

MARIANIST CULTURE, FAITH AND COMMUNITY

ALIVE

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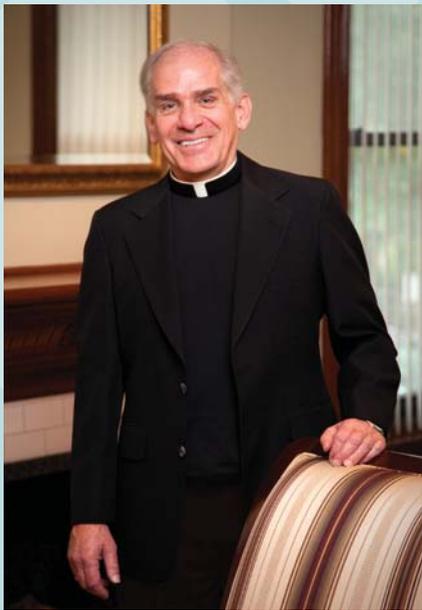
Marianists share their experience of seminary life in Rome, Page 4

A MESSAGE

from the Provincial

Dear Friends of the Marianists,

Pope Francis has designated 2015 as the Year of Consecrated Life in the Church. This is a wonderful opportunity to understand more fully the importance of this expression of Christian life, a life given totally to the Lord and lived in community for mission.



Father Martin Solma, SM

This issue of *ALIVE* features an article on the lives and experiences of Marianists preparing for ordination to the priesthood at the *Seminario Internazionale Chaminade* in Rome. This is a double blessing: It gives us an opportunity to learn about these talented and zealous young men, and to underscore the distinctive nature of the priesthood in the Society of Mary.

Father Chaminade, our founder, envisioned a community of men from different backgrounds and lifestyles: teachers, clerics, craftsmen. We refer to this as “mixed composition,” a distinctive trait of our brotherhood that encompasses brothers and priests living together as equals in a community of mission. We are predominantly a brotherhood, with ordained priests comprising about one-third of our membership. We are proud of this tradition and see it as a wonderful witness within the Church. Along with our lay collaborators and Lay Marianists, we present a more “Marian” face of the Church: welcoming, inclusive and service- and mission-minded.

It is not uncommon for someone to call me “brother,” then apologize when learning I am an ordained priest. But for me, their mistake is my blessing. My deepest identity as a Marianist comes from my vowed commitment as a religious brother, a commitment I share with the members of the Society of Mary. Being an ordained brother means that I am dedicated, first, to serving the brothers within the Marianist



The current Marianist seminarian community in Rome includes eight members from the Province of the United States, of which the District of India is part. Front, Brothers Bob Jones, Raj Mohan, Sebastian Bara and Josephraj Rymond; back, Brothers Armando Añeses, Sean Downing, Lester Kaehler and Mariandu Belevendiran (see story, Page 4)

community and then, alongside them, serving the needs of the mission.

We appreciate all you do to partner with us in our mission: like Mary, to bring the Incarnate Lord to life in the lives of those we serve, helping them to grow in faith through apostolic communities. There is a strain of Catholic theology that speaks of Mary as a “priest.” She was the first one to offer us the body and blood of Jesus. As Marianists, brothers and priests, we seek to do the same in our consecrated lives.

We pray for all of you often, lifting up you and your intentions to the God who loves us all.

Sincerely in Christ and Mary,

Father Martin Solma, SM
Provincial

Father Martin Solma, SM
Provincial

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Front cover
Marianist seminarians Sean Downing, Sebastian Bara, Josephraj Rymond and Bob Jones pass the Colosseum on their morning walk to class, page 4.

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The Society of Mary (Marianists) is an international Roman Catholic religious congregation of priests and brothers. More than 300 serve in the Province of the United States, which includes India, Ireland, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. In the United States, they sponsor three universities: University of Dayton in Ohio, St. Mary's University in San Antonio and Chaminade University of Honolulu, as well as 18 secondary/middle schools, seven parishes and several retreat centers. The order has been present in the United States since 1849 when the Marianists came to Cincinnati. Blessed William Joseph Chaminade founded the Society of Mary in 1817.

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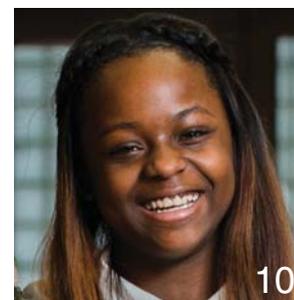
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ON THE ROAD *to Priesthood*

Seminarians share their experiences while attending the Marianist seminary in Rome.

BY CAROL DEXTER

The male voices rise above the clank of plates and bowls in the dining room. There is laughter and good-natured kidding. The conversation is in Italian ... but listen carefully. The Italian words are colored with a mishmash of accents — Indian, Kenyan, Spanish — even Korean and American.

It's *pranzo* — lunchtime — at the Marianist seminary in Rome.

The scene plays out daily, as it has for decades. Currently there are 13 Marianist brothers preparing for the priesthood at *Seminario Internazionale Chaminade*. They live, study and pray in a sprawling building that also houses the international administration of the Society of Mary. The brothers attend classes at local theological universities, typically for three years.

The seminarian community changes yearly, with roughly one-third of the men finishing studies and returning to their home provinces for ordination. The community currently includes brothers from seven countries, along with Rector Father Francisco Canseco, who's from Spain, and Vice Rector Brother Lester Kaehler, an American. So they have a common language, all must learn Italian — a native tongue for none of them.

The following comes from a conversation with five of the seminarians: Brothers Sean Downing and Bob Jones are from the Midwest; Brother Armando Añeses is from Puerto Rico; and Brothers Sebastian Bara and Raj Mohan are from India.

