

MARIANIST CULTURE, FAITH AND COMMUNITY

ALIVE

SPRING 2012 • VOL. 9, NO. 1



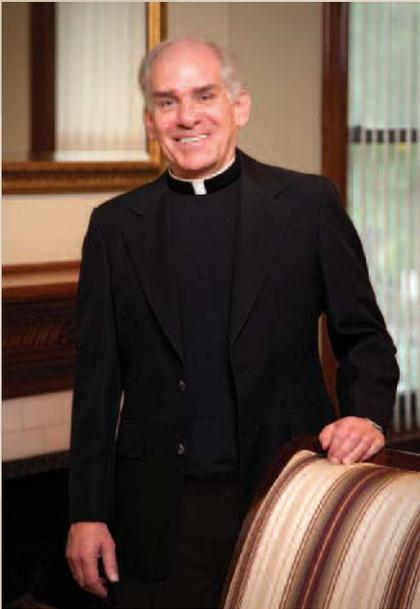
Children from a Marianist-sponsored school in the slums of Nairobi are eager to learn, page 4.

A MESSAGE

from the Provincial

Dear Friends,

The Gospel parable of the mustard seed teaches us that the Kingdom of God begins small and grows, often in unexpected ways. This is an appropriate image for the Marianist primary school that serves 1,968 poor children in the Mukuru kwa Njenga slum in Nairobi, Kenya.



Father Martin Solma, SM

Begun in 1992 by the Irish Sisters of Mercy as an informal school to serve the educational needs of slum children, its name was changed to “Our Lady of Nazareth Primary School” when the Marianists assumed responsibility for it in January 1997. Marianist novices and aspirants painted the mabati (iron sheet) buildings. Flowers and trees were planted and walkways were constructed in what had been a river of mud in the middle of the slum. The transformed school was opened with new energy, guided by a Marianist educational philosophy. New buildings, a beautiful library, a new dining facility and a state-of-the-art computer lab

have created a little oasis in the dreary surroundings of Mukuru. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the school’s foundation.

But buildings alone do not make a school. Students do. One shining example is Jenipher Nywawera Kahuthu, who graduated last December from Moi University with a Doctor of Medicine degree. She originally came to OLN because of the feeding program, which is sponsored by the World Food Organization. Having done well on the national exam at the end of her primary education, she gained

admission to high school. Through our sponsorship program she was connected to a family leaving Kenya who wanted to give something back to the country that had been their home for many years. At the end of high school, these sponsors continued to support her, allowing her to realize her dream.



Jenipher Nywawera Kahuthu

There are many students like Jenipher — bright, capable and ambitious — who need a chance.

Under the guidance of Chris Hill, a Marianist supporter, the feeding program has grown like the mustard seed to include a hot cup of high-nutrition porridge served each morning to the students, many of whom come to school with empty stomachs. The story of Chris and the students is told on page 4 in this issue of *ALIVE*.

We are deeply grateful to the many people who support this and other ministries sponsored by the Society of Mary.

Thank you, thank you. Congratulations to Jenipher! Happy anniversary to OLN!

In Jesus and Mary,

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Provincial

Father Martin Solma, SM
Provincial

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Front cover
Children of Our Lady of Nazareth Primary School,
a Marianist-sponsored school in the slums of
Nairobi, Kenya. See story, page 4.

Back cover
The Marianists encourage people to take time for
spiritual reflection at one of their retreat centers.
See story, page 13.

ALIVE
Vol. 9, No. 1 – Spring 2012

ALIVE is published three times a year (Spring,
Summer, Fall/Winter) by the Marianists, Province
of the United States. Comments welcomed. Direct
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mailing list, email amueller@sm-usa.org

POSTMASTER: Send corrections to *ALIVE*, The
Marianists, Province of the United States, 4425
West Pine Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108-2301, USA

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 in 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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An Appetite for Learning

Students at Our Lady of Nazareth Primary School, a Marianist-sponsored school in Nairobi, are eager to learn — once their hunger pangs have been satisfied.

BY SHELLY REESE

On a bright day last fall the entire student body of Our Lady of Nazareth Primary School, a Marianist-sponsored school in Kenya, marked a momentous event: Every student in the school ate breakfast. At a school in the developed world, the achievement would have passed unnoticed. At OLN, however, located in the heart of Mukuru — one of Nairobi's largest slums — it was cause for celebration.

"For me, breakfast in the morning is a given. For them, it's a victory," says Chris Hill, a University of Dayton graduate and wildlife photographer who launched the school's "Uji Porridge Program" in 2006. "I am overwhelmed when I realize how happy and grateful these kids are for something as simple as breakfast."

OLN provides schooling for nearly 2,000 students — kindergarten through eighth-grade — who live in crushing poverty. More than half the population of Kenya lives on less than a dollar a day, and Nairobi's squatter slums are crowded with dilapidated corrugated metal shacks lacking electricity, water and sanitation. Violence and disease come with the territory.

Against this backdrop, OLN is a sanctuary: A place where children can study and learn with the help of two meals a day and the support of a nurturing staff. But it hasn't always been that way.

Pass the porridge, please

Chris Hill first visited the school in 2001 and after several visits approached Marianist Father Marty Solma with the idea of starting a morning nutrition program.

"Her first idea was to give the children a banana a couple times a week," says Father Marty, former director of the school and now provincial of the Province of the United States. "At the time we had 1,600 students. That's 3,200 banana peels a week. Can you imagine that? It was a good idea, but the logistics were a nightmare. I suggested she start with something simpler — a porridge program for the younger children."

Chris took to the idea instantly. Her donation enabled OLN to purchase "uji," a sweet porridge made from millet, corn and sorghum flour, and build a storage shed for the cooking equipment.

Originally, daily uji was available only to children in kindergarten through third grade, but the staff and teachers at OLN recognized that the other children also would do better with a full stomach — starting with breakfast.



Chris Hill pours uji at the first uji day celebration.

Get to know a child and provide a lifeline of support.

In February 2012, Our Lady of Nazareth Primary School celebrated its 20th anniversary – 15 of those years under Marianist leadership – and recently received recognition for scoring the best national exams in the school's history. Donors have been an integral part of the school's success. In addition to the Uji Porridge Program, the school administers a Sponsorship Program funded by donors.

The two programs go hand-in-hand, says Jenipher Nywawera Kahuthu, who became the first alumna from OLN to graduate from medical school in December 2011. "Initially, I would go to OLN just so I could eat lunch," says Jenipher, now 27, who remembers going to bed hungry many nights because her family was unable to provide food for her and her two siblings. "Looking back, that hot plate of githeri (maize and beans), however simple, was a lifesaver."

With the help of her teachers at OLN, Jenipher began to con-



Jenipher Nywawera Kahuthu

centrate on her education and did exceptionally well. She was awarded scholarships to attend high school, university training and medical school. "I thank God for the honor of being a doctor," she says, "and I am so grateful for John and Vivienne Rathband, who paid for my education."

Jenipher has been assigned to work in Guru Nanak Ramgarhia Sikh Hospital, a district hospital in Nairobi, starting in March 2012.

"There are many like Jenipher — 'stars of Mukuru' — who could use a little help," says Marianist Brother Joseph Maricky, director of OLN and its sponsorship program. "A donation of \$125 will pay for a year's tuition at OLN, and a donation of \$600 can send a deserving OLN graduate to high school for a year."

One of the unique features of the program is that once a donation of \$125 is made, donors receive the name and photo of the child they are sponsoring. Throughout the year, the student sends at least two letters to update their sponsors on how they are doing. "This enables you or your family or church group to know the child you are assisting," says Brother Joseph. "This kind of personal involvement can make a huge difference — for the child and the donors."

