "root" is not so different.

In this issue of *ALIVE*, you will learn more about these Marianist novices and their experience of discerning a call to religious life in an article called "Schooling of the Heart." I hope you will pray for them and all those who desire to give their lives to Jesus in service to others.

Thank you for your great support, your prayers and your kind friendship.

In Jesus and Mary,

A handwritten signature in cursive ink, appearing to read "Fr. Marty". Below the signature, the text "Father Martin A. Solma, SM" and "Provincial" is printed.



Father Martin Solma, 1973

Father Martin Solma, SM
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Mike Moroski, Brother Mike Murphy and Mike Rogers
pose in front of Choices Café, a gathering place for
community initiatives in Cincinnati. See story, page 4.

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The Society of Mary (Marianists) is an international Roman Catholic religious congregation of priests and brothers, with almost 500 serving in the Province of the United States, which includes India, Ireland, Mexico, Nepal and the Philippines. In the United States, the Marianists sponsor three universities: University of Dayton, Ohio, St. Mary's University in San Antonio and Chaminade University of Honolulu, as well as 19 high schools, seven parishes and several retreat centers. The order has had a presence in the United States since 1849, when the Marianists came to Cincinnati. Blessed William Joseph Chaminade founded the Society of Mary in France in 1817.

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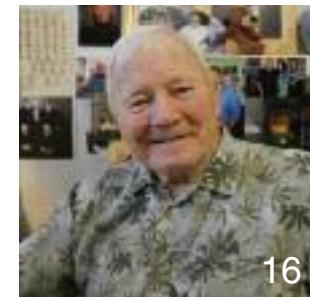


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“Chaminade Would Hang Out Here”

Choices Café — an experiment in inner-city community building — has rallied the interest of Marianist educators, students and religious.

BY SHELLY REESE

If you are looking for the best cup of coffee in Cincinnati, Choices Café may not make your list. But if you want to experience people from different walks of life, share camaraderie, build community and maybe enjoy a cup of coffee on the house, this little “café,” located in the heart of Cincinnati’s poorest neighborhood, may interest you.

Choices Café is not a traditional coffeehouse. It doesn’t sell coffee and pastries. Rather, it’s a not-for-profit focused on building relation-

ships and generating hope, says Director Mike Rogers. “It’s about building bridges.”

All kinds of bridges: bridges between the affluent and the impoverished; bridges between social service organizations and civic development groups; bridges from a past of despair to a future of hope.

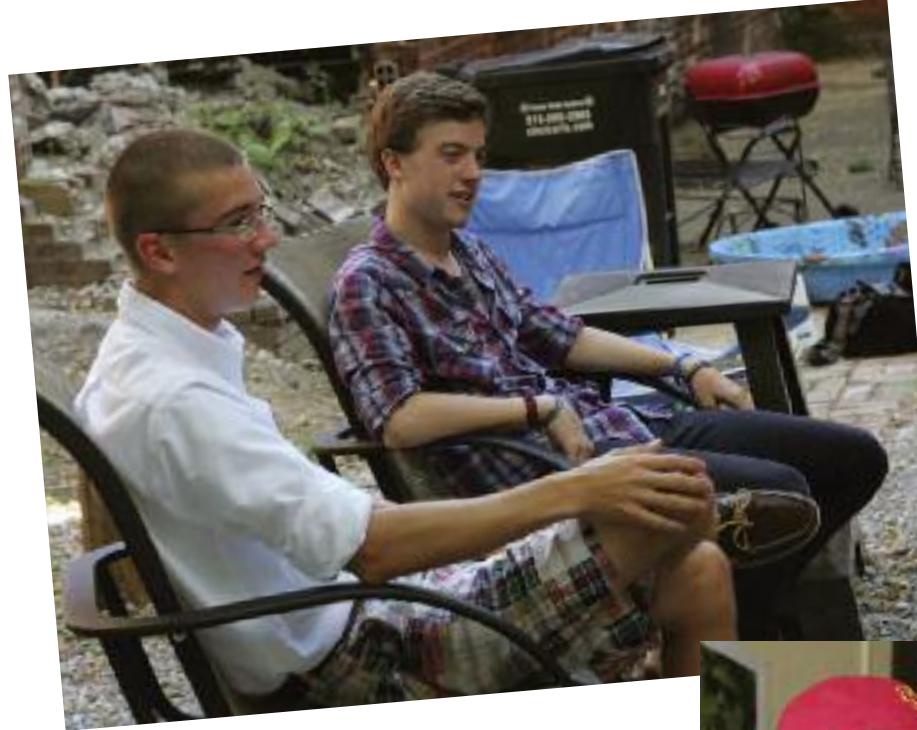
Not surprisingly, Choices itself began as a bridge between two people from very different worlds.



*From left: Mike Moroski,
Brother Mike Murphy,
SM, and Mike Rogers*

A vision that grew

The idea for Choices Café was born in 2005. Rogers and Mike Moroski, then an English teacher at Archbishop Moeller High School, a Marianist high school in Cincinnati, wanted to open a coffee shop in the neighborhood. Although they share a similar spirit and vision, the two Mikes come from different backgrounds. Rogers grew up on the streets. Moroski says he “grew up on the golf course.” The two wanted to create a place where people from different worlds could come together, develop friendships and learn from each other.



Above, Archbishop Moeller seniors Wes Cuprill (left) and Sam Effler

Others added to their vision. Some said the café should be a place where young men and women would learn to make better choices, so they didn't end up on the street.

Marianist Brother Mike Murphy, an advocate for social justice, proposed using the coffee shop as a venue for helping people who had been in trouble with the law get their lives back on track. A group of Moeller student volunteers, who spent their Saturdays rehabbing affordable housing in the neighborhood, saw the café as an opportunity to create a home base for their program.

The name was selected to reflect those myriad visions. The café would be a place where people blessed with many choices could get to know and learn from people who had few. It would be a place where people who had made poor choices could turn their lives around and learn to make better decisions in the future.

Life-changing experiences

Today Choices, which opened in February 2008, is home to a variety of groups working to build community and improve the quality of life in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. In addition to the

student volunteer program and Brother Mike's HELP program for ex-offenders, Choices hosts week-long urban immersion experiences for Catholic high school and college students and provides service learning opportunities for high schoolers.

While the programs are diverse, there's plenty of common ground. For example, the opening of Choices helped draw attention and volunteers to Moeller's student volunteer program. Some of those volunteers are now helping draft résumés and complete job applications for ex-offenders involved in Brother Mike's HELP program.

“The students have come to know people in the neighborhood — people who are poor or homeless,” says Brother Mike. This connection has taken them from the abstract to the personal. “They went from rehabbing buildings and working with cement and mortar to having relationships with people on the streets.”

It's the kind of connection that bonds people and changes their viewpoints forever.

Marianist values come alive

Moroski, who now serves as assistant principal and dean of student life at Purcell Marian High School, another Marianist school in Cincinnati, says that Choices' evolution continues to be organic, thanks largely to input from students.