The walk to class for seminarians Sebastian Bara, Sean Downing and Bob Jones includes a stretch along the ancient Roman Wall, which dates to the third century.

ALL PHOTOS: CAROL DEXTER





Marianist Brothers Armando Añeses and Bob Jones review an assignment.



In what ways is the seminary community like your community at home?

Brother Armando: My community in Puerto Rico is very small. This community is larger and much more diverse, but the family spirit we share is the same. We also have the life of prayer that is very central to any Marianist community.



Marianist Brother Raj Mohan

Brother Raj: When I first walked in here, I thought, this is my community. This is home. I believe this would be true of any Marianist community in the world. A feeling of belonging — it's something very special about the Marianists.

What are the advantages of being required to speak Italian in community?

Brother Bob: It's a necessity, because none of us speak the same language. Most of the brothers know at least some English, but having to learn Italian puts us all on the same footing. Of course, there have been times when I felt like crying because I didn't understand what was going on, and I couldn't express myself.

Brother Sebastian: It is a struggle, but I am eager to learn. It is making me grow in ways I would not have expected — learning the language, learning the Italian culture — it is hard, but very rewarding.

How do you describe the role of Marianist priest?

Brother Sean: As Marianists, we view it from Mary's perspective — in the light of her *yes*. We are first and always brothers, so it's different from being a diocesan

priest in that we have our community. That brotherhood is not something they experience.

Brother Bob: In some ways, the Marianist priesthood is atypical because community is so much a part of who we are. My first role of service as a priest will be to my community — to my fellow brothers.

Brother Armando: Maybe we should not say that Marianist priests are atypical, though. Given the great diversity among priests, it is difficult to talk about "typical priesthood." All priests share in the same priestly ministry of Jesus Christ — it's just that Marianist priests live it within the context of Marianist spirituality and community.

Brother Sean: Maybe a way for us to look at this is "service above ambition."

Brother Armando: Right. Marianist priests are not above brothers. We don't have that hierarchy.

When you were first considering life as a Marianist, Brother Sebastian, did you see yourself as a priest?

Brother Sebastian: No, I did not. But as I progressed through my studies, the idea began to take hold. I prayed about it for two, three years before I knew it was what I was called to pursue.

How about you, Brother Bob?

Brother Bob: (laughs) I didn't know what I wanted to do! I guess I saw myself as a brother, working in education. It was a year or two after taking first vows

that brothers in my community suggested I consider ordination, to ask myself, “is this what I’m called to?” It has been a journey of discernment.

What aspect of life in Italy is most wonderful?

Brother Bob: Gelato!

Brother Raj: Italians are very friendly. In India, people are more reserved, but here, people on the street talk to you. They are eager to help you. It’s nice, but I’m not used to it yet.

Brother Armando: I like listening to the Italians speak to each other. Their language is very musical.

Brother Bob: Can I give a real answer? The part that never ceases to amaze me is the history. I walk past the Colosseum on the way to classes every day. There’s so much Church history. I was here for the election of Pope Francis — right in St. Peter’s Square. That’s a once-in-a-lifetime thing.

How will you be a different man for having been here?

Brother Armando: I am growing more deeply in faith. We are called to be a connection between God and His people — that’s a huge challenge. It’s not that I will become perfect, but I am called to my own greater holiness.

Brother Sean: Something’s happening to me; it’s hard to put into words. I work and study as hard as I can, but God’s grace plays a big role. I’m learning to open myself and let Christ work within me.

Pope Francis has declared this the Year of Consecrated Life in the Church. What does that mean to you?

Brother Raj: It is a chance for us to bear witness — to be examples of consecrated life. I would like people to understand that we are religious brothers, yes, but we are also humans.

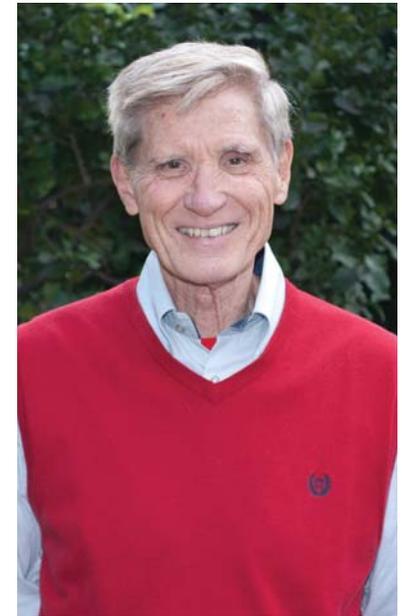
Brother Bob: It’s an opportunity for us to demonstrate to the world how we live the Gospel. I think many people don’t understand what consecrated life is. This year shines a light on the good and satisfying life we have.

Brother Sebastian: I also think Pope Francis wants us to deepen our life of prayer, our life of service — to remind us of our ministry. It’s a year of special grace.

THE SEMINARY EXPERIENCE: BECOMING SERVANT-PRIESTS

Brother Les Kaehler serves as vice rector at *Seminario Internazionale Chaminade*. He helps guide the seminarians with a combination of wit and wisdom.

“The seminarians face the shock of a multi-cultural environment, Italian as a common language and tough university courses,” says Brother Les, describing the challenges of their first year. “They begin to realize that they are entering another stage of formation — this time preparing to be servant-priests to their brothers and sisters. They learn what it means to be a Marianist priest. They grow in self-confidence and in deeper confidence in the Lord.”



Brother Les Kaehler, SM

The Marianists have donors who give specifically to support vocations and formation. What do you want them to know?

Brother Armando: They should know priestly formation is important for the Society of Mary and for the Church. The Church needs well-educated, fully formed priests. I would like them to know we are living a simple life — we are using the resources wisely.