To fund a sponsorship: Send your donation to: Marianist Mission, 4435 East Patterson Road, Dayton, Ohio 45481-0001. To send a donation now, please use the enclosed envelope or go to our website at www.marianist.com/oln. For more information, contact Father David Paul, SM, at 314.533.1207 or dpaul@sm-usa.org.

Donors soon learned about the needs of the older children and lent their support. Corpus Christi, a Catholic parish in Wokingham, England, helped extend the program to children in the middle grades in 2009; last year, the Nairobi branch of Pricewaterhouse-Coopers, a global financial firm, made uji available to the seventh and eighth graders. All three donors have pledged their support for the uji program through 2012.

Donors take the lead

The donors have helped in a myriad of other ways. Chris underwrites the cost of an annual field trip for seventh graders — many of whom have never been outside the slum — and finances a graduation party for eighth graders. The parishioners at Corpus Christi have supported a variety of projects at OLN, including scholarships, a water program, construction of toilet facilities, a music center and a project to

stock the library with 2,000 books by African writers.

Helping OLN is one of the most rewarding things he has ever done, says Corpus Christi parishioner Jeremy Best, who first learned of the school while working for Barclays Bank in Kenya. "It's great to see our parish so enthused and supportive. Even though these children have been born into poverty, there is hope through education," he says.

Today, thanks to a morning meal, the students of OLN are happier, have more energy, and are better able to learn. But they aren't the only ones who have benefited from the program. On her most recent visit to Kenya, one of the school's two uji cooks greeted Chris with a smile and a heartfelt "thank you."

"Now I have a job," the cook says. "Now I can feed my family."

"In Kenya, I've learned about the immense strength of the human spirit — something not everyone gets a chance to experience," says Chris, who the students have christened 'Mama Uji.'

"They've taught me more about love in 15 minutes than I had learned in my entire life. It's an amazing and humbling experience." ♦

Shelly Reese is a freelance writer from Cincinnati.

Jeremy Best, an OLN supporter (center), shares uji with school cooks, Brother Joseph Maricky (far right) and staff.



A Glimpse of the FACE OF GOD

Two longtime Marianist supporters learn the joy that comes from an open and giving heart.

BY JOHN SCHROEDER

"Ministry is receiving God's blessing from those to whom we minister. What is this blessing? It is a glimpse of the face of God."

— Henri J. M. Nouwen



Michael and Susan Pinto

IT'S BEEN SIX YEARS, but the memory still brings tears of joy to Michael Pinto. He and his wife Susan had just arrived at Our Lady of Nazareth Primary School (OLN) in Kenya after a taxing 36-hour journey from Kalamazoo, Mich.

"As soon as we got out of the car, a little kindergartener ran over to us — his cheeks covered in cornmeal and beans — and jumped into my arms," Michael says. "There was no fear in him, just love for me and my wife — two perfect strangers. His hug, and getting porridge all over me, was the first of many blessings during our visit."

Which is exactly what Father Marty Solma had promised when he encouraged the Pintos, his longtime friends and Marianist supporters, to visit the school in 2006.

"'Come and be blessed by them,' he told us. It sounded strange. After all, we're the donors, so how could we be blessed by being there?" Michael questioned. "But we were blessed by interacting with the children. It profoundly changed our relationship with the school."

Before their trip to Kenya, the Pintos were supporting the school because of their connection to a former teacher. "After the trip," Michael says, "we wanted to do it for OLN and the children we met."

Upon returning to the United States, Michael and Susan stepped things up. Along with their generous personal contributions — sponsoring three students through high school and university and helping fund

the new dining hall — they began looking for opportunities to get others involved in supporting the Marianists' work at OLN. Today, they frequently take up collections at the Methodist church where Michael serves as pastor. The ministry often finds its way into business conversations, too. The Pintos own and operate Wonder Makers Environmental, a remediation and training firm, which provides Michael many opportunities to give talks before business audiences across the country.

"Often I'll end my presentation with a brief reflection on how blessed we are here, and how we can be blessings to others," he says. "If anyone's interested, I give them a flyer with details about OLN."

They know that any contribution, large or small, can make a difference. "Even five cents can buy a bowl of porridge or school supplies, and just about anyone can afford to put that much in the collection basket," Susan says. Supporting a student through the Sponsorship Program has added benefits, and it's not just about giving. There are blessings that come with helping someone personally, say the Pintos. "When it's personal," Michael says, "you make an effort to share it." ♦

John Schroeder is a freelance writer from St. Louis.

To learn more about how you can support the children at Our Lady of Nazareth Primary School, see "To Fund a Sponsorship" on page 6.

To Learn More

about how you can support the Marianists, visit www.marianist.com/support or call 1.800.348.4732



Holding Sacred Space

Spiritual direction — a practice of listening and discernment — helps people birth new insights and grow in faith.

BY JAN DIXON



Joan McGuinness Wagner first thought about seeking the help of a spiritual director at the urging of the late Marianist Brother Walter Oberster. “He thought I might appreciate it,” she remembers.

But it wasn’t until after Brother Walter died six years ago that she took his advice seriously. “He had seen in me a desire to deepen my faith. After his death, it was as though he was sitting on my shoulder — this Marianist angel — inviting me to make that call. I figured I owed him that much.”

In her search, Joan realized she wasn’t looking for a director with all the answers. “I needed someone to help me examine the answers that were within me, someone who could help pull these to the surface.” She also recognized that spiritual direction is a process that takes time. “There are more questions than answers in our lives and being comfortable exploring those questions can take a lifetime.”

What is spiritual direction?

When defining spiritual direction, there are important distinctions, say those who have made it part of their faith and practice. “It’s not counseling or therapy or coaching,” says Lay Marianist Pati Krasensky, who has been in spiritual direction for 12 years and was certified to work as a spiritual director in 2009. “Spiritual direction is sharing sacred space with another person so you can explore your relationship with God and how God is moving in your life. What distinguishes it from therapy and other practices are the questions it raises: ‘What is God saying to me through this? What is God asking of me? How do I be authentic in my faith?’”

Marianist Brother Tom Redmond, who has served as a spiritual director for 15 years, says that spiritual direction is one person sharing his or her story with another, preferably a person of faith whom they respect and trust. The purpose is to find clarity and affirmation. “People come to me with many questions: ‘Is this valid? Is this real? Do other people talk about or experience this?’ As I listen to their stories, they go deeper into the narrative, finding new meaning and language that enables them to own the spiritual dimension of their lives.”

Krasensky says the term “spiritual director” may be misleading. It’s more a process of spiritual companioning. “This is not about dispensing advice or teaching, nor is it hierarchical,” she says. “The image of spiritual midwife is more accurate. We are servants of a spiritual process. It’s much bigger than us.”

The search for meaning

There are many reasons people seek assistance from a spiritual director — help with a job loss, death of a

loved one, relationship issues or simply being stuck in one’s prayer life. Marianist Father Joe Uvietta, who has served as a spiritual director for more than 40 years, says that most people are looking for meaning in their lives — where they fit in God’s plan and the courage to carry out their life’s calling. But this isn’t always clear in the beginning. “A director has to be attentive to the person being directed, listening carefully and responding and conversing only to clarify or go deeper. It is a confidential relationship and trust is earned over time.”

People usually meet with a spiritual director for an hour every month, sometimes more frequently, depending on the issues that need attention. Those who serve as spiritual directors describe it as a ministry of presence where the biggest job is to set aside their agendas and get out of the way. It is in these quiet moments, away from the distractions and noise of everyday life, that the gifts of spiritual direction unfold.