This year Moeller seniors Wes Cuprill and Sam Effler, who co-direct the Choices student board, will make presentations to service organizations at Purcell Marian and other Catholic high schools in an effort to grow the Choices student volunteer corps. They also want to launch new programs, including a micro loan program for neighborhood businesses and a program that would enable student entrepreneurs to hire HELP clients.

Their ideas are often passionate and ambitious; Moroski admits the board occasionally has to apply the brakes. But Brother Mike says it's an indication of how Choices is helping students bring their Marianist education to life.

“We're developing leaders. Part of Marianist life is community. That community has happened here and it has overflowed into the streets.”

Moroski agrees. If Marianist founder Blessed William Joseph Chaminade were alive today, he says, “he'd hang out here.” ♦

Shelly Reese is a freelance writer from Cincinnati.

Schooling of the Heart

Those discerning a call to Marianist religious life are invited to experience the contours of community living and the depths of prayer.

BY JAN D. DIXON

"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

— Matthew 4:19

IT'S 6 A.M. IN DAYTON, OHIO. Somewhere on the second floor of the Marianist novitiate, an alarm clock is going off. Here in the early morning darkness, six novices are waking to participate in the ritual of daily prayer — a practice established nearly 1,600 years ago by St. Benedict and adopted by nearly every Catholic religious order. Their morning supplications to Mary followed by shared morning prayers begin the day, one characterized by a quiet pace and ample time for personal reflection.

The first year at the novitiate is "a time of slowing down," says Marianist Brother Tom Wendorf, national



director of vocations for the Marianists.

"Though people want to jump into ministry, we need them to pause, sink down roots in the Marianist spirit and community life, so they can listen for what God is calling them to do."

The novitiate experience is a 20-month program designed to help participants determine if Marianist religious life is right for them. It also is a way for the novitiate community to determine "whether they have the qualities to live the Marianist life," says Marianist Brother Mike O'Grady, assistant novice director. "We want to see if these guys can be brothers to the men they live with. Can they

Novices gather with the Marianist community for morning prayers.





Brother Tom Wendorf, SM,
national director of vocations for
the Marianists, in conversation
with Novices Nhan Nguyen and
Brandon Paluch

live in community? Do they have the discipline to be men of prayer?"

It also is a time of grounding oneself for a lifetime of ministry. "Passion for ministry won't sustain you for the long haul," says Marianist Father Chris Wittmann, who will assume the position of novice director in January 2012. "Although it's exciting, if that's all you have, you'll burn out."

The broader goal of the novitiate program is to help participants build a strong foundation in faith — deepening their relationship with God through prayer and study — that will enable them to sustain a religious vocation with its blessings and challenges.

Schooling of the heart

By 9 a.m. the novices are in a classroom for a lecture on Mariology. It is one of many courses they will take throughout the first nine months of the program, including studies in prayer, Marianist history and spirituality and religious vows.

Half of the novices in this class — Hugo Bastida, 41, Norman Capinpin, 29, Andrew Caruso, 29, Michael Chiuri, 38, Nhan Nguyen, 45, and Brandon Paluch, 28 — became acquainted with the Marianists in high school or college and all developed deeper bonds with

the brothers by the time they first declared interest in the order as a contact — the first step on the path to brotherhood. (For more about steps in the formation process, see "When a Sacred Voice Calls," *ALIVE*, Spring 2007; www.marianist.com/alive.) Prior to entering the novitiate, each had completed an aspirancy year, or what Novice Brandon Paluch calls the

"Marianist fitting room."

"It's your first chance to try on Marianist life by living for one year in a community to see how it fits," he says. "I asked myself after that year: Can I walk away from this? The answer was no. I need to go deeper."

The novitiate experience is structured so participants can disengage from

the busyness of the world to gain a glimpse of life through God's eyes. This is a schooling of the heart that requires openness to mystery and an acceptance of whatever might unfold. It also takes a large measure of humility as one lets go of personal agendas and ego. "I encourage participants to be patient and humble in this process," says Brother Tom. "Allow God to work in you. This doesn't always happen on your terms."



Brother Mike O'Grady, SM

A Day in the Life of a Marianist Novice

For more about daily novitiate life, be sure to watch a newly released video called *A Day in the Life of a Marianist Novice* at www.marianist.com/vocations or request a copy of the DVD by contacting Brother Tom Wendorf, national vocation director, at 314.533.1207 or twendorf@sm-usa.org.



Brother Tom Wendorf, SM



Novice Brandon Paluch



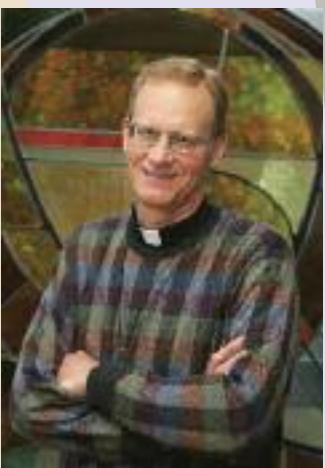
Novice Andrew Caruso



Novice Michael Chiuri



Novice Hugo Bastida



Father Chris Wittmann, SM



Novice Nhan Nguyen



Novice Mark Motz



Novice Norman Capinpin

Shown, the current first- and second-year novices for the Marianist Province of the United States; Brother Tom Wendorf (top, left) is director of vocations for the Province; Father Chris Wittmann (below, left) will become novice director in January 2012

Be still and know ...

It's Thursday morning, and stillness has settled over the novitiate grounds. Even the kitchen exudes a quiet hum. That's because every Thursday is "desert day," says Brother Mike O'Grady. "We don't schedule anything. We encourage people to be silent, to pray all day or just be still."

Depending on one's personality, this time of quiet can be a "special privilege," says Novice Nhan Nguyen, the oldest among this novitiate class. But others may find it frustrating, even unsettling.

"I used to be a workaholic," says Marianist Brother José Julián Matos-Auffant, 37, who professed first vows in May. "Transitioning to life here was tough. It felt like my life had come to a screeching halt." Looking back, Brother José says his time at the novitiate was transformational — "a challenge and a grace."

Part of the purpose of the novitiate year is to force participants to sit with themselves, to deal with their interior issues — both their gifts and flaws, says Father Mike Lisbeth, current novice director. "Spiritual direc-

tion is critical to help novices integrate what they are experiencing and learning."

It also helps to have the guidance and support of the novitiate directors for dealing with the intensity of living with others on a daily basis.

Where's my sandwich?

It's breakfast on a Friday morning and Marianist Brother Tom Farnsworth, who lives in the novitiate community, is scrounging through the refrigerator looking for a sandwich he has set aside for lunch — one he says he has been thinking about since early morning. It is an open invitation for those in the room to volley some quick wit. The banter at the kitchen table dissolves into goodhearted teasing and laughter.

Humor and collegiality are some of the saving graces of living in community and help form bonds of loyalty and love. "Sometimes humor is the one thing that gets me through the day," says Brother Tom Wendorf. But he notes that community life can draw

out the worst in people, too. To live well in community means learning good communications skills and the patience to appreciate one another's differences, he says. "It's a school for learning to love as Jesus loves."