Brother Sean: We are all committed to becoming good priests, to becoming worthy servants of God’s people. This is a joyful transformation for us.

Brother Raj: The donors are supporting our growth in faith. In turn, we as priests will help others grow in faith. It is hard to imagine anything more important. I am so grateful for this opportunity. I know we all are. ■

SUPPORT OUR SEMINARIANS AND OTHER MEN IN MARIANIST FORMATION

Help the Marianists bring Christ to the world by providing financial support for religious formation. There are monthly giving clubs and other options from which to choose. Send a donation now using the enclosed envelope, or go to marianist.com/donate. For more information, please contact Brother Alex Tuss, SM, at 937.222.4641, ext. 3003, or by email to alex.tuss@marianistmission.org.

Taking Jesus to the Waiting World

Marianist Father Al McMenemy gives and receives spiritual encouragement through his long-standing ties with Lay Marianist communities.

BY JOHN SCHROEDER

When Marianist Father Al McMenemy, 80, meets with one of 14 Lay Marianist and Affiliate communities he mentors, he often starts the meeting with an exhortation: “Our common mission is the same as Mary’s,” he says, and they finish the line: “To take Jesus to the waiting world.”

These familiar words of Marianist Founder Blessed William Joseph Chaminade have echoed throughout Father Al’s 64 years in the Society of Mary. In the early 1990s, he began helping them resonate in a distinctly Marianist way by energizing “the revival of our lay branch,” he says.

Father Al considers this ministry a gift from his parents, who made their consecration as Affiliates in a Lay Marianist community in the early 1950s. “I knew that we’d had the lay branch since Father Chaminade’s time,” he recalls. “But I didn’t get too involved with it until mother and dad made their commitment.”

The Marianist connection

Growing up in Florissant, Mo., the fifth of 10 children, Father Al says his parents were deeply spiritual. “We prayed the rosary every night, and we never missed Mass or spiritual exercises like Sacred Heart devotions or the Corpus Christi procession.” They were overjoyed when, as a 16-year old, he told them he felt called to religious life.

Still, it took a quirk of geography to make the Marianist connection. Florissant was Jesuit country in the 1930s and 1940s. Priests from the Society of Jesus staffed both Catholic parishes in the city and

“We had nearly lost sight of working as equals with the laity, so it’s a grace for me to bless them and be blessed by them today. It’s a mutual journey, building up what Father Chaminade would have called ‘a spectacle of saints.’”

— Father Al McMenemy, SM

ran a house of formation on a 1,000-acre farm nearby. But to foster their son’s vocation, the McMenemy family chose McBride High School, a Marianist school closer to their home.

After a year at McBride, Father Al transferred to Maryhurst, a Marianist pre-novitiate in Kirkwood, Mo., for the remainder of high school. He spent the next 12 years in formation and ministry until beginning his studies for the priesthood in 1962.

Ordained on St. Patrick’s Day in 1967, Father Al began serving as a teacher and chaplain at Marianist schools throughout the West and Midwest. At each stop, he looked for opportunities to connect with Lay Marianist communities through retreats and other spiritual enrichment activities on weekends and in the evenings.

To bless and be blessed

Initially, Father Al “dabbled at this work among the laity,” he says, while carrying a full workload at the schools where he served. Over time, his relationships deepened with the lay communities in different states, even as the Marianists found themselves unable to continue staffing schools with vowed religious. “We left city after city, but in each of those places we had lay people,” he says. Eventually, that became his calling: to journey with the laity.

In 1993, the Provincial administration asked Father Al to work full time with Lay Marianist communities, a role he’s had ever since. Today he makes 35 to 40 trips a year across the Midwest and Southwest from his base in St. Louis, offering Mass, presenting mini-retreats and engaging the lay communities in spiritual exercises.



Father Al McMenemy and Lay Marianists, standing, Carol Craddock and Carole King; seated, Mary Kay Fitzpatrick and Jeanette Pence

St. Louisan Mary Kay Fitzpatrick, who's known Father Al for nearly 30 years, admires the energy of this itinerant minister. But she's even more captivated by his talent for nurturing spiritual gifts. "He encourages people to use their imaginations to draw closer to Jesus through Mary," she says.

It's a calling Father Al loves, especially because it's connected to Blessed Chaminade's original vision of a spiritually strong laity.

Jeanette Pence, who teamed with Father Al and Mary Kay to form the newly named Cana Companions Lay Marianist community, says she's strengthened by his wisdom. "It's a beautiful charism,

and Father Al believes and lives it," she says. "His example inspires us to live the way that Chaminade intended."

There's great joy in serving those who've heard "the universal call to holiness," Father Al says. "We had nearly lost sight of working as equals with the laity, so it's a grace for me to bless them and be blessed by them today. It's a mutual journey, building up what Father Chaminade would have called 'a spectacle of saints.'" ■

John Schroeder is a freelance writer from St. Louis.

Please help the Marianists in caring for their elderly priests and brothers by joining the St. Joseph Legacy Club. To donate, use the enclosed envelope or go to marianist.com/donate.

For more information, contact Brother Alex Tuss, SM, at 937.222.4641, ext. 3003, or alex.tuss@marianistmission.org.

SAFETY NET

The Marianist Urban Students Program provides mentoring and support to vulnerable high school students, guiding them on a path to higher education.

BY JAN D. DIXON

It's early morning when Alexis Clark, 18, boards a bus for an hour-long ride to Baldwin Wallace University in Berea, a suburb of Cleveland. She's been excited about college since she graduated last spring from Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School (VASJ), a Marianist-sponsored school on the southern shore

of Lake Erie in Cleveland. Had it not been for the Marianist Urban Students Program (MUSP), a scholarship and mentoring initiative funded by the Marianists, Alexis would not easily have made the transition to college. Not much has been easy for her.