Because this is a process that requires patience and a degree of silence, people may choose to be in spiritual direction for many months — sometimes years. Others seek help occasionally. “It depends on what prompted a person to come for direction,” says Father Joe.

The road to Emmaus

The gifts of spiritual direction are numerous: new insights, healing, wonderment, grace. The spiritual director also reaps rewards: “When the director and directee surrender to the process, there is a feeling that we are a conduit of the Holy Spirit, and with that comes a profound sense of gratitude and humility,” says Krasensky. Adds Brother Tom: “Bearing witness to another’s awakening is a privilege. I can’t help but feel joy in those moments.”

When Jesus appeared to two people on the road to Emmaus shortly after his death and resurrection, he provided a classic role model for spiritual direction (Luke 24:13-35). Says Brother Tom: “He asked them about their experience. When they questioned him, he answered with another question, inviting them to go deeper into the meaning of his life and death and their experience of it.”

This is the call of all spiritual direction: To go deeper. To grow. To heal. To live in a timeless sense of God’s grace and love. ♦

How to Find a Spiritual Director

If you are interested in spiritual direction, many religious and Lay Marianists are trained or certified to provide spiritual direction. Ask friends or people in your parish, school or small faith community for referrals. Or, Pati Krasensky recommends, go online to Spiritual Directors International (www.sdiworld.org), an organization that provides resources for finding a spiritual director.



Brother Tom Redmond, SM, and a retreat participant

The Road Less Traveled

Three employees reflect on critical job decisions and how the Marianists changed their career paths forever.

BY JOHN SCHROEDER

“This job enables me to be the kind of nurse I’ve always wanted to be — and fulfill my life’s purpose.”

— Grace Pancipanci

For most of her life, Grace Pancipanci dreamed of being a nurse, someone who cares for others “with compassion — with my whole heart,” she says. Yet finding the right workplace had eluded her until one day she spotted a job listing that would change her life. Grace and others like her — Bill Raddell and Anthony Fucci — vividly recall the moment they said “yes” to an invitation to work for the Marianists and recount the blessings poured out as a result of a decision to take a path less traveled in their careers.

“Lord, show me the way”

Grace Pancipanci wasn’t looking for a job when she met the Marianists 17 years ago. She was working as a nurse at Labouré Residence, a Daughters of Charity retirement facility in Los Altos, Calif. But something about this particular job posting — to become the first director of nursing at the Cupertino Marianist Community in Cupertino, Calif. — caught her eye.

“It was a start-up opportunity, and that appealed to me,” she says of the community that was being created to offer assisted living and nursing care to senior Marianists. “I would be designing both a staffing system and the healthcare procedures for their facility. I love those sorts of challenges.”

Still, taking the leap wasn’t easy. “Right after my first round of interviews, the Marianists said they wanted to hire me,” she says. “But that same week, I had received a job offer from Stanford University — and it was big bucks. I realized I was at a crossroads in my career, so I went to church and prayed: ‘Dear Lord, show me the way.’”

The answer to that prayer came in the person of Brother John Haster, Father Steve Tutas and other

Marianists whom Pancipanci met as the interview process continued. “Each of them won my heart when we talked,” she says. “Something just clicked, and I thought, ‘I belong to these people. They’re like family.’”

That sense of belonging has deepened in the intervening years, as Pancipanci has had the opportunity to meet and serve the Marianists who come to Cupertino. “There’s such a wealth of wisdom, experience and spirituality in the brothers here,” she says. “I consider it one of my perks — to be able to go to them for help with all sorts of life’s challenges.”

Working for the Cupertino community isn’t just a job, Pancipanci says. When she entered the nursing profession, she felt called to give her life to helping people. But her previous jobs in busy healthcare facilities, with mounds of paperwork and clinical demands, left little time for patient care. At the end of the day, she often went home feeling unfulfilled.

At the Cupertino Community, she has plenty of time to build relationships — “to sit and listen to each one, to give them the compassion and acceptance they need, especially at this stage in their lives. This job enables me to be the kind of nurse I’ve always wanted to be — and fulfill my life’s purpose.”

“Something struck a chord with me”

As a college sophomore in the late 1960s, Bill Raddell was mostly thinking “road trip!” when Marianist Brother Mike O’Grady invited him and a few classmates to travel from Cleveland to Dayton to hear a talk on Marianist spirituality by the late Marianist Father William Ferree. But at some point during the presentation, he realized his heart had been moved.

“Father Ferree’s talk about Chaminade’s vision,



Grace Pancipanci, director of nursing at the Marianist Cupertino Community, shares a moment with Father Bill O'Connell, SM

“Something struck a chord with me — and I thought, ‘this is the way I want to live my life.’”

— Bill Raddell

the Marianist Family and the role of the laity captured my imagination,” Raddell says. “Something struck a chord with me — and I thought, ‘this is the way I want to live my life.’”

A year or two later, he ran into another Marianist — his high school biology teacher — who encouraged him to think about becoming a religion teacher. That chance encounter blossomed into a 40-year commitment at his Cleveland alma mater, St. Joseph High School (now Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School).

“When I started, I was one of only two lay people in the theology department, and the Marianist priests and brothers were phenomenal in their support,” he says. “Beyond mentoring me in teaching methodologies, we met regularly at the Marianist house to plan. But the planning sessions became much more: We grew into a community. We prayed together, ate together and worked together. We didn’t use the term ‘family spirit’ in those days — but we certainly experienced it.”

As Raddell learned more about the Marianists, he found himself energized by Chaminade’s insights. “The idea that all are equals in the Marianist Family — priests, brothers, sisters, lay people — that very much attracted me,” he says. “It’s something I stress with our faculty and students today — the sense that lay people play a key role in carrying on the mission of the Church.

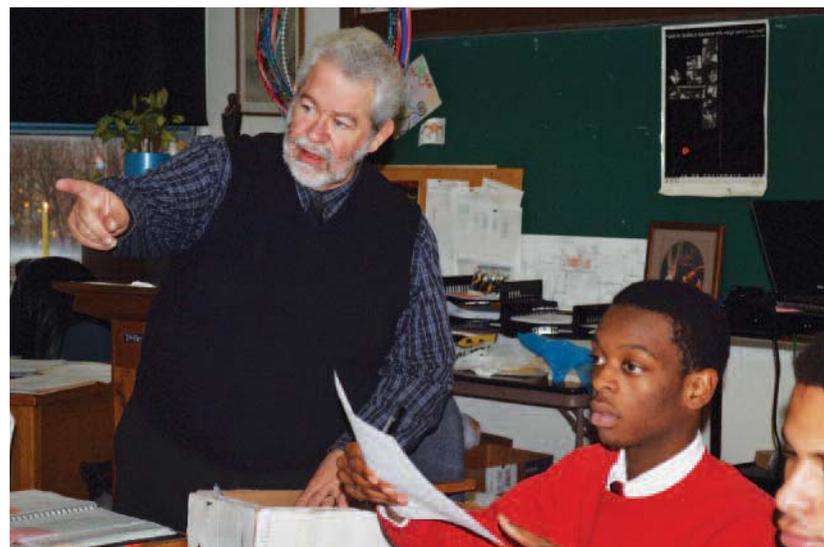
“I feel blessed to be part of the teaching profession — to have so many opportunities to pass the Marianist vision along to others,” he says. “It’s a big reason why I’ve always wanted to be in this school. I would never want to lose the Marianist connection.”

“I get paid to do something I love”

Anthony Fucci was only a kid in 1976, the first time he and his family stayed at the Marianist Family Retreat Center in Cape May Point, N.J. Still, he remembers the profound impact that visit had on his family. “That retreat

changed us. We became more focused on our faith — and it motivated us to begin living it out, every day,” he says.