For this novitiate class, one catalyst for learning has been its ethnic and cultural diversity. "There are 16 brothers living in the novitiate community representing seven nationalities," says Novice Hugo Bastida, a native of Cuba. "The best part is the richness this brings to our discussions, our study together — even our mealtimes," says Novice Michael Chiuri, a Kenyan. "We are like a mini United Nations."

However, differences in culture can allow tensions to break through. Learning how to respond with the appropriate balance of challenge and patience is part of the task. "I don't know anyone who doesn't struggle in this way," says Novice Brandon. "It's part of life. I figure if you are going to struggle anyway, why not struggle with people aimed at trying to bring the love of God into the world? I think a Marianist community is a good place to grow in that way."

A path to fullness of joy

It is 5:15 p.m. at the novitiate and the community is gathering for evening prayers and Eucharist. Novice Brandon stops before entering the chapel. "I've had days when I've wondered: 'What am I doing here?'" he says. "I think this is normal. Any major commitment in life, including marriage, involves moments of doubt and grace. But here I have the support of others engaged in the same questions."

Help our vocation ministry.

Vocation ministry is crucial to the Marianists' mission of bringing Jesus into the world by following the example of Mary. Here are a couple of things you can do to assist this vital ministry.

Be sure to ask: Marianists view vocation ministry as more than recruitment: It involves accompanying people as they seek to discern God's call in their lives. It is a ministry and a matter of Christian discipleship. But it does require inviting others to this life, an opportunity we encourage *ALIVE* readers to engage in as you notice young people searching for their vocational calling.

Financial donations: Another form of support is financial. There are monthly giving clubs and other options for you to choose from. To send a donation now, please use the enclosed envelope or go to our website at www.marianist.com/support. For more information, contact Allison Hewitt at 314.533.1207 or email ahewitt@sm-usa.org.

The answer they all are wrestling to discover:
Why become a Marianist?

Father Chris mulls the question over, looking for the right words. "Why?" he repeats the question. "At the risk of sounding flip, because it's a good life. It's a good fit. It makes sense and there's something about me that comes alive at the prospect of this life.

"Perhaps it's a path to happiness. It has been that for me, a life of fullness and joy. That's what we are inviting novices to discover. Is this that path for them?" ♦





From the **Inside** **Out**



Marianist Brother Cletus Behlmann's colorful paintings and generous spirit are the gifts of a vibrant inner life.

BY NANCY M. PREYOR-JOHNSON

Marianist Brother Cletus Behlmann begins each day with a prayer. "I wake up and talk things over. I tell God what I need and thank him for what I've got," he says. He always ends with a simple request: "Give me some direction."

As a Marianist for the past 55 years, Brother Cletus has grown in many directions — teacher, artist, world traveler — roles that have nurtured his creative spirit. For the past decade, he has been living at the Marianist Residence on the campus of St. Mary's University in San Antonio, a Marianist university, where he serves as the university's artist-in-residence.

People recognize Brother Cletus' work for its life and vibrant color. They also appreciate him for his love, his generous spirit and his style.

Discovering the artist within

Brother Cletus grew up on a farm near St. Louis, the eleventh of 12 children in a boisterous Catholic family. Though his journey to become a Marianist was straightforward, his path to becoming a full-time artist took time to unfold.

He joined the Marianists at age 19 and professed first vows in 1953. Three years later, he graduated from St. Mary's University in San Antonio with a bachelor's degree in English and a minor in music.

Brother Cletus taught at schools in Texas before moving back to the Midwest in the late 1960s. His last full-time teaching assignment was at St. John Vianney High School, a Marianist high school in St. Louis, where he taught art for seven years.

While teaching, Brother Cletus took courses at the Chicago Institute of Art and Washington University School of Art in St. Louis. He moved to San Antonio in the late 1970s and has been actively involved with the St. Mary's arts community for the past 34 years.

Art and pajama pants

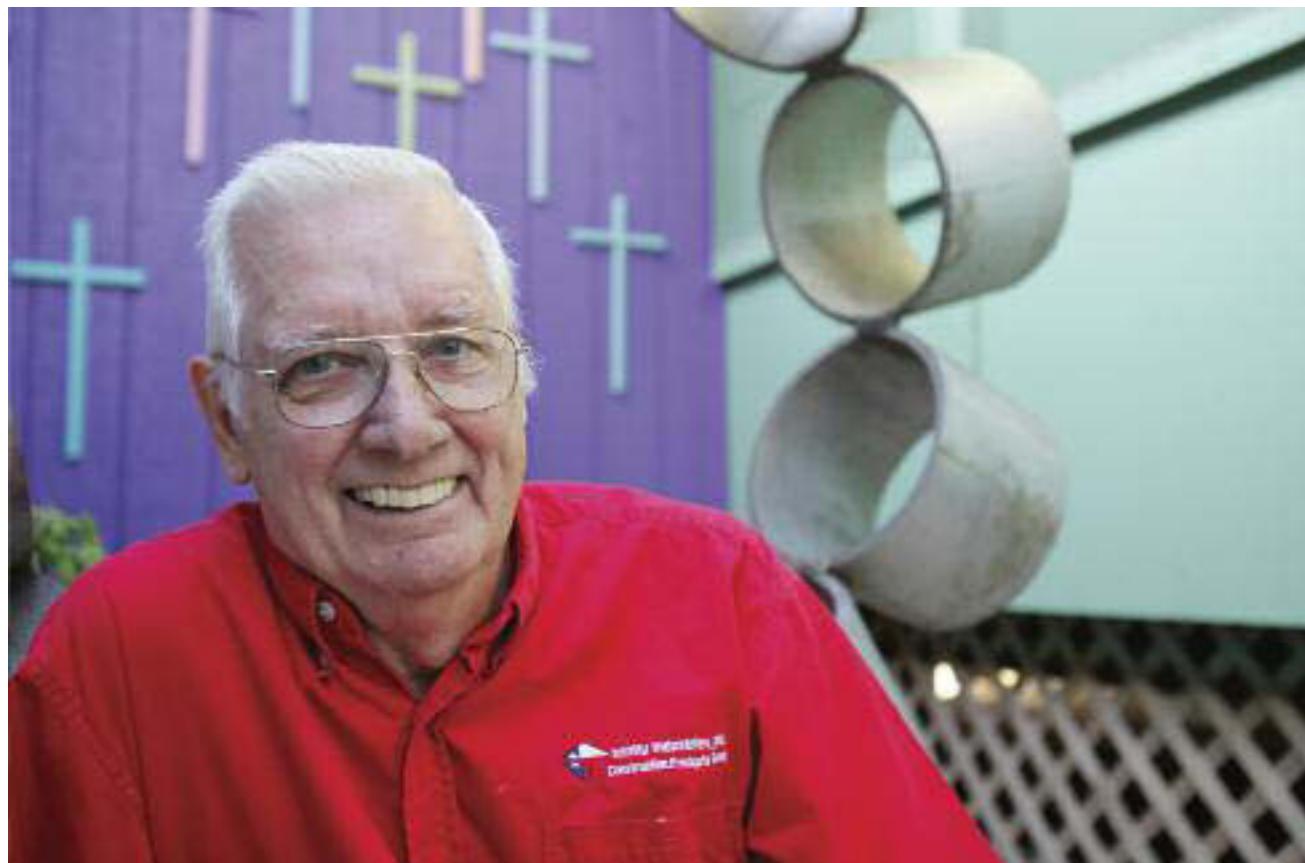
Visit Brother Cletus in his studio and you'll find him smiling from ear to ear. Surrounding him are paintings and supplies. He calls his humble studio and gallery near St. Mary's University on San Antonio's west side his "disaster area." It's where the magic begins for his art.