"My dad was killed in a fight," says Alexis, explaining that he was trying to help someone. "I was very young."

In 2013, her mother, Valerie Short, was shot while pumping gas at a convenience store not far from their home. Caught in crossfire when men began shooting at each other, Valerie didn't realize she had been hit. "I got in my car, and didn't notice the pain in my hip until I sat down," she says.

Rushed to a nearby hospital, Valerie underwent surgery to repair her shattered hip. A month later, while still in recovery, she suffered a major stroke.

For the next several months, Alexis took charge of the household, looking after her three younger siblings, making sure they did their homework, were fed and got to school on time. "I helped my mom with everything," she says. "She couldn't do much."

Going to school was the easy part. "I wouldn't have made it last year had it not been for the people in the MUSP program," says Alexis. "They were always there for me. They had my back when I didn't have anyone else."

"Many of the students in the MUSP program come from inner-city neighborhoods that aren't safe," says Janice Roccasalva, chair of the advisory board for MUSP and a former principal at VASJ. "School is their home away from home and their safety net."

Saving kids

Helping students feel safe, supported and valued is part of Tim Neary's job as director of MUSP. The students in the MUSP program "experience the typical pains of adolescence, but they have extra burdens," says Tim, acknowledging that the stress in their young lives comes from many sources. Their biggest worry

"Tim is more than the MUSP director. He's their guidance counselor, social worker, surrogate parent, cheerleader and coach. I wish we had 10 more like Tim Neary at this school. I think MUSP is saving kids."

— Janice Roccasalva, advisory board chair, MUSP

Opposite page: Tim Neary, director of MUSP, with MUSP alumna Alexis Clark, her sister, Danyell Wilson, and their mother, Valerie Short





PHOTO: KEN BLAZE

MUSP participant Sean Johns enjoys good-humored coaching from Tim Neary.

is money. "Many parents have lost jobs or are just getting back on their feet. They are living paycheck-to-paycheck or receiving some type of assistance," says Tim.

The MUSP program was launched at VASJ in 1999 to help children living in impoverished households afford a Catholic high school education. But low income is not the only criterion for admittance to the program. "We look for children who are at risk of dropping out of high school," says Tim. "Even if they make it through their senior year, the ones that don't go on for more training and education are left with few good job opportunities. Our goal is to identify high-potential students who wouldn't go to college without MUSP."

Identifying these students means asking lots of questions: Is this a single-parent household? Who's their support system? Who are their role models? Without MUSP, where would they end up?

Not surprisingly, the students accepted into MUSP are vulnerable and need a lot of support. "Tim is more than the MUSP director. He's their guidance counselor, social worker, surrogate parent, cheerleader and coach," says Janice, who works with Tim and a 14-member MUSP board to select students each year for the program. "I wish we had 10 more like Tim Neary at this school. I think MUSP is saving kids."

Close bonds

There are 23 students participating in MUSP at VASJ this year. The program can accommodate as many as 26. The students come from four Catholic elementary schools in the area. Each class, starting freshman year, admits six to eight students. The participants form tightknit bonds. "We've grown close, almost like brothers and sisters," says Sean Johns, a junior in the program who says he can talk with his MUSP friends about almost anything.

But it's Tim Neary to whom he looks for guidance. "I've learned that I'm not alone," says Sean, who lives with his mom, a single parent. "There is always someone here to help me, especially Mr. Neary. Sometimes, when my grades are down, he asks me, 'What are you doing? You can do better.' He sets the bar high, like a good coach."

Sean has watched his mother, Mary, juggle two low-paying jobs to make ends meet, working from 5 a.m. until 6 p.m. Still, it isn't enough, so this year Sean began working at a restaurant 10 hours a week to help with expenses. He's determined to go to college, a goal almost all the MUSP graduates achieve. "When I see how hard my mom works, it's a big motivator," he says.

Savoring each success

Alexis Clark is thriving in her first year of college. Last fall, her younger sister, Danyell Wilson, followed in her footsteps and began her freshman year at VASJ through the MUSP program. Danyell wants to become a lawyer, "so I can help people find justice," she says. In her inner-city world, where violence, drug abuse and clashes with the law are common, she's witnessed her share of injustice.

Alexis also wants to make a difference in the lives of people who have been hurt. "I want to be a therapist so I can help people overcome trauma and live normal lives," she says.

Their ambitions are what keep Tim Neary going. "I'm inspired by the success stories that happen every day at VASJ, like the kid who comes in early to work on a paper because he doesn't have a computer at home," he says.

But he saves his greatest admiration for those who come back to school after graduation. "When I see kids go to college — reach that goal — and come back here so lit up, so excited. They just glow," he says. "It's the best part of my day, and I know that our hard work is paying off." ■

HELP A STUDENT SUCCEED

You can help the MUSP program through a financial contribution. To make a donation now, please use the enclosed envelope or go to our website at marianist.com/donate-to-musp. For more information, contact Allison Hewitt at 314.533.1207 or ahewitt@sm-usa.org.



MUSP alumnus Jimmy McLeod Jr

A RUNNING CHANCE

Marianist Urban Students Program spurs students to cross the finish line.

According to census data, 98 percent of adults living in South-Collinwood, an inner-city neighborhood in Cleveland, do not have a college degree. Jimmy McLeod Jr, 26, who grew up in this part of town, was determined to defy the odds. He credits the Marianist Urban Students Program (MUSP) at Villa Angela-St. Joseph for giving him a running chance.

Besides financial support, the program provided him with many resources. But it was MUSP's summer trip to visit college campuses that set Jimmy on a winning course. "I would never have attended Bowling Green State University without that trip," he says.