As he grew older, he’d return often — first, attend-



Bill Raddell, religion teacher, Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School

ing weekend retreats with his parents, and later, staffing teen retreats one or two times a year. “I met my wife, Erin, at Cape May while we were both on staff for a young adult retreat,” he says.

Did he aspire to become the center’s director one day? “No, never,” he says. “I really liked my corporate job in Manhattan.”

Then, a little over a dozen years ago, he noticed an ad in the center’s newsletter seeking applicants for the top spot. “I asked Erin, and she encouraged me to apply — neither of us thinking I would actually get the job,” he says. “But ‘lo and behold,’ I did.”

That decision was a turning point — one that has had a powerful impact on Fucci and his family.

“It’s funny because I still get to use my business skills here — I manage the endowment, pay the bills, do the fundraising — but I’ve also discovered how a job can be so much more,” he says. “We form deep relationships with people through the center. We get to know them as family, sharing stories, growing in faith, praying for them, even supporting them in times of mourning. You usually don’t make such deep connections in other jobs.”

The rest of the Fuccis — Erin and their two sons, A.J., 7, and Eddie, 5 — are blessed by the ministry, too. “As young parents, we learn from all the families who come here. They’re an example to us,” he says. “Plus, the boys love it here. It’s a second home to them, and I love having them exposed to Marianist spirituality. It reinforces our efforts to make faith a part of their everyday lives.”

Today, after serving 13 years as the center’s director, Fucci considers his job one of the great blessings in his life. “I get paid to do something I love. Not everyone can say that,” he says. “I feel like I belong in this ministry.” ♦

John Schroeder is a freelance writer from St. Louis.



Anthony Fucci, director, Marianist Family Retreat Center

Come Away... *and Rest*

The Marianists operate four retreat centers that offer opportunities for prayer, quiet time and shared reflection.

BY JAN DIXON

"The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile.'" — Mark 6:30-31

Jesus implores us to "come away" — to take time to rest. Time away from the distractions — the smartphones, computers and the overly scheduled lives most of us lead. "We are all so busy," says Dan Donnelly, assistant to the Office of Religious Life for the Marianists. "But to grow spiritually, we need time to sit with ourselves — to breathe, listen and reflect on what God is calling us to do."

Retreats are an ideal getaway and provide the setting needed to rekindle a relationship with God "because a spiritual director or retreat leader are available to listen to you as you discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit," says Donnelly, who works with Marianist retreat ministries throughout the Province.

Retreats have added benefits: They enable us to seek God's

healing grace and connect with others who are struggling to grow spiritually. "Most people I know come away from a retreat feeling refreshed, reenergized and better able to refocus their life priorities," says Donnelly.

For these reasons, Marianists brothers and priests are required to go on at least one retreat a year. "A retreat is an opportunity for lay people to model what the Marianists practice," says Donnelly.

The Marianists provide a variety of retreats to choose from, including family retreats, youth retreats, specialty retreats — for example, Palm Sunday or Easter weekend retreats — or self-directed retreats. They also offer space for groups to host their own parish or small group retreats.

The following is a list of Marianist retreat centers in the United States. For more information about scheduled or self-directed retreats, facilities and fees, contact the retreat centers.

Missouri: Marianist Retreat & Conference Center, 4000 Highway 109, P.O. Box 718, Eureka, MO 63025-0718
636.938.5390
www.mretreat.org
Director: Sister Paulette Patritti, OP

New Jersey: Marianist Family Retreat Center, 417 Yale Ave., P.O. Box 488, Cape May Point, NJ 08212-0488
609.884.3829
www.capemaymarianists.org
Director: Anthony Fucci

Ohio: Bergamo Center for Lifelong Learning, Mount Saint John, 4400 Shakertown Road, Dayton, OH 45430-1075
937.426.2363
www.bergamocenter.org
Director: Dick Flack

Texas: Tecaboca: A Marianist Center for Spiritual Renewal, 5045 Junction Highway, Mountain Home, TX 78058-5073
830.866.3425
www.tecaboca.com
Director: Kay Tally-Foos

Man-to-Man

A Marianist retreat program helps men explore their faith, develop friendships and share their life experiences.

BY SHELLY REESE

"The peace in my heart has been beyond my wildest dreams. It's hard to describe the feelings of love and camaraderie. For a man to go to another place and discuss the love of Jesus with his peers — it's extraordinary."

— Joe Denzler

Whenever Ray McCracken's wife, Joanne, returned from leading a women's retreat at the Marianist Family Retreat Center at Cape May, N.J., he felt a twinge of envy. She was so energized by the women she had met and the deep connections she had made from time spent in conversation and prayer with others.

But there wasn't a similar retreat program for men. Not until 12 years ago when Ray, a Lay Marianist and certified spiritual director, decided to launch a men's only weekend retreat. After more than a decade of leading and participating in the retreats, he's learned some important differences between men's and women's spiritual experiences.

In our culture, "men's identities are focused on performance, not on relationships and being," says Ray. Though there are exceptions, women tend to process experiences emotionally. In contrast, men process experiences through facts and information, skipping the emotional aspects. Because they are not socialized to share their thoughts and feelings with others, men often have difficulty understanding the spiritual and emotional implications of the experience. Failing to move from head to heart can lead to detachment, emotional alienation and a spiritual void.

When you think about it, "half of the human race doesn't talk about or share their emotions," says Ray, noting that this puts men at a huge disadvantage in their faith lives. But the retreat is a safe place where men have

permission to share what they're feeling and thinking and to make male friends.

One reason the retreats are effective is because they are peer-led, says Marianist Brother Tom Redmond,



Rich Sroczyński and Joe Hopko share a moment in quiet conversation.

who provides music and spiritual direction at the Cape May retreat center. By listening to each other, participants form bonds and are inspired to consider their own lives more deeply.

"The presenters don't just share a road map for the faith journey. They talk about their experiences — what has worked and not worked for them," says Brother Tom. "Participants see that other men have the same questions, the same struggles relating to God, their spouses, families and co-workers. The retreat experience is an affirmation that they are not in this alone."

A sense of brotherhood

Joe Denzler, a retired New York City employee, admits he was skeptical 12 years ago when members of the men's group at his church suggested they go on a retreat. But attending Sunday Mass wasn't enough to fulfill his spiritual needs, so he warily agreed. The experience changed his life.

"From the minute I got there, I felt loved," he says. "I didn't have to put on any airs because I felt loved and accepted."



The men's retreat provides time for worship and reflection.



Jay Konar lights candles before a retreat session begins.

Denzler listened to other men share their trials, faith, doubts, feelings, fears and shortcomings. He knew he could trust these men because they trusted him. They were brothers.

"I am so grateful after one of these retreats," he says. "The peace in my heart has been beyond my wildest dreams. It's hard to describe the feelings of love and camaraderie. For a man to go to another place and discuss the love of Jesus with his peers — it's extraordinary."

The experience started Denzler on a spiritual journey that led him to become an ordained deacon.

Permission to look inside

John Serra, who attended his first men's retreat in 2005, says the retreats have helped him heal in the wake of his experience as a 9/11 survivor.

"Listening to others open up — become vulnerable — touched me deeply. It dared me to go deeper into

myself," he says. "A lot of times we walk around with burdens. To go someplace where you feel safe enables you to unburden yourself."

But getting men to take the first step and open themselves to the experience is a challenge, says Ray. When he started the men's retreat in 1999 he had to make 100 phone calls to drum up 18 participants. Today the annual November retreat attracts about 40 participants.