Brother Cletus has experience in various art media, but now focuses on watercolor and acrylics. "When inspiration hits, I work until the project is finished,"

he says. He sifts through a stack of unframed paintings, listing the locations where he painted them: Guatemala. England. New Jersey. Spain. Jamaica. France. Maine.

"Assisi, Italy, was my favorite," he says. "It was quiet and peaceful. I felt like I had the whole place to myself."

Brian St. John, an art professor at St. Mary's University who has known Brother Cletus for the past



22 years, calls him a "fixture" at St. Mary's University and in the community.

Brother Cletus Behlmann, SM

"His energy never ceases to amaze me. He is prolific and passionate about making art. This guy is in his element. He loves his work and he's good at what he does and he does it all while wearing pajama pants and paint-splattered shoes" — Brother Cletus' trademark.

"It's great fun," says Brother Cletus. "I can't think of a job I would rather have. I marvel at how doctors remember prescriptions or how engineers figure stuff out. That is not my world."

The product of an inner life

Brother Cletus says his spirituality—his ministry—hangs on the walls. "It comes from inside of me onto the canvas."

A quality that makes Brother Cletus different, says Marianist Brother Tom Suda, is his temperament.

"He is easygoing. He doesn't get too concerned with the details."

*Brother Cletus Behlmann
at his art studio near
St. Mary's University*



Tom Egolf, a resident of Houston, has known Brother Cletus since the early 1950s. "He is a happy, outgoing person with a wonderful outlook on life," Tom says.

When they were students at St. Mary's University, Tom and Cletus were asked to paint a room. "Cletus painted each wall a different color. He tried to make it cheerful. That's what he does with his art — he makes people happy."

Brother Cletus also is known for his generosity. Name a fundraiser in south Texas, and he has probably donated a piece of his art for the auction. "When a fundraiser makes a lot of money from my work, that's good," he says.

Brother Cletus will be the featured artist for the San José Clinic in Houston, a charity healthcare clinic that will celebrate its 90th anniversary in May. Paule Anne Lewis, executive director of the charity, said it was an easy decision.

"Everyone knows and loves his

art," Lewis said during a visit to Brother Cletus' studio.

A good life

At age 78, Brother Cletus says his health is good. He points to a bum knee and when he mentions his pacemaker, he's matter-of-fact.

"I got a pacemaker six weeks ago," he says. "I stepped off the elevator and hit the floor. Good thing people were around. I didn't know I had heart problems."

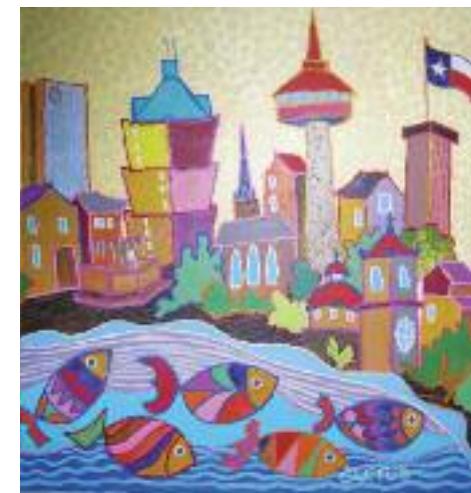
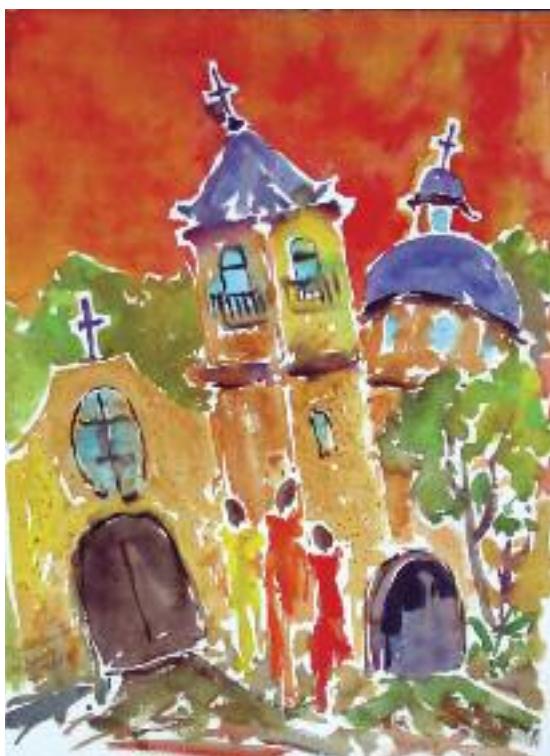
But one thing he does know: When his time comes, he's ready. "I tell people that if I have a heart attack, don't try to revive me. I don't want to be someone who needs around-the-clock care. I've had a good life. I've laughed. I've traveled. I've painted.

"It's inevitable," he says about death. "So when I've done my last one ..." he points to an empty canvas, then smiles and snaps his fingers.

"That's it. I'll go with a brush in my hand." ♦

Nancy M. Preyor-Johnson is a freelance writer from San Antonio.

Mission San José, watercolor



San Antonio, acrylic

A Place to Honor Mary

Forty-two years in the making, a Marian shrine in Zambia has become a place for spiritual renewal and forgiveness.

BY JOHN SCHROEDER



Father Anthony Jansen, SM

You could say it was perfect timing. In 1969, Marianist Father Anthony Jansen arrived in Zambia, a country in southern Africa. He had been called to serve as a chaplain at Matero Boys Secondary School, a Marianist sponsored school in Lusaka, the capital.

That same year, the Archbishop of Lusaka began soliciting people to help build a permanent Marian shrine for the archdiocese. Father Anthony and a handful of others embraced the challenge — one that began a 42-year journey.

This summer, with the consecration of a permanent structure, the journey was completed. Along the way, they galvanized the support of local parishes and nurtured a devotional and pilgrimage tradition that has enriched the faith of families and the lives of those who gave so much to this effort.

In Mary's presence

Marian devotion runs deep in the archdiocese. Father Anthony explains, "For many years, the practice was to make a pilgrimage on the Feast of the Assumption — with one parish hosting all the others on a rotating basis. The archbishop had purchased a statue of Our Lady of Fatima and commissioned us to find a suitable place for a permanent shrine."

Father Anthony teamed with a Jesuit priest, Father Lawrence Tomasin, SJ, to choose a site in Chelston (about 12 miles from Lusaka) and began work in the early 1970s.

They included other religious and lay people in the project who were responsible for planning and hosting pilgrimages each month. This was the key to its success, says Father Anthony. When they enlisted the support of local parishes that provided instruction on how to appreciate the shrine as a time for reconciliation among families, the power of this sacred event was evident.