His path kept opening to bigger possibilities. After graduating college, he attended Loyola University Chicago and earned a master's degree in higher education. He was hired by the University of Dayton to work in administration.

A year ago, Jimmy spread his wings again and took a job at the University of Colorado Boulder. Recently, he was promoted to "first-year success advisor," a job designed to help first-generation college students, most of whom are people of color, stay in school. "I'm a catch-all campus resource person," says Jimmy. Recognizing the position is much like the MUSP director at VASJ, he marvels at the similarities. "I've come full circle," he says in amazement. "I love it."

How MUSP works

The Marianist Urban Students Program operates in three Marianist high schools: Purcell Marian High School, Cincinnati; Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School, Cleveland; and Central Catholic High School, San Antonio.

Scholars from the MUSP program are typically "at-risk students," meaning they are at risk of underperforming or dropping out of school. MUSP provides students with mentoring and financial support. The Marianists pay two-thirds of the annual tuition fee for each MUSP student. The balance of the tuition is paid by the student's family as a personal investment.

House of Prayer

Eastern Pennsylvania families find blessings in a Marianist-inspired rosary community.

BY JOHN SCHROEDER

Sometimes grace happens like this: You look back over a period of time and discover that a pearl of great price has come into your life — a simple treasure you wouldn't trade for anything.

That's how participants talk about the Marianist-inspired family rosary group they formed in Chester County, just outside Philadelphia. It's been going strong for six years, nourishing spirits, building community and strengthening faith in unexpected ways.

"Everyone who leaves our large gatherings goes home happy," says Cassandra Doughty. "The joy is hard to define, but it comes from praying the whole rosary together, from sharing our hearts and enjoying the company of each other's families."

Bringing the spirit home

Cassandra understood how the rosary could help bring people together because she'd seen it happen during the pre-dinner recitations that are a long-standing tradition at the Marianist Family Retreat Center in Cape May Point, N.J. "It's always informal, cozy and beautiful there, as families spread out on their blankets to pray," she says. "We wanted to borrow that spirit and bring it closer to home."

She wasn't the only one who felt such a call. Fellow parishioner Joanie Roe and her husband, Chris, were looking for ways to strengthen prayer life in their family. The Roes, too, had been on family retreats at Cape May. After attending formation training



ALL PHOTOS: KYLENE CLEAVER

The family rosary group often draws 50 or more adults and children to its gatherings.



sponsored by the Marianist Lay Formation Initiative, the Roes sent out an open invitation to see if other families in the area were interested in forming a prayer group. The response was overwhelming. “At least 70 people attended that first gathering, which was held on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception,” says Joanie.

The next year, Pati Krasensky, director of the Marianist Lay Formation, met with Joanie and Cassandra, offered a few suggestions and then stepped back to watch the group evolve “in the spirit Chaminade would have appreciated,” she says.

“Once you get Marianist people together, things seem to grow and blossom,” says Joanie. For example: After tweaking the schedule a time or two, the group has settled into a rhythm of gathering six times a year, on or near Marian feast days. Families take turns hosting the prayer sessions, which typically include a potluck dinner or dessert. They intentionally cast a wide net, often drawing groups of 50 or more adults and children on a given night.

The group has spawned other activities, such as monthly service opportunities, an email prayer chain and a home Mass celebrated by a Marianist priest each summer. “The Marianists and the extended lay community have been so supportive,” says Cassandra.

But the primary focus of the group remains on gathering families together regularly to deepen their faith and strengthen the bonds of community.

Keep it simple

Kathleen Darcy is among those who’ve seen the impact on her family’s prayer life. Noticing that her growing sons had begun to “question whether this is all normal,” she discovered that the rosary group offered strength in numbers among the teens.

“They enjoy each other’s company,” she says, “and they look up to kids who are living out their faith. That kind of example is invaluable.”

In busy families, it’s hard to do any activity together, says Cassandra. “Our lives are fragmented because of school, sports and jobs. It’s all we can do to keep those plates spinning.” The rosary group offers some relief because it brings families together around a spiritual activity. “We knew we would be blessed by it.”

“Keeping it simple has made it successful,” adds Joanie. “There’s such hunger for community among Catholics, and this helps. It’s good for everybody who participates.”

Good and getting better. “It’s by God’s design that these people have become some of our best friends,” says Kathleen. “We’ve shared a lot of struggles. When my family is in need of prayer, I know they’re going to pray for us.”

It’s a gift the long-time participants are eager to pay forward, too. “It feels wonderful to host our group,” Kathleen says. “It’s a joy to open my house as a place of prayer — not just for our family, but for our community.” ■

John Schroeder is a freelance writer from St. Louis.

Family rosary group members Kathleen Darcy, Joanie Roe and Cassandra Doughty

Interested in starting your own Marianist lay group?

Please contact Pati Krasensky, Marianist Lay Formation Initiative, at 215.634.4116 or pkrasensky@sm-usa.org.





*2014 Heisman Trophy winner
Marcus Mariota was a star at
Saint Louis School, a Marianist-
sponsored school in Honolulu.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF FL MORRIS/
HONOLULU STAR-ADVERTISER.

THE CHARACTER OF A CHAMPION

*Marcus Mariota, 2014 Heisman Trophy winner,
embodies the grace and character of his Marianist education.*

BY CAROL DEXTER

“And the winner of the 2014 Heisman Trophy is ... Marcus Mariota!”

The auditorium at Saint Louis School in Honolulu exploded with cheers, whistles and riotous applause. More than 600 students, alumni and parents at the Marianist-sponsored school had gathered in December for a Heisman watch party. Now they were reveling in the joy of a native son receiving a well-deserved honor.