Because most men attending the Cape May retreat are repeat participants, Ray wasn't surprised or discouraged when only 10 men attended an inaugural men's retreat in October at Tecaboca, a Marianist Center for Spiritual Renewal in Texas.

"Getting men to explore their interior lives is a lot like getting olives out of a bottle," McCracken says. "Get the first one out and the rest come easily. Someone has to give men permission to look inside themselves." ♦

"A lot of times we walk around with burdens. To go someplace where you feel safe enables you to unburden yourself."

— John Serra

Shelly Reese is a freelance writer from Cincinnati.

To learn more about Marianist retreat centers, see the story on page 13.



“People’s earnest desire for prayer says something to me about the importance of this work and affirms my life’s vocation.”

— Father Pat Tonry

Father Pat Tonry, SM

Surprised *by* Grace

Four Marianist priests share stories of their vocational journey and the unexpected joys and challenges that have shaped their lives.

BY JAN DIXON

Faith takes courage. Like Peter, Jesus calls us to step out of our boat — our place of comfort — into the fluid and ever-changing landscape of our lives, trusting God to use our gifts and guide our steps. This is particularly true for Marianists.

“A life of faith means living with a lot of unknowns,” says Marianist Father Dave Schuyler. “If I had set out to plot what I would be doing in my life, I would never have imagined most of it.”

Marianists are called first to be brothers: teaching brothers, professional brothers, working brothers — and some later are called to be ordained priests. “Brothers and priests are viewed equally in the order,” says Marianist Brother Tom Wendorf, national director of vocations. “We’re known for being egalitarian — brothers, priests, sisters and laity all sharing in ministry.”

It is also true that becoming a priest is not just a personal choice, says Brother Tom. It is a calling discerned in consultation with many others in a brother’s community and throughout the order. This takes time and must be the right fit because a Marianist priest’s first responsibility is to serve his fellow brothers — providing sacramental ministry and spiritual support for those in the community.

“This is their number one focus,” says Brother Tom.

When asked about their vocational calling, many Marianist priests share a sense of surprise at the uncanny ways God has used their gifts to carry out Gospel ministry. *ALIVE* magazine spoke with Marianist Fathers Pat Tonry, Rudy Vela, Dave Schuyler and Neville O’Donohue about their work — and the people and events that have challenged, inspired and shaped them.

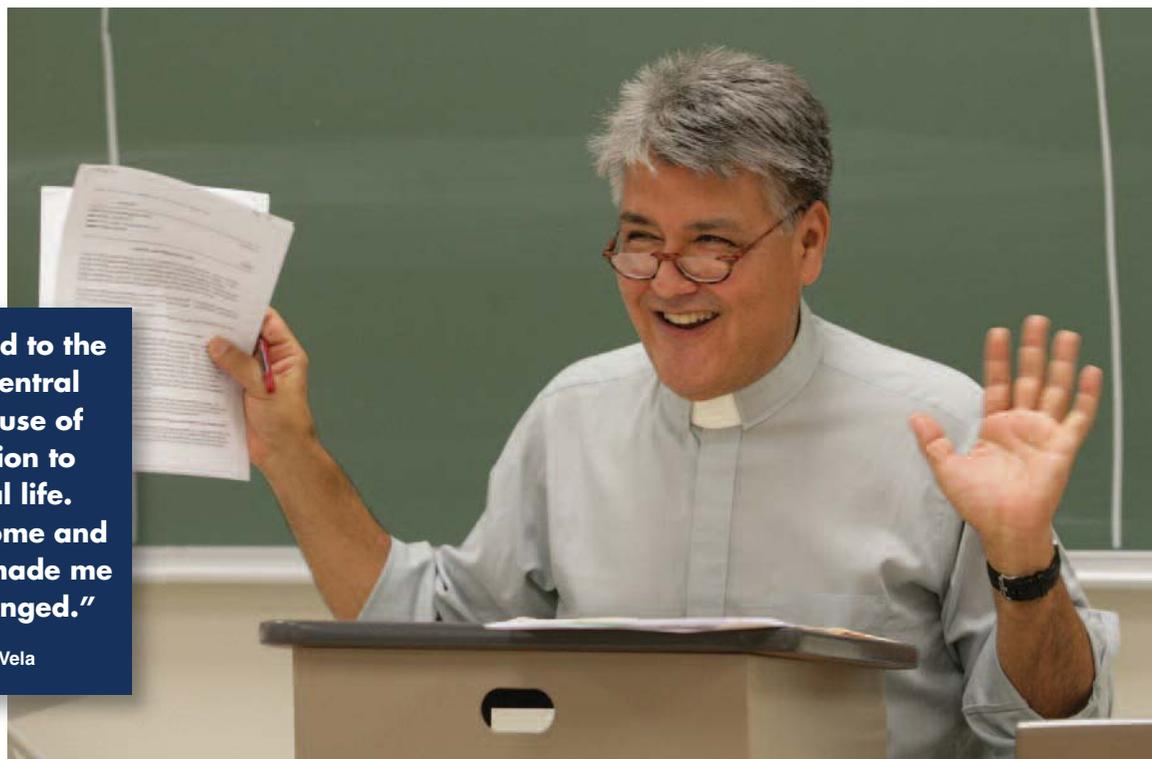
A call to prayer

Though Marianist priests are called to serve their brothers in communities first, Father Chaminade saw there was much to be done to bring the Gospel to a needy world. Says Father Dave: “With so much work and so few people to do it, his apostolic vision required that Marianists be willing to serve outside their communities in a variety of ministries, especially education and those that touched the lives of the young.”

Today, most Marianist priests work in five types of ministry: high school chaplaincy and teaching; educational administration; youth work; retreat leadership; and parish ministry. A few also work in provincial administration or field positions for their local diocese when the need arises.

Father Pat Tonry, 78, has worked in all these areas. But it was a call 16 years ago to pastor St. Joseph Catholic Community, a Marianist parish near Baltimore, that surprised him most. “I never wanted to work in a parish,” he says. “I couldn’t imagine it. But those 10 years I spent at St. Joe’s turned out to be some of the happiest in my life. The people and the parish are extraordinary.”

Today he serves as spiritual director for the Marianist Mission in Dayton, Ohio. It is an unusual ministry — one that builds relationships with people through letters, phone calls and lots of prayer. “I’ve been surprised by how freely people disclose themselves in a letter — even more than face-to-face conversation,” says Father Pat. “Some people have heavy burdens and no one to share them with.”



“I was attracted to the brothers at Central Catholic because of their dedication to their spiritual life. It was wholesome and inviting. They made me feel like I belonged.”

— Father Rudy Vela

The Mission is more than a place to buy prayer cards. Says Father Pat: “People see the Mission as a safe place to share their stories and prayer requests. We celebrate Mass once a week and put all the prayers and intentions on the altar. I’m amazed at the number of requests we get.”

The job is one he seems to have been groomed for all his life. “It’s an interesting position — more than I expected,” says Father Pat. “People’s earnest desire for prayer says something to me about the importance of this work and affirms my life’s vocation.”