"It was an honor to see young and old, husbands



Marian shrine near Lusaka, Zambia

and wives, involved in the sacrament of reconciliation — using this pilgrimage to heal their relationships and strengthen their faith in Christ through Mary. This was the most significant value of these pilgrimages," says Father Anthony.

Participation in the pilgrimages continues to grow. "Most months, you'll see hundreds of people at the shrine," says Father Anthony, "and for the Feast of the Assumption each August, pilgrims typically number in the thousands."

Where we belonged

Over the years many improvements have been made to the site to accommodate the monthly celebrations, including a steel pavilion, stations of the cross and more recently, a permanent church building.

Having moved back to the United States in 2010 after 41 years in Lusaka, Father Anthony wasn't among the 8,000 people on hand for the dedication. But he has no regrets: "I am happy to have been involved in such a great undertaking," he says. "As a Marianist, I believed this is where we belonged, closely associated with a project to honor the place of Mary in the lives of ordinary Catholics." ♦

John Schroeder is a freelance writer from St. Louis.

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The Marianist Family

Reflections on Chaminade's vision of a collaborative community

BY JAN D. DIXON

WHEN BLESSED WILLIAM JOSEPH CHAMINADE, founder of the Marianists, returned to France in 1800 following the French Revolution, he found himself at a crossroads. Parish life and the Church were a shambles. Without the traditions and structures of the past, many former Church leaders were at a loss. How do you rebuild the Christian faith in a country where people are demoralized and the Church has been decimated?

For Chaminade, this was a call to start something new. He began by looking for signs of life, of God's spirit at work. He soon organized groups of men,

women and young people — believers who gathered to share the Gospel, to encourage each other in faith and to rediscover what it meant to live as a dynamic Christian community. From these groups, Father Chaminade built the impressive "Sodality of Bordeaux" — his community dedicated to Mary, the Mother of God.

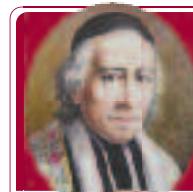
These dynamic lay groups became the engine for Chaminade's apostolic mission of

re-Christianizing France. Eventually, some "sodalists" felt a calling to become brothers, priests and sisters — forming the religious orders of men and women that would collaborate with the laity in carrying on Chaminade's vision. Today the three groups — Lay Marianists, the Society of Mary and the Daughters of Mary Immaculate — are known as the Marianist Family and are one of Chaminade's most important legacies.

As Marianists around the world celebrate "Cham-

inade Year" — a time to honor and remember the impact of this faithful visionary — *ALIVE* magazine spoke with Father Martin

Solma, provincial of the Society of Mary, Sister Gretchen Trautman, provincial of the Marianist Sisters, and Rudy Reyes, president of a lay organization known as the Marianist Lay Network of North America, about the significance of the Marianist Family. What inspiration can we draw from Chaminade's original vision? How do we reclaim and pass on these lessons from the past? What do we gain in ministry together? What follows are excerpts from their conversations.



BLESSED
WILLIAM
JOSEPH
CHAMINADE

250TH ANNIVERSARY • 1761-2011

Spectacle of saints

What Chaminade set out to do in 19th century France was unheard of in those days — encouraging lay people from all walks of life to work together with vowed brothers, priests and sisters in carrying out Gospel ministry. But this was the genius of his vision, says Rudy Reyes.

"Chaminade was an 'ecclesial entrepreneur' of his day. He was like Mark Dell in his dorm room discovering new ways to assemble computers or Mark Zuckerberg dropping out of Harvard to start Facebook and change the way we communicate. Chaminade was pushing the envelope of how Catholics relate to one another as the body of Christ."

His vision was to bring together people from all strata of society and all walks of life, forming what he saw as an authentic Christian community — "a spectacle of saints" — like the first Christian communities, having but one heart and one mind.



"Chaminade was an 'ecclesial entrepreneur' of his day. He was like ... Mark Zuckerberg dropping out of Harvard to start Facebook and change the way we communicate. Chaminade was pushing the envelope of how Catholics relate to one another as the body of Christ."

— Rudy Reyes, president of the
Marianist Lay Network of North America

"Chaminade believed that if he could help people see what it means to live a meaningful Catholic life and grow in goodness," says Father Marty Solma, "then others would be attracted and want to be a part of this 'spectacle.'" For Chaminade, to "multiply Christians" was to rebuild the Church.

Which happened: Starting with a handful of participants in 1800, Chaminade's lay groups grew to more than 500 people in just three years.

This doesn't surprise Sister Gretchen Trautman. "When people are gathered around a common purpose and beliefs, there is an energy that can be felt



"We do our best work as the Marianist Family when we look in the same direction with eyes of faith. Chaminade gave us this collaborative model. It is up to us to keep it alive and pass this to a new generation."

— Sister Gretchen Trautman,
provincial of the Marianist Sisters

and witnessed," she says. "This is the transforming energy of God, and where the spirit works best."

Where is this dynamism today?

Community dynamism not only attracts people, it offers a "glimpse of the kingdom," says Reyes. One place he sees this happening is at Marianist LIFE (Living in Faith Experiences) retreats, a program that fosters faith among adolescents. "For eight days, we gather kids in community, a space we've created for them, to experience what it means to be the body of Christ to each other," says Reyes. "At the end, you often hear kids say: 'This has been the best week of my life.'"

"For the first time, many young people learn what it means to make faith in Jesus their own, to forgive one another and to truly accept each other," says Father Marty — transformative experiences that continue when they return to LIFE programs at their parishes and schools.

This glimpse of the kingdom also is evident in Marianist Family retreats and at parishes, high

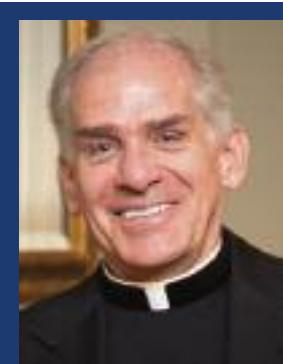
schools and universities where there are ample opportunities for laity and religious to work together, says Sister Gretchen. "We do our best work as the Marianist Family when we look in the same direction with eyes of faith. Chaminade gave us this collaborative model. It is up to us to keep it alive and pass this to a new generation."

Reappropriating our Marianist identity

There are some things that can get in the way of Chaminade's vision of working together as a family "with one heart, one mind." Pride, misunderstandings and personal agendas are some of those stumbling blocks. But with renewed emphasis on collaboration and a willingness to work together, these issues can be overcome.

"If we go back to our original inspiration, this began as a lay movement," says Father Marty. "We are growing in appreciation of this and reappropriating our collaborative identity as the Marianist Family," he says.

"The laity was the only order for the first 16 years of Chaminade's ministry," notes Reyes. "Many were young, energetic and emboldened. I'd like our lay communities to rediscover what this means. Along the way, the Marianist Family may have lost some of its identity, with the laity and religious often working separately. But as teachers, campus ministry teams,



"If we go back to our original inspiration, this began as a lay movement. We are growing in appreciation of this and reappropriating our collaborative identity as the Marianist Family."