Marcus, a 2011 grad of Saint Louis School and quarterback for the Oregon Ducks, received college football’s top award in a landslide election, garnering 90 percent of the first-place votes.

His impressive stats on the gridiron were indisputable. But in a sport often associated with brutish behavior, the grace and character of this Marianist school grad have shone as brightly.

Humble, dedicated, authentic, tireless and devoted were just a few of the glowing adjectives filling media reports at Heisman time.

None of this was a surprise to his friends and teachers at Saint Louis School.

“Everything you have heard about this young man is true,” says SLS religion teacher Elizabeth Vegas. “He has never wanted the recognition of his incredible successes. He was always willing to stop for a picture, shake hands or give one of the middle school boys a hug. We call him a ‘Saint Louis Man’ because he embodies all we hope for in our young gentlemen.”

Marianist influences

Marcus’ parents, Toa and Alana Deppe-Mariota, are graduates of Chaminade University of Honolulu, a Marianist university that shares its campus with Saint Louis School. They chose to continue their Marianist tradition for Marcus’ education; younger brother Matthew is in the SLS class of 2015.

SLS is the oldest Marianist middle/high school in the Province of the United States. It has been shepherded by the Society of Mary since 1883 — long before Hawai’i became a state — and has an enrollment of 560 boys in grades 6-12. Marcus led the SLS Crusaders to a

state championship his junior year. He was a big man on the *Kalaepohaku** campus, but never fit the stereotype of that role.

“Marcus was always an ‘A’ student, but what struck me was his gentleness,” says SLS campus minister Errol Christian, who oversaw service activities when Marcus was a student. “Each year we sponsor an event called Pumpkin Patch. We bring in kids from poorer neighborhoods to play games. The seniors are expected to sign up for a shift.

But Marcus — well, he stayed the whole day with a group of kindergartners. The image is still engraved in my mind of this big star quarterback holding hands with these little ones, walking with them and making sure they were having a good time.”

In his senior year at SLS, Marcus was selected to receive the “Blessed Chaminade Award,” named for Marianist founder Father William Joseph Chaminade. The award is given to those few students who embody the characteristics of a Catholic, Marianist education. Marcus fit the bill in the classroom and on the field.

“(Marcus) won’t raise his voice at anyone,” says his SLS coach, Vince Passas. “He’d be the first guy running sprints, the first guy to finish, the first guy on the field, the last guy to leave. He was that kind of leader.” Vince noted that Marcus also served as the unofficial team tutor. “He often gave up a Sunday at the beach to help teammates with homework.”

In his Heisman acceptance speech, Marcus said: “To the men of Kalaepohaku and the Saint Louis brotherhood, thank you for teaching me to always be mindful and faithful.” In typical

fashion, he deflected the attention and spoke to the children of Hawai’i. “You should take this as motivation to dream big and strive for greatness.”

“If this guy isn’t what the Heisman Trophy is all about, then I’m in the wrong profession,” says Mark Helfrich, Oregon Ducks coach. “If you want your son or daughter to have a role model, pick this guy.” ■

* The Hawaiian word refers to the rocky hillside neighborhood that is home to Saint Louis School and Chaminade University.



Desmond Howard

MARIOTA SCORES THE THIRD “MARIANIST HEISMAN”



Roger Staubach

Marcus is the third Marianist school alumnus to earn a Heisman. He follows in the cleatsteps of Desmond Howard, a 1988 grad of St. Joseph High School (now Villa Angela-St. Joseph) in Cleveland, who played for the University of Michigan. The first “Marianist Heisman” was earned by the legendary Roger Staubach, a 1960 graduate of Purcell High School (now Purcell Marian) in Cincinnati, who played for Navy. On a particularly Marianist note, Staubach is credited with popularizing the term “Hail Mary Pass.”

PHOTO COURTESY MARISSA MCCLAIN/THE MICHIGAN DAILY

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Marianists — religious and lay — bring the light of the Gospel to the slums of Kenya's coastal region.

BY JAN D. DIXON

“If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.”

— Isaiah 58:10

ALL PHOTOS: RICH DAVIS



Marianist Father Stephen Wanyoike, SM

At first, there was no building. People gathered anyway, seeking shade under a canopy of trees to pray, sing and celebrate the Eucharist. Then, in 1995, a few Marianist brothers joined this humble outpost called St. Martin de Porres parish in the Kenyan coastal city of Mombasa. Before the year was up, the Marianists were invited by the Mombasa Archdiocese to staff and run the fledgling parish. It was a turning point.

“This parish has become a strong witness to the people of Mombasa,” says Marianist Father Stephen Wanyoike, who has been serving as pastor for six years. “It stands out from other parishes in the area,” he says, pointing to the energy and enthusiasm of its youthful members.

It also has grown exponentially. Starting with a handful of families, the church now serves roughly 7,500 people. The reasons for its explosive growth are many, but Lay Marianist Josephine Njeri Njeru, 33, believes Marianist spirituality is at the core. “It may not be visible from the outside, but Marianist spirituality has changed the whole church,” she says. “It transformed and awakened it.”

Under Marianist leadership and inspired by a compassionate group of Lay Marianists, this working-class parish has taken a special interest in families living in Bombolulu, an overcrowded slum adjacent to church property.

The role of the parish in this community cannot be overstated. As in many African nations where government services have failed, the Church is one of the few trusted social structures remaining to fill the gap. In the last 20 years, St. Martin de Porres has risen to meet critical needs, offering desperately poor children and families a host of social, legal and health services. In so doing, it has become a living witness of faith, says Lay Marianist Michael Thuo, 48, a civil engineer. People in the slum “know something is different about us,” he says.