The gifts of culture and language

Father Rudy Vela, 60, was drawn to religious life as a student at a Marianist high school in San Antonio. “I was attracted to the brothers at Central Catholic because of their dedication to their spiritual life. It was

Father Rudy Vela, SM

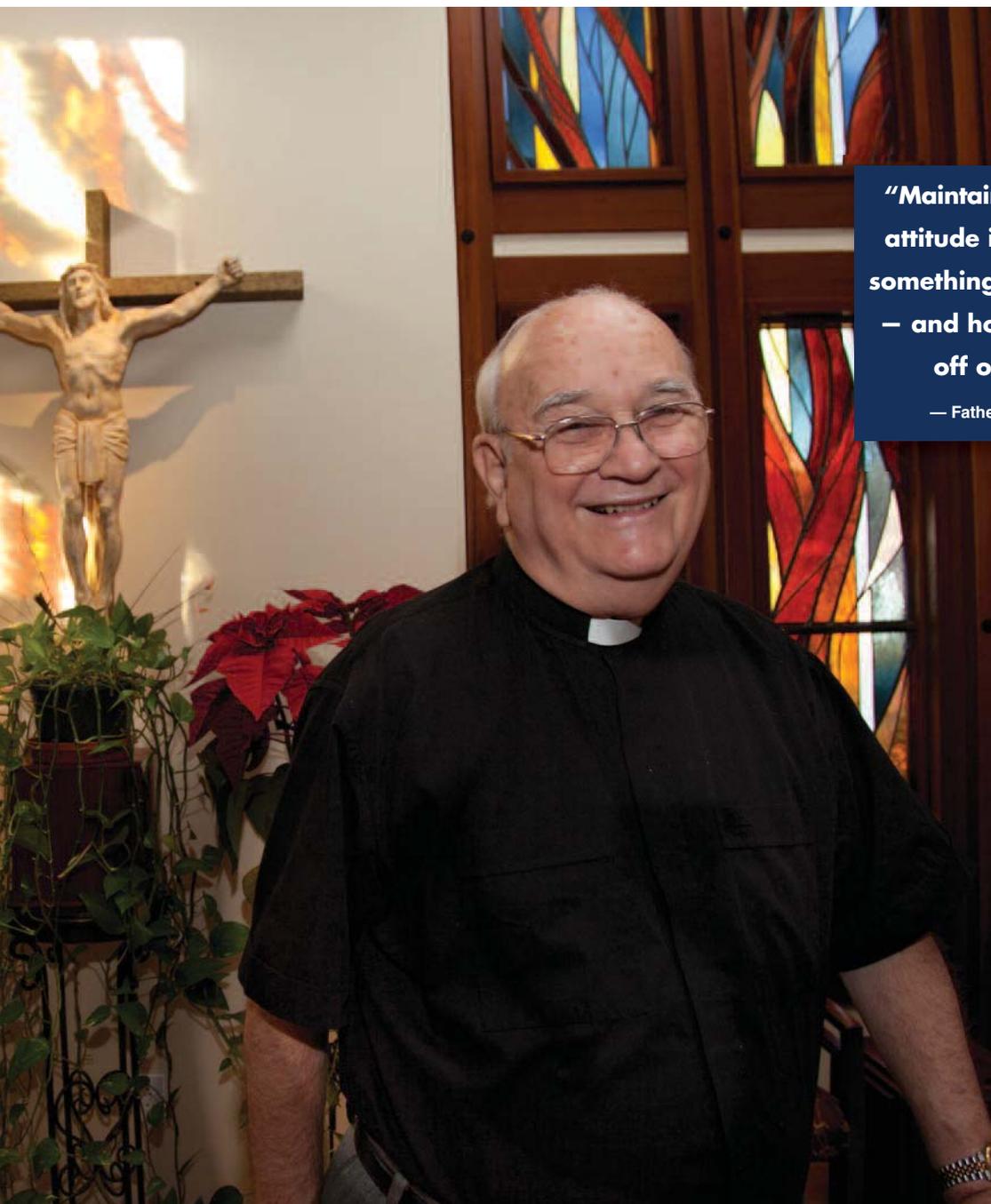
wholesome and inviting. They made me feel like I belonged," he says.

But Father Rudy never imagined himself wearing a clerical collar. "I had no desire to become a priest," he says. But during a five-year stint in the 1980s as a Marianist working in the missions in Peru, something changed. He began doing more pastoral work and assisting with Mass. "Many people, especially the younger ones, would challenge me: 'Why don't you become a priest?'"

He spent two years contemplating the idea before discovering a simple truth: "If I became a priest, I wouldn't stop being a brother," he says.

He also realized that he didn't need to leave the United States to do missionary work. The mission field was at his back door – especially among the Hispanic population in Texas where he had grown

Father Dave Schuyler, SM



"Maintaining a positive attitude is a choice. It's something you can share – and hopefully it rubs off on others."

— Father Dave Schuyler

up. Ordained in 1984, Father Rudy returned to the Southwest where the Marianists continued "presenting me with opportunities I would never have imagined."

His ministries have included work for the diocese of Fort Worth, 15 years as a pastor at a Marianist parish in San Antonio and an assignment at the Mexican-American Cultural Center, to name a few. Many of his assignments have enlisted the gifts bestowed on him from his Hispanic heritage. "I am a third generation Hispanic," he says, and though he didn't grow up speaking Spanish, he became adept in the language and "sensitive to what it means to be bilingual and bicultural."

Today, Father Rudy serves as vice president of mission and identity for St. Mary's University, a Marianist university in San Antonio. His primary responsibility is to promote and foster the Catholic Marianist identity of the institution. He also teaches a course each semester. "I love getting to know the students," he says, noting that time in the classroom is where he does "theology on my feet" — that crossroad where intellectual dialogue intersects with the everyday

lives of students who challenge, energize and inspire him. "My teaching comes from that love."

Led by the Spirit

Father Dave Schuyler attended St. Joseph's High School, a former Marianist school in the small town of Alameda, Calif. "It was the spirit

of the place that was wonderful," he says, "and I became a Marianist because of that."

Like many Marianists, he started as a teaching brother working at Marianist high schools in California. In 1957 he began studying for the priesthood and was ordained in 1960. Then one day he received a letter that would dramatically change his life. "I was asked by my superiors to study Church law," he says. "This had never entered my mind. It was so out-of-the-blue and providential. It shaped my life considerably."

Since then, Father Dave's ministries have included several assignments working for various dioceses in Hawai'i and California that relied on his knowledge of canon law. He also worked for several years in university teaching and administration at Chaminade University, a Marianist school in Honolulu.

Today he serves as director of the Marianist Cupertino residence — a community comprised of 26 brothers and priests, most of whom have retired from active ministry. He does canonical work on the side.

The work at the residence supports his main calling: to love and serve the brothers in sacramental ministry

— and share the ups and downs of life together. “We have a happy community, a wonderful group of men who make my work a joy,” he says.

Looking back on his life, he has found “wonderful people wherever I have lived ... and there is beauty everywhere in the world. You do what you are asked to do with the people you are with,” he says. That is part of his secret to happiness: “Maintaining a positive attitude is a choice. It’s something you can share — and hopefully it rubs off on others.”

Time to grow in faith

Father Neville O’Donohue thought a business career was the path for him until he started working full time for an international accounting firm in Ireland. Dissatisfied and unenthused, “I felt empty,” he says.

It was the tragic death of a friend from high school in the early 1980s that took him back to his alma mater, St. Laurence College, a Marianist high school in Dublin, and reconnected him with the Marianist community. A few years later he completed novitiate training in Dayton, Ohio, and professed first vows. Returning to Ireland in the late 1980s, he taught at St. Laurence and completed three years of study before accepting an assignment in youth ministry for the Archdiocese of Dublin.

He was 41 by the time he accepted the call to priesthood. “I hesitated about becoming a priest because the Irish church is so clerical,” he says. “I needed to be deeply grounded in the Marianist model — one that is collaborative and firmly rooted in community — before I felt the courage.”

He also recognized that, as a Marianist, he wasn’t dedicating himself to one type of ministry in one location, typical of diocesan work. As a priest in the Society of Mary, he was likely to serve in a variety of ministries, some around the globe.