— Father Marty Solma,
provincial of the Society of Mary

lay groups, LIFE leaders and religious, we are all collaborators in mission."

Reyes believes that mission is clear. "We are an intentional group of baptized people committed to being Christ to each other and the world in the spirit of His Mother." ♦



The Gift of Years

Three Marianists in the eighth decade of their lives share the joys, challenges and surprises that come with the gift of longevity.

Each stage of life has a purpose, says Sister Joan Chittister, OSB, in her book, *The Gift of Years*, but the last stage is special because it enables a person to assimilate all of his or her life experiences. "These are the capstone years, the time in which a whole new life is in the making again. But the gift of these years is not merely in being alive — it is the gift of becoming more fully alive than ever," she says.

What does it mean to be more fully alive, even as a person looks in the mirror and sees that the passage of time has taken its toll? *ALIVE* magazine talked with three Marianists in their 80s — Brother Joe Barrett, Father Bob Backherms and Father Stephen Tutas — about how they continue to grow, engage in life, even thrive in their elder years.

Use your imagination

It's Thursday afternoon and Brother Joe Barrett, age 87, is in his room at the Marianist Residence, a Marianist community in San Antonio that provides independent living and nursing care for elderly Marianists.

The phone rings. "Hello, this is God's office," says Brother Joe. "With whom would you like to speak? God? His son, Jesus? Mary?" he asks in a serious voice that breaks into a hearty laugh as soon as the caller identifies Joe's voice.

Always up for a practical joke and a good one-liner, Brother Joe doesn't miss an opportunity to have fun. "I have always enjoyed life," he says, noting how much he loved teaching social studies and serving as a guidance counselor in Marianist high schools, the last 20 years at Daniel Gross Catholic High School in Omaha, Neb. "I talked with kids about serious things, but I always added a twist of humor so they were smiling when they were learning."

Brother Joe often told his students that they had seven senses: hearing, touch, taste, smell, sight — and a sense of humor, as well as common sense. "Common sense is not learned at a university, but from observing life," he says.

What has he observed about getting older? "There is a great advantage in being old because you have so



Brother Joe Barrett, SM



many life experiences that you can use in a positive way," he says.

Father Bob Backherms, SM

One way Brother Joe does this is through storytelling. Not surprisingly, this lively and humorous Marianist has a long list of former students and friends who stay in touch with him. "I find snatches of my life, things that happened 40 years ago or remembering some of the famous people I've met, and relate these stories to people today in new ways. I use my life experiences to draw them in. I love to get people thinking," he says.

Say "yes" to life

If you stop to visit Father Bob Backherms, who lives at Mercy Siena, a retirement center near Dayton, Ohio, where many elderly Marianists live, you'd better call first. That's because Father Bob is so eager to try new things — a lunch, an educational seminar, a trip to a museum — chances are he won't be there. "The staff quit asking me if I wanted to go on these outings," he says, "because they know I always sign up. Now they automatically put me on the list."

It's one of the many ways this 83-year old Marianist stays active and fully alive. "We have art classes here, too. I enjoy working with clay. I'm always trying something new," he says.

Throughout his life, Father Bob served the Marianists in a variety of assignments, including his early years teaching in Marianist high schools before being ordained in the early 1950s.

In the spirit of Mary, one of the guiding principles

Melting into God

"This is a time of melting into God. The words that will come now will be honest ones, the hopeful ones. This time will be the culmination of all of the learning of all the other years. The veil between us and eternity will begin to tear and we will begin the slow walk through it, ready, open, thrown upon the heart of God.

Now the mystery is about to reveal itself. Now the time is complete. Now it is finished. Now it is only beginning."

— Joan Chittister, OSB,
The Gift of Years, © 2008.

of his life is to say “yes” to everything he’s been asked to do. With this open-hearted spirit, he found himself serving in ministries throughout the world — four times in India and twice in Africa — followed by several years of retreat ministry in the States.

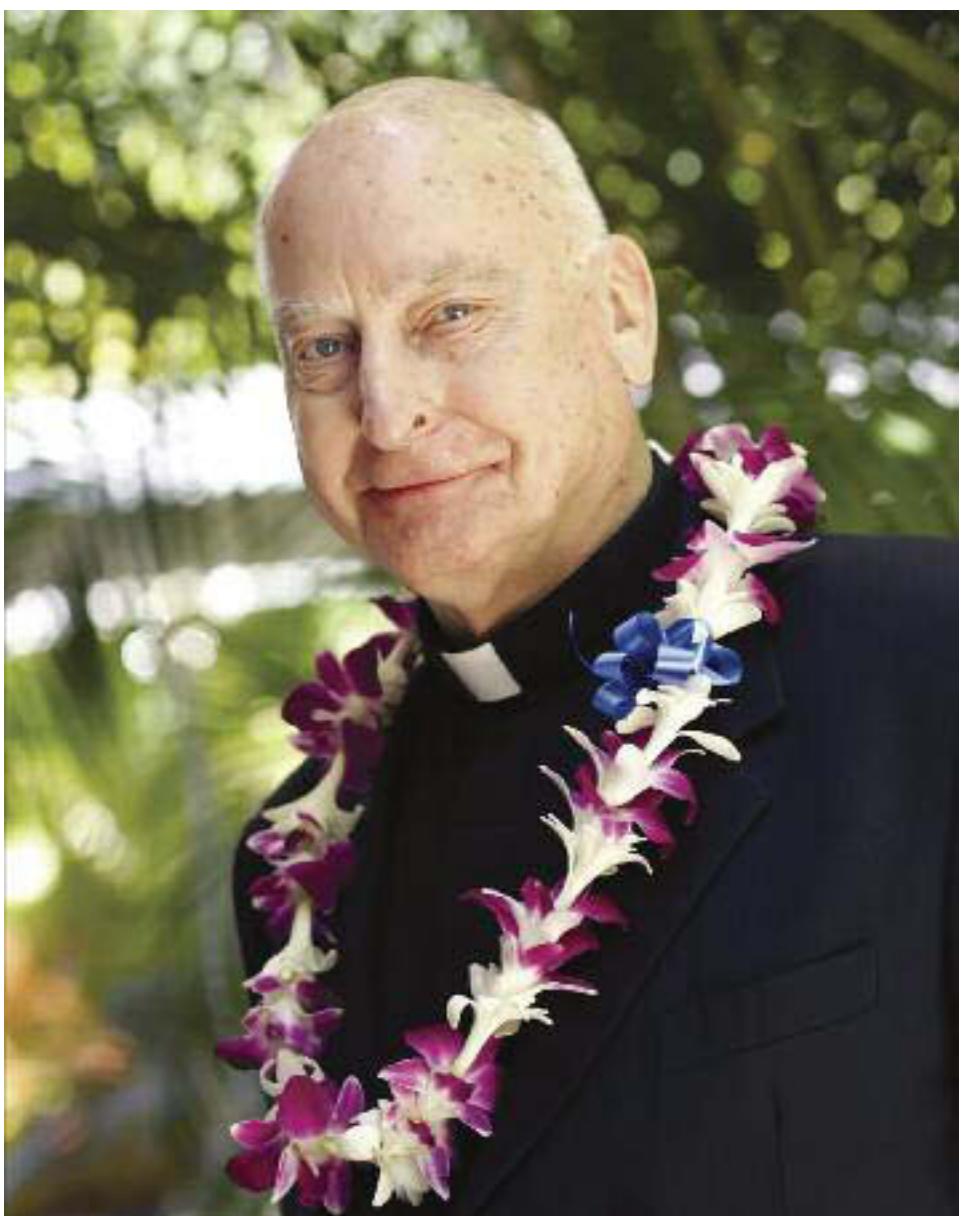
Father Bob especially loves getting others to try new things. Last year, he organized a dance at Mercy Siena. “We hired a small dance band and got everyone — even those in wheelchairs — out on the dance floor doing the hokey pokey. The place was packed,” he says. “They loved it.”