Laying a Marianist foundation

It's 10:30 a.m. on a brutally hot Sunday morning. A group of Lay Marianists have gathered in a small meeting room to pray, discuss their personal challenges of the week and share a cup of tea. There are 23 Lay Marianists at St. Martin de Porres, a multi-generational group that first formed under the leadership of Marianist Brother Paul Kageche 13 years ago. Each has gone through a two-year formation process before making a final commitment.

While the group meets weekly, most members also participate in or lead a small faith community, forming a strong Marianist network throughout the parish. On any given Sunday, Lay Marianists are busy singing in the choir, serving as lectors and assisting with one of three Masses celebrated that day.

"Lay Marianists are called to be leaders and role models," says Hellen Ochanda, 30, who became a Lay



Lay Marianist Josephine
Njeri Njeru

Marianist five years ago. "It's a serious commitment and a big part of my life."

The Church as refuge

When the Marianists first visited Mombasa in the mid-1990s, they assessed the needs of people living in extreme poverty in Bombolulu. They found the most pressing issue was unemployment. In 1998, they

launched the Marianist Development Project (MDP), a skills training program to help young adults acquire job skills. The program offers training in catering, hairdressing, metalwork, carpentry and dressmaking, and has garnered national recognition. "We have twice the number of applicants we can accommodate and not enough classroom space," says Marianist Brother Anthony Wanyoike, assistant director of MDP.

A child from St. Martin de Porres parish, a Marianist-staffed parish in Mombasa, Kenya.

Their foray into these slum neighborhoods paved the way for Lay Marianist outreach. While the work of the lay group can easily be seen on Sunday morning, much of their ministry happens outside the compound of the parish, on the dark streets of these impoverished settlements.

"We wanted to help the poorest families," says Michael, who with his wife, Eunice, were some of the

first Lay Marianists in the parish. But that became a daunting task. "Everyone in the slum is needy," he says.

Slum communities are organized according to tribal customs, with a "chief" overseeing a group of 10 to 12 families. "We asked the chiefs to help us identify 10 of the poorest families," says Josephine. Based on their recommendations, the Lay Marianists began directing resources from the parish to these families, providing essentials such as food, clothing and tuition assistance for children whose parents could not afford school fees. It is an ongoing ministry.



There is another group in the parish that helps poor families with social justice issues — legal matters, police arrests and domestic violence — working as advocates on their behalf.

The parish also stepped up efforts several years ago when the HIV/AIDS crisis began to unravel family structures. "We opened a clinic on the grounds of the parish to help those with AIDS," says Father Steve, "but today it is open to anyone, Christians and Muslims, who needs medical attention."

Calm amid the storm

Mombasa is an ancient seaport city of 1.2 million people. It is home to the largest population of Muslims in Kenya, who comprise nearly half of the city's population. There is a "fragile coexistence of faiths in this city," says Father Steve, who has initiated efforts to establish interreligious dialogue.

Despite ongoing tensions, Father Steve remains calm. "We share a lot of common ground," he says.

The problems swirling around him don't keep him from dreaming. Plans are underway to build a new skills training facility for MDP on property adjacent to the parish, and a new parish conference hall is under construction. He would like to do more. "Education is the best way to help our young people feel worthy and live healthy, productive lives."

Father Steve also is learning to stop worrying. "God is able to take care of these things. It is hard sometimes, but with God, anything is possible." ■



Lay Marianist Hellen Ochanda studied catering at a Marianist skills training program.

OFFERING A HAND UP

The Marianists have spent many years helping people in Mombasa, Kenya, lift themselves out of poverty through skills training. The Marianist Development Project (MDP) provides courses in catering, hairdressing, metalwork, carpentry and dressmaking, as well as classes in Gospel living and social skills.

Supporting MDP. You can be a part of this hand-up approach by sending a 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 marianist.com/donate. For more information, contact Father David Paul, SM, at 314.533.1207 or dpaul@sm-usa.org.

Be sure to see the new Marianist video about Eastern Africa ministries! Ever wish you could visit Africa? A newly released video titled "Make It a Better Place: The Marianists in Eastern Africa" will take you there. The video offers a comprehensive overview of the Marianist work among the families and children of Kenya, Malawi and Zambia. To view the video, visit marianist.com/India-Africa.

In Remembrance

For complete obituaries of these Marianists, visit marianist.com/obits.



Father Michael Barber, SM

Father Michael Barber, SM, 73, died Nov. 17, 2014, in San Antonio. Father Mike began his ministry in 1962 as a teacher at McBride High School, a Marianist school in St. Louis. For 18 years beginning in 1964, he served at St. Mary's High School in St. Louis as a teacher and coach. In 1988, he attended seminary in Rome and was ordained in 1990. Father Mike worked as a parish priest in Mexico, eventually moving to the remote Uxpanapa Valley, where he served a large parish. In 2009, he was seriously injured in a truck accident. Due to spinal cord injuries, Father Mike lived the remainder of his life as a quadriplegic. He inspired many visitors, friends and fellow Marianists through his devotion to Mary and prayer.



Father Daniel Doyle, SM

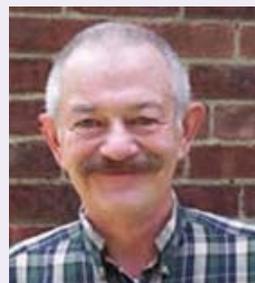
Father Daniel Doyle, SM, 77, died Oct. 29, 2014, in Hollywood, Fla. Father Dan served as a teacher at Cathedral Latin, a former Marianist school in Cleveland. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in theology and was ordained in 1967. He began a long association with Chaminade High School (now Chaminade-Madonna College Preparatory) in Hollywood, Fla., serving as teacher, chaplain and as the first president of the school in 1988. Father Dan ministered in the charismatic renewal movement for the Archdiocese of Miami. Throughout the 1990s, he served in retreat and workshop ministries, and many volunteer activities, earning him recognition from President George W. Bush's Council on Service and Civic Participation.