Today, Father Neville has embarked on a new chapter: pastoral ministry. He serves as temporary administrator at St. Joseph Catholic Community in Eldersburg, Md., an assignment in the United States that he accepted while the current pastor is on sabbatical.

At age 54, he looks back on his life of ministry with appreciation. “For most of us, the journey is not of instant brilliance, but a slow maturation. I am thankful for this journey because it’s given me time to grow in faith and confidence,” he says.

Father Neville also acknowledges that a life of faith requires openness and flexibility. “The challenge is to not hold too tightly to how life will look. It keeps changing,” he says. ♦

“The challenge is to not hold too tightly to how life will look. It keeps changing.”

— Father Neville O’Donohue



Father Neville O’Donohue, SM

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SLICE *of Life*

The Districts of Mexico and India Install New Leadership

New council members were installed in the District of Mexico in September 2011 and in the District of India in 2012.



New District of Mexico council members: Brother Esteban Reyes Durán, Brother José Jesús Ruiz Santillán, Brother Ed Longbottom, district superior, Brother Régulo García Hernández, Brother Francisco González (Provincial Council liaison to Mexico) and Provincial Father Martin Solma



New District of India council members: Father Charles (Kip) Stander, Father Rajesh Kandulna, Father Ignatius Arulappen, Brother Augustus Surin, district superior, Father Jack McGrath, assistant district superior, Brothers Antony Xavier and Basant Kujur

Marianists Celebrate Vows in Puerto Rico and India



The perpetual vow ceremony for Brother Armando Añeses, front, Father Bill Meyer, Provincial Martin Solma, Brother Armando, Father Don Wallace and Novice Hugo Bastida; back, Brother Joe Janosik, Brother Francisco González, Brother Reinaldo Berrios and Brother José Julián Matos

Brother Armando Añeses Professes Perpetual Vows in Puerto Rico

Bro. Armando Añeses professed perpetual vows in the Society of Mary in October on the feast of Our Lady of the Pillar. The ceremony was held at the church-auditorium of Colegio San José, a Marianist school in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Father Oscar Vasquez presided at the Eucharist. Provincial Martin Solma received the vows. About 300 people participated in the celebration. Following the Mass, a reception was held on the school's campus. Brother Armando is a teacher at Colegio San José.

Indian Bros. Raj Mohan, Suman Dungdung Profess Perpetual Vows

Brothers Suman Dungdung and Raj Mohan professed perpetual vows with the Society of Mary in December. Father Pragasam Thathappa (former district superior) served as the main celebrant. Provincial Martin Solma received the vows and Father David Fleming gave the homily. Many Marianist Family members attended the celebration, including the incoming and outgoing district council members.

Brother Suman is a teacher at Prabhat Tara in Singhpur, and Brother Raj is the program director for REDS (Ragpickers Education & Development Scheme).

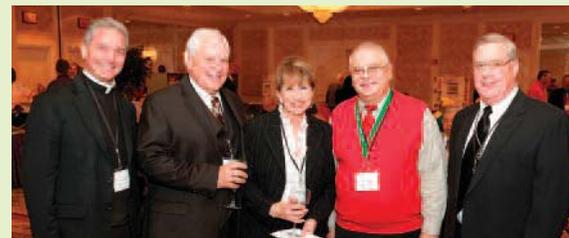


Father Pragasam Thathappa, Brothers Suman and Raj and Father Martin Solma

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

Marianist High School Reunion Honors Eight Schools

In November, the Marianist Province of the United States hosted a “Marianist High School Reunion” in St. Louis for alums and former faculty and administrators of the eight secondary schools the Marianists sponsored in the greater St. Louis area. Three of the schools remain open: Chaminade College Preparatory, St. Mary’s High School and St. John Vianney High School. Five schools have closed: Assumption High School (East St. Louis, Ill.), Cathedral High School (Belleville, Ill.), Coyle High School, DeAndreis High School and McBride High School. Almost 40 Marianist brothers and priests who taught or administered at the schools were present at the event.



Father Mitch Doyen, president, St. Mary’s High School; George Henry superintendent, Catholic Education for the Archdiocese of St. Louis; Rosalie Henry, Lou Peters, principal, Chaminade College Preparatory; and Assistant Provincial Brother Joe Kamis, SM

In Remembrance

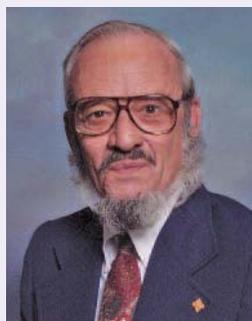
For the complete obituaries of Marianist Brothers Terrence O’Connor, Charles Roggemann and Robert Wade and Fathers James Imhof, Paul Ryan and Adolf Windisch, visit www.marianist.com/obits. To make a memorial donation in the name of a Marianist, visit www.marianist.com/memorial.



Father James (Jim) Imhof, SM, 90, died Oct. 5, 2011, in Cupertino, Calif. Father Jim taught at schools in Iowa and Pennsylvania before being ordained in 1951.

For the next 10 years he worked as a teacher and chaplain at high schools in Ohio and Puerto Rico. In 1961, he embarked on two teaching assignments in Eastern Africa, first in Malawi and then in Zambia. Father Jim returned to Puerto Rico in 1969 to teach. Before retiring from full-time ministry in 2003, he served at Chaminade-Madonna College Preparatory in Hollywood, Fla. Father Jim was known as an avid bird-watcher and was rarely seen without his binoculars and a camera.

Brother Terrence (Terry) O’Connor, SM, 77, died Nov. 6, 2011, in San Antonio. Brother Terry served as a teacher for nearly six decades in Marianist high schools in Missouri and at his alma mater, Central Catholic, in San Antonio. He taught languages — mostly French — and began teaching at the college



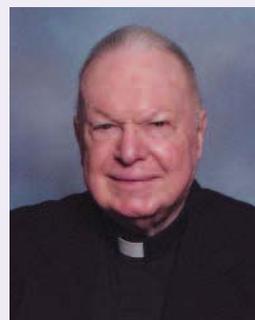
Brother Terrence O’Connor, SM

level at St. Mary’s University in 1983. He served in this position for the remainder of his life.

Brother Charles Roggemann, SM,

88, died Nov. 10, 2011, in Dayton, Ohio. Brother Charles began his long career as a Catholic educator as a high school teacher in Pennsylvania before accepting a teaching position at Holy

Trinity High School in Brooklyn, N.Y., where he served for 20 years. He earned a master’s degree in English from Duquesne University in 1967 and taught for nearly 30 years at Chaminade-Madonna College Preparatory in Hollywood, Fla. He was voted into the Catholic Education Foundation’s Hall of Fame in 2003, which honors great religious educators.



Father Paul Ryan, SM

studies, English and Latin at Marianist schools in St. Louis and Texas until 1957 when he took a position at St. Mary’s University. He then served in administration for the former St. Louis Province and in 1964 assumed the position of principal at McBride High School in St. Louis. He moved to Texas in 1972 to work for St. Mary’s University as registrar and continued in that work until he retired from full-time ministry in 1987.



Brother Charles Roggemann, SM

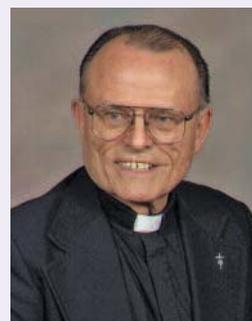
Brother Robert (Bob) Wade, SM,

84, died Dec. 8, 2011, in Cupertino, Calif. Brother Bob served the Marianists as a working brother most of his life. He was known as a jack-of-all-trades who could

fix anything. His talents were put to use at Marianist schools in Hawai’i and throughout California. In 1985, he joined the staff of Queen of the Apostles Parish in San Jose, Calif., and was a pioneering member of that community. His last assignment before retiring from active ministry was at Archbishop Riordan High School in San Francisco.