“I like to challenge people,” says Father Bob, who is trying to get a drama club together for a show. “Now that would be fun.”

Be open to mystery

Father Steve Tutas is another Marianist who may be hard to track down on any given day. Though he has lived in the Marianist community in Cupertino, Calif., since 1982, where the Marianists run a healthcare facility, this 84-year old priest is often on the go.

Father Steve Tutas, SM



Show your gratitude

There are more than 100 Marianists living in one of three retirement centers across the country that provide excellent healthcare. These brothers and priests have touched many lives in their roles as pastors, teachers, school chaplains, social workers and missionaries. Now they need your help. The Marianists invite you to join them in financially participating in the care of their elderly. There are many ways your donation can offset the cost of care and serve as a meaningful expression of your appreciation for their years of service.

Financial donations: There are monthly giving clubs and other options for you to choose from. To send a donation now, please use the enclosed envelope or go to our website at www.marianist.com/support. For more information, contact Alison Hewitt at 314.533.1207 or email ahewitt@sm-usa.org.

He continues to minister through retreats, spiritual direction and Province committee assignments — work that mirrors much of what he has done in his years of active ministry, including serving as Superior General of the Society of Mary in the 1970s. In 1989, he was awarded the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* medal for his leadership in the Church as president of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men.

One committee he serves on is called “Aging with Grace,” in which participants examine the aging process and the habits that support a quality life.

One of the secrets of a good life is a practice of gratitude, says Father Steve. “I start my day by looking back with gratitude to what has happened in my life. I look forward with hope to the new day and I live as much as possible in the present moment. Gratitude is the most important part of this exercise. It’s simply recognizing how God is at work in my life,” he says.

A key theme for Father Steve is the idea that each day is a perpetual mystery. “Our God is a God of surprises. So we need to approach aging with anticipation — be open to what’s around the corner.”

God gives us this time in our 80s to keep growing, says Father Steve. “You see things that have happened in your life, even the rough experiences, through God’s eyes.”

One issue in a long life is dealing with loss — the death of loved ones and sometimes the loss of independence and health.

“You can’t dismiss the grieving process,” says Father Steve. “It is real. But as Christians, we believe that death means a life has changed, not ended. A lot of people have trouble with death. But it is the start of something new,” he says. “As a believer, that is our hope.” ♦

The COMFORTING *Power of Prayer*

An oncologist in Texas learns that a simple gesture — a Marianist Mass card — provides consolation in times of need.

BY JOHN SCHROEDER



Catherine Ronaghan, M.D.

As a surgical oncologist, Dr. Catherine Ronaghan often meets people at a vulnerable time in their lives. They come to her for cancer treatment at Covenant Medical Group in Lubbock, Texas. It's significant, she says, that the first thing they see in the reception area is a photo of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a favorite of Dr. Ronaghan's, depicting a grotto at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

"It's the only piece of art in my lobby, and that sums it up for me,"

Dr. Ronaghan says. She believes in Mary's intercession and in the power of prayer. She also understands that God has given her a particular talent for an important medical specialty.

"Patients often say things like, 'thank goodness you saved me,' and my response is always the same: 'It's not me,'" she says. "This is my vocation, what God put me on earth to do — and I make it clear that it is God who deserves the glory."

That's true no matter what the outcome of the treatment, Dr. Ronaghan believes. Some patients are cured. Some succumb to the disease. But all are God's children, and all are being drawn to union with God in heaven. Still, she remembers how devastated she felt in the early years of her practice when a patient died.

"I remember saying to my mom, 'I wish I could do something,' and she said, 'you ought to send a Mass card,'" Dr. Ronaghan recalls. "It was a brilliant idea and I've been sending Marianist Mass cards ever since."

Long ago, the surgeon and her staff stopped counting how many Mass cards they've ordered. "It's taken on a life of its own," she says — with remembrances requested for a much wider circle than the patients she's treating. Colleagues, extended family members, business associates, "I send them to almost everybody. They are grateful to know their loved ones are being remembered in prayer."

Dr. Ronaghan thinks the memorial cards offered by the Marianist Mission are "perfect."

"I know exactly what the card will look like and exactly what the family members will read. Many say they like the message so much they've started sending Marianist cards themselves."

Which is not unlike Dr. Ronaghan's own experience, since she first learned of the Marianists' ministry of consolation through her mother's suggestion.

"My parents had been donating to the Marianists for many years, and that's how it started for me," she says. "It's a win-win: People who are grieving receive a beautiful remembrance, they know someone is praying for their loved one, and the Marianists get the support they need to carry out their mission." ♦

John Schroeder is a freelance writer from St. Louis.

To Learn More

about the Marianist prayer ministry, visit www.marianist.com/mission or call 1.800.348.4732

SLICE *of Life*

Eight Brothers Profess First Vows in Eastern Africa

Eight brothers from the Region of Eastern Africa professed first vows in the Society of Mary this summer. The ceremony was held at St. John the Evangelist Mission Church in Limuru. Father Michael Jun Otieno served as the main celebrant and Father Allen DeLong was the homilist. Brother Chola Mulenga, regional superior, and Father Callistus Jeje, deputy regional superior, received the vows. A reception followed.



At the vow profession in Limuru, from left, Brothers Elvis Owuya and Shadrack Malesi, Deacon Joseph Maria Mwaura (novice director), Brothers Dancan Onyango, Kennedy Bwalya, Eipdius Ngosa, Paul Katumbi and Wisdom Nyondo, Father Allen DeLong (assistant novice director) and Brother Frank Sandiko

Brother Frank Deibel, 103, Celebrated as Oldest Vowed Catholic Male Religious

Brother Frank Deibel celebrated his 103rd birthday on Aug. 13 — the same day he celebrated 85 years of religious profession. He is the oldest vowed Catholic male religious in the United States, according to the National Religious Retirement Office. Brother Frank is accustomed to being



Brother Frank Deibel, SM

asked the secret of his longevity. His answer is short: Take a walk every day, love Jesus, Mary and Joseph and live a good life. Brother Frank spent the first two decades as a Marianist teaching in high schools in Ohio. In 1954, he became assistant librarian at the University of Dayton, a position he held for nearly 50 years. Brother Frank resides at Mercy Siena Retirement Community in Dayton, Ohio.