Brother Patrick McMahon, SM

Brother Patrick McMahon, SM, 79, died Nov. 1, 2014, in Cupertino, Calif. Brother Pat began his teaching ministry in Hawai'i serving at Marianist schools in Honolulu and Maui. In 1962, he moved to California to teach at Junipero Serra, formerly a Marianist school. The following year he served in Japan, where he taught math and religion at St. Joseph College (later St. Joseph International School).

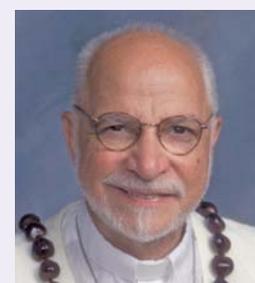
He returned to California and taught in Marianist high schools throughout the state. From 1990 to 1992, Brother Pat served on the staff of the Marianist Retreat Center in Cupertino. He returned to teaching at Archbishop Riordan High School, where, in 2005, the school awarded him the Blessed Chaminade Award for his life as a Marianist and his 23 years of teaching and service to Riordan.



Father John Melloh, SM

Father John Melloh, SM, 71, died Dec. 31, 2014, in Palm Beach, Fla. A gifted scholar, Father John earned bachelor's degrees in mathematics and philosophy and taught at the Marianist postulate in Beacon, N.Y., from 1965 to 1967. He earned a bachelor's degree in education and taught for three years at Chaminade High School in Florida (now Chaminade-Madonna College Preparatory). Father John was ordained in 1973. He earned a master's degree in liturgical studies and a doctorate in historical theology. Early in his career as a university professor, Father John taught at the University of Dayton and St. Mary's University. In 1977, he began teaching at the University of Notre Dame, where he spent most of his ministry. Father John loved music, often serving as a choir director or cantor. He played the organ, oboe, guitar, piano and autoharp.

Father Joseph Priestley, SM, 89, died Oct. 11, 2014, in Honolulu. Father Joe began his ministry as a teacher at Marianist schools in Ohio and Hawai'i before his ordination in 1955. The ensuing years were a flurry of teaching assignments in religion, languages, music and history at Marianist schools in California and Hawai'i. He lived for three years in Japan, where he taught at St. Joseph College in Yokohama (later St. Joseph International School). He returned to the United States and ministered as a chaplain at Marianist schools. From 1970 through 1986, Father Joe traveled widely as a preacher for retreats and special liturgies. In 1978, he published a book titled "To Live is to Love Now," about spiritual renewal in the Church and the world. From 1986 to 1995, Father Joe served as pastor at Saint Ann Church in Maui.



Father Joseph Priestley, SM

Memorial: To make a memorial donation in the name of a Marianist, use the envelope enclosed and provide the name of the brother or priest you wish to honor, or go to marianist.com/memorial.

My Year in Nairobi

Before entering law school, a college grad from New York finds himself on a journey that he never imagined.

BY JAN D. DIXON

All Stephen Fleischer did was ask. Through God's grace, doors opened. People appeared. Events unfolded in ways he never imagined. That's how Stephen recalls experiences last year that led to a year-long volunteer internship with Our Lady of Nazareth Primary School (OLN), a Marianist-sponsored school in one of Nairobi's worst slums.

"I wanted to do a year of service before entering law school," says Stephen, a 23-year old graduate of Loyola University Maryland. Having grown up in New York and having traveled the globe with his parents, Stephen realized how privileged he was. "I wanted to give something back. I asked my dad, and he suggested I talk with the Marianists."

Things moved quickly. Only a few months after connecting with the Marianists, Stephen boarded a plane for Nairobi and the unknown challenges that awaited him.

Sharing one's gifts

Now six months into his internship, Stephen is the 6th grade math teacher at OLN, where he also teaches creative arts, life skills and physical education. Recently, he started a chess club. "I used to play chess competitively throughout the United States, so I'm teaching a group of students how to play," he says.

"Stephen is a can-do person who looks at a situation and asks: 'How can we fix this? How can we make this better?'" says his dad, Stephen R. Fleischer.

That questioning spirit led the younger Stephen to launch a more formal basketball program at OLN,

and raise money for new basketballs, uniforms and basketball court improvements.

In December, Stephen's father and mother, Toni Marie, found themselves carting 20 deflated basketballs to Nairobi to equip the aspiring team.

"The magnitude of the problems is enormous," says his dad after visiting Kenya. "You look around the slum, and it's easy to be overwhelmed. The economic, physical and educational problems seem impossible. But Stephen sees it as a challenge."

The classroom of life

Packing his bags and heading to Nairobi by himself for a year was scary, admits Stephen. "But I think this is what life is about: conquering your fears, entering difficult situations and overcoming them."

His biggest challenges take place in the classroom, where every day he learns something new. "The students at OLN teach me as much as I teach them," he says. "Mostly, they have taught me compassion."

Stephen knows the only way these students will get out of the slum is through education. He and his parents are helping through student sponsorships and financial support. In spite of their

extreme poverty, the children at OLN are "strong, much stronger than I was at that age," says Stephen. He knows his future will be shaped by them. "It's

children like these that I want to help by using the law, maybe becoming a human rights lawyer," he says.

Of one thing he is certain: "I am a better, more compassionate person as a result of this experience." ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPHEN A. FLEISCHER

Interested in sponsoring a child at OLN?

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 marianist.com/oln. For more information, contact Father David Paul, SM, at 314.533.1207 or dpaul@sm-usa.org.

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Bro. Jim Brown, SM