Brother Robert Wade, SM



Father Adolf Windisch, SM

Father Adolf (Ade) Windisch, SM, 83, died Oct. 26, 2011, in San Antonio. Father Ade started his career as a teacher at McBride High School in St. Louis in 1952. He was

ordained in 1960

and remained at the seminary to complete a doctorate degree. Between 1963 and 1982, he served in three different ministries in San Antonio: Central Catholic High School, the Marianist scholasticate and St. Mary’s University. Father Ade returned to St. Louis and in 1986 became the first president of St. John Vianney High School. After leaving Vianney, Father Ade began a new ministry at the North American Center for Marianist Studies in Dayton, where he served until his retirement.

Holy Nudges

BY JOANNE MCCRACKEN

“Sometimes people think that many things are needed to begin a house of the Miséricorde (a home for repentant prostitutes). What is really needed? Only this: a house with four rooms ... bread for one day, work for one week, six francs on hand. That’s all it takes, and nothing more. In my view, with that one can found all the Miséricordes one might wish.”

— Marie Thérèse de Lamourous, Bordeaux, France, circa 1830

Marie Thérèse de Lamourous, one of the founders of the Marianist Family, makes difficult situations sound easy. When I’ve been asked to take on something that feels bigger than I can handle, perfectionism — and her twin sister, self-doubt — are at my doorstep. I succumb to fear, unsure I can reach beyond what is familiar. Yet God seems to challenge me to do much more.

Even before I begin, I’m often stopped short: How should I proceed or which road should I take? In these moments I hear myself complaining: “God, you need to be much clearer about what you want me to do!”

So how do we move beyond feeling inadequate or being afraid to fail? How do we know that we are doing the right thing? Marie Thérèse, in her own way, told us: You simply take what you have and trust God will provide the rest.

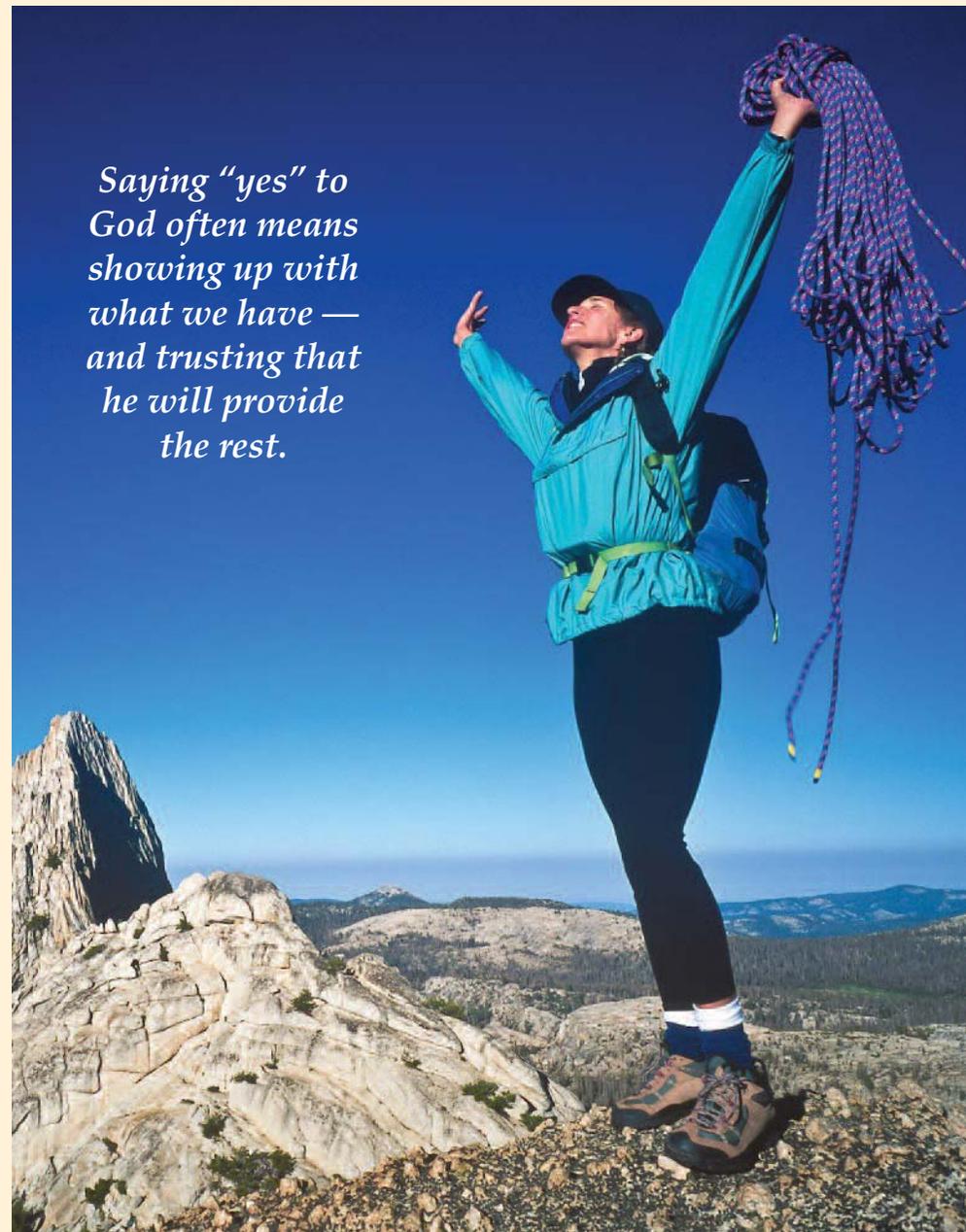
God doesn’t ask for perfection, only that we wholeheartedly commit to our spiritual growth — to saying “yes” — and are persistent in our desire to become whole. We also must acknowledge an important truth: We cannot do it alone.

When Marie Thérèse was first asked to work with the prostitutes of Bordeaux, she was appalled. The story goes that she had such repugnance for these women that she would make long detours to avoid them. But her friend, Jeanne Germaine de Pichon, a woman who worked tirelessly before and after the French Revolution to help the prostitutes, would not accept her refusal.

She became God’s agent — God’s “holy nudge” — that gave Marie Thérèse encouragement and support. That, plus Marie Thérèse’s natural talents and her trust in God, were all that was needed. She went on to establish a home called the Miséricorde to help the indigent women of Bordeaux and partnered with Father Chaminade to re-Christianize France.

Years ago, I was asked to help facilitate a women’s retreat at the Marianist Family Retreat Center in Cape May Point, N.J. “Helping” meant passing out the papers, turning on the music and arranging the chairs. Marianist Sister Laura Leming did everything else. The next year she called to say that she couldn’t make it and she needed

Saying “yes” to God often means showing up with what we have — and trusting that he will provide the rest.



me to run the retreat ... in two months. Panic raced through me. Yes, I had helped her a couple of times, but I knew nothing about putting a retreat together. She offered some ideas for a theme, suggested a few books to read and told me to call her if I had any questions.

One thing I have learned: The God who created us, who knows our weaknesses, will strengthen us and give us what we need to do the job he sets before us. Faith in that — and a few good holy nudges — is mostly all we need.

What about that women’s retreat? With a few good nudges, it turned out fine. ■

Joanne McCracken, a Lay Marianist Affiliate, lives with her husband, Ray, in Medford, N.J., and is a member of Our Lady of the Roundtable, a Marianist small faith community that meets regularly via the Internet.



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Take time for retreat, page 13.