Brothers Nereo, José Jesús Profess Perpetual Vows in Mexico

Brothers Nereo Ramírez Hernández and José Jesús Ruiz Santillán from the District of Mexico professed perpetual vows with the Society of Mary at Our Lady of Guadalupe chapel in Colonia Amanecer Balvanera, Mexico. Brother Francisco González represented the Province and received the vows. Father Quentin Hakenewerth presided at the Mass and gave the homily. After the Mass, the Querétaro community hosted a dinner reception for 200 guests. Brother José Jesús serves as formation director of pre-novices and Brother Nereo teaches high school in Puebla.



Brothers José Jesús Ruiz and Nereo Ramírez Hernández



South program participants; Central program participants linked in prayer

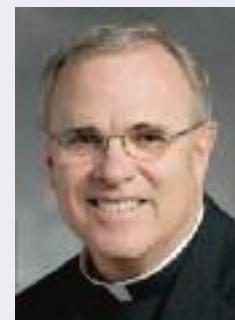
Marianist LIFE Hosts Regional Summer Programs

Marianist LIFE (Living In Faith Experience) hosted its annual trio of regional summer programs in June and July. Marianist LIFE Pacific (Occidental, Calif.), Marianist LIFE Central (Dayton) and Marianist LIFE South (Mountain Home, Texas) welcomed participants from across the continental

United States, Hawai'i, Puerto Rico and Ireland for workshops and experiences in leadership development, prayer, the sacraments, community building and social justice. A total of 196 high school students, 107 adults and 29 schools and parishes participated.

Marianist Pilgrimage to Italy Set for April

Marianist Father David Paul will serve as director of an 11-day Marianist Mission Italian pilgrimage April 13 – 23, 2012, to Padua, Assisi, Rome, Venice, Florence and Orvieto. The trip will include Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and prayer at the tombs of Blessed Pope John Paul II and Blessed Pope John XXIII. To receive a brochure, email Father David at dpaul@sm-usa.org or call 314.533.1207.



Father David Paul, SM

In Remembrance

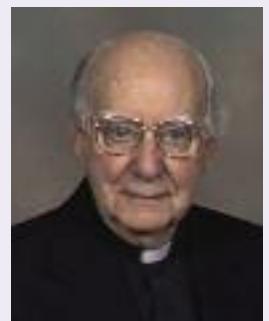
For the complete obituaries of these Marianists, visit www.marianist.com/obits. To make a memorial donation in the name of a Marianist, visit www.marianist.com/memorial.



Brother James Dods, SM

Brother James Dods, SM, 72, died June 25, 2011, in Honolulu. Brother Jim started his ministry as a teacher in Marianist schools in California. In 1964, he began serving in Japan where he worked as an English teacher, counselor

and administrator for six years. Returning to the States, he spent several years as a teacher and later as interim principal at Archbishop Riordan High School in San Francisco. In his last assignment, he worked as a college and scholarship advisor at Saint Louis School in Honolulu.



Father Richard O'Shaughnessy, SM

Father Richard O'Shaughnessy, SM, 93, died June 29, 2011, in San Antonio. Father Richard began his ministry as a teacher at a Catholic high school in Detroit. Following his ordination in 1947, he began a lifelong career as a Catholic educator

that would span several decades. He served as chaplain and taught English at schools in Missouri, Texas and Nebraska. With the exception of a brief period in Ireland, Father Richard served for 24 years at St. Mary's High School in St. Louis until his retirement from active ministry in 2008. He was the inspiration behind the founding of a Lay Marianist group of faculty, staff and parents at the school.

Father John Russi, SM, 71, died June 20, 2011, in Cupertino, Calif. Father Jack served

the Marianists as a Catholic educator most of his life at schools in California and Hawai'i. In 1967 he was ordained and worked as a teacher, counselor, chaplain and president at Archbishop Mitty High School in San Jose, Calif. In

1978, Father Jack served in provincial administration for the former Pacific Province for seven years. He returned to Archbishop Mitty until 1988 when he was called to serve as principal at Saint Louis School in Honolulu. In 1997, he returned to California to serve as provincial of the Pacific Province until 2002. He spent the last five years of his active ministry as a counselor and chaplain at Archbishop Riordan High School in San Francisco followed by one final stint at Archbishop Mitty in 2008.



Father John Russi, SM

For more Marianist news, visit www.marianist.com/familyonline.



"For I know the plans
I have for you ...
plans to give you
hope and a future."

— Jeremiah 29:11

The Plans I Have For You

BY JOAN MCGUINNESS WAGNER

As people of faith, we are comforted that God calls us by name, loves us for who we are — not what we do — and has hopes and dreams for each of us. This is an awesome and humbling belief. The God who created us knows our capabilities and encourages us to grow into them. But as doubting humans, we can anguish over discerning God's plan for us. What are we to do? Where are we to serve this loving and gracious God? With the smallness of our minds and tightness of our hearts, it is difficult to comprehend God's hopes for us.

Blessed William Joseph Chaminade experienced many of these questions. Answering the call to priesthood early in his life, he continued to be alert to where Mary was leading him. His life was filled with blessings and challenges. A favorite image of him is his time in Saragossa. Exiled from his beloved France, unable to use his faculties as a priest, Father Chaminade spent his days praying in front of the statue of Mary of the Pillar, asking the ageless question, "What am I to do with the rest of my life?" True to the goodness of God and the openness of his heart, Chaminade's question was answered.

Marie Thérèse de Lamourous had plans for her life. This quiet woman wanted to be a Carmelite nun, spending her life in prayer and silence. Suddenly she was asked to run a house for repentant prostitutes. She was appalled! She didn't want to engage in this work, yet her heart opened and she found such peace with these women that she never left them. What an act of faith, what a vocation story!

Throughout our lifetimes we revisit these questions in a variety of forms. "Should I take this job" ..."go to this school" ..."marry

Discovering God's plan for our life requires openness to change — and faith that moves us beyond our fears.

this person" ..."enter into religious life"..."remain single"..."give my time, my money, my talent to this cause?" The questions can paralyze us and mask our ability to hear the whispering of God.

Years ago a woman sat in my office trying to process a decision. Her reluctance to decide was evident. Finally I asked her why she was hesitant. Her answer: "I am afraid." My response was, "Do you know what you are afraid of?" "Yes," she said, "I am afraid I'll change."

Isn't this true? We are afraid to change. Responding to God's call, regardless of what the call may be, means we will be transformed in the process. Our role as parents changes as our children mature. New opportunities can require different skills. Moving from one ministry to another requires relocating, starting over. Letting go of our fears means believing the Scriptures when God says, "Be not afraid, I am with you always." We are altered by the transitions in our lives. The God of all ages who guided Abraham and Sarah, Mary and Joseph, Blessed Chaminade, Venerable Marie Thérèse and Venerable Adèle keeps all promises. We need only to believe and grow into the great dreams God has planned for us, allowing God to stretch us into new forms.

In this autumn season let us observe the cycles of the trees and pray that we have the courage to let go of our fears — to be the holy people God dreams us to be. Amen. ■

Joan McGuinness Wagner is director of Marianist activities, Office of the Rector, at the University of Dayton.



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