

MARIANIST CULTURE, FAITH AND COMMUNITY

ALIVE

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Marianists share reflections on Pope Francis – the people’s pope, page 4.

A MESSAGE

from the Provincial

Dear Friends of the Marianists,

Pope Francis is a good friend of the Society of Mary. While Jesuit provincial in Argentina and as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he had many occasions to associate with our brothers and with Marianist leadership. Before leaving Argentina for the papal conclave in 2013, he entrusted an important parish and social service center to the Marianists. Many of our Argentinian members know him personally and were delighted with his election as Bishop of Rome.

This first Jesuit Vicar of Christ made quite an impression during his recent visit to the Church in the United States. Our novices were present for the canonization of Junípero Serra at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on Sept. 23. We all watched with interest as he spoke at the United Nations and addressed the joint session of the United States Congress. He brought a message of peace, respect for human life and care for our “common home.” He speaks the truth forthrightly because he is indebted to no one, except Jesus and the truth of the Gospel.

In this issue, you will read about important themes of the Francis papacy. The pope says that religious should radiate joy. In declaring the Year of Consecrated Life, he has challenged religious to “wake up the world.”

You will read about how Brother José Julián Matos-Auffant, campus minister at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, brings the papal message of joy to his work with Spanish-speaking youth. Studies indicate that, within a decade or so, the majority of Catholics in the United States will be Spanish-speaking. Engaging young Hispanic men and women in the following of

Christ is of paramount importance. Pope Francis has challenged young people to take their faith to heart.

The Holy Father has asked religious men and women to serve the needs of people “at the margins.” Brother Giancarlo Bonutti does exactly that for homeless men and women in Cincinnati at the Mary Magdalen House. This ministry helps meet basic needs and brings dignity to those living in desperate poverty. Brother Raj Mohan, who is studying for the priesthood in Rome, also has dedicated his life to serving children living at the margins.

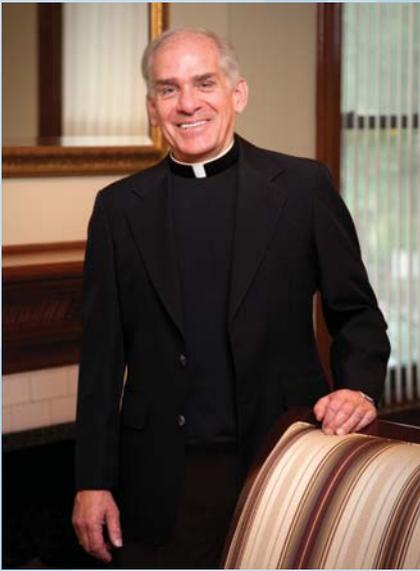
Of course, the importance of the family is central to Pope Francis’ concerns. The Synod on the Family is but one example of this concern, expressed early in his pontificate. In other stories, you’ll read about the Marianist Family and people like Deanna Snyder, a wife, mother and committed Lay Marianist, and about a group of Marianist youth engaged with their counterparts in Peru, a part of the Adèle Social Justice Project. The Marianist charism finds expression among Marianist religious and, increasingly, in the lay branch as well.

This issue of *ALIVE* comes to you with our deep gratitude and promise of prayers for you and your family. Let us pray for our Holy Father. Let us also pray that, someday, he will have the honor to canonize Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, Marianist founder and witness to the faith.

In Christ and Mary,



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Provincial



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Front cover
Pope Francis inspires and challenges Marianists, especially during his recent visit to the United States, 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, six 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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"PRAY *for* ME"

Faced with daunting challenges, Pope Francis' actions surprise, delight and challenge those in and outside the Church.

BY JAN D. DIXON

On March 13, 2013, Pope Francis stepped onto the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome for the first time as the new leader of the Roman Catholic Church. It was an electrifying moment as people from around the globe gathered to hear him speak. He closed his remarks that evening with a simple request: "Pray for me."

Those three words signaled to the world a new relationship between this pope and the Church's 1.2 billion people. "From the moment he said, 'pray for me,' I sensed his humility," says Brian Reavey, assistant for justice, peace and the integrity of creation for the Marianists. "He was willing to speak at our level — to ask for our help — as one of the people of the Church."

For Marianists Brother Stephen Glodek and Father Pat Tonry, and Lay Marianist professionals Brian Reavey and Pati Krasensky — who live and work in Philadelphia where the pope stopped in September on his first visit to the United States — his actions since becoming pope have shocked, amazed and inspired them.

It started on the night of his election when he hopped on a bus to his hotel with the cardinals who had just elected him pope, instead of taking the papal limo. Days later, he set up home in a two-bedroom dwelling at the Vatican's guest house, instead of the Apostolic Palace. It wasn't long before people noticed him eating in the Vatican's cafeteria, instead of the papal dining room. His actions are statements about who he is: a pope with a preference for simplicity and whose choices reflect his spiritual moorings.

The most vivid gesture of his humility came on Holy Thursday. Instead of celebrating Mass at a basilica, he chose

"God is not afraid of new things. That is why he is continually surprising us, opening our hearts, and guiding us in unexpected ways."

— Pope Francis, Oct. 19, 2014, homily at the beatification of Pope Paul VI

PHOTO: MARTIN PODZORNAY, SHUTTERSTOCK



PHOTO: KYLENE CLEAVER

Marianists Brother Stephen Glodek and Father Pat Tonry were among 2,000 guests to attend the pope's Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul in Philadelphia.

shocking," says Brother Stephen. "Shocking, in the best sense of the word, because he modeled for people what it means to be Jesus in the world."

Breaking the mold

St. Francis of Assisi said, "Preach the Gospel always, and if necessary, use words." Taking a cue from his namesake, Pope Francis' gestures speak volumes. He is setting the Church on a new course — "breaking the mold," says Father Pat Tonry, spiritual director for the Marianist Mission. "He is making the Church and the Gospel accessible and appealing. He has given us hope."

Many believe hope is what the Church has sorely needed. As Roman

to preach at a juvenile prison where he washed the feet of inmates, including Muslim women.

"We've never had a pope who went to a prison and washed the feet of Muslim women," says Brother Stephen, former provincial and now director of a religious property planning project. "He didn't explain himself. He just did it."

Although some were critical of him, "he did what he thought Jesus would do, and it was

author Massimo Franco wrote, "His election rose out of trauma." With Pope Benedict XVI suddenly resigning, a litany of daunting challenges awaited the new pope. The financial institution of the Church, known as the Vatican bank, was in disarray; the central administration, called the Roman Curia, was snarled in bureaucratic infighting; and the sex abuse scandal appeared to have no end in sight. "It felt hopeless," says Father Pat, "and the Church seemed so divorced from people's lives."

Pope Francis has moved quickly, especially for the Vatican, an institution often intransigent to change. In his first two years, he selected nine cardinals as an advisory board to assist with changes within the Roman Curia. He formed a commission to make bishops accountable in sex abuse cases. He established a new position called the secretariat for the economy and brought in outside advisors to bring transparency to Vatican finances. It may be too early to say whether these changes will have a lasting impact, but many believe it is a good start.

But it is his actions regarding the poor and the condition of the planet that have ignited conversations among Catholics and non-Catholics the world over.

A moral leader for our time

Pati Krasensky remembers the day the Vatican installed bathrooms for the homeless in a building in St. Peter's Square, complete with showers, sinks and hygiene kits. "I nearly jumped for joy," says Pati, director for the Marianist Lay Formation Initiative. "It was a huge symbolic gesture, but it goes beyond symbolism because it's a practical way to help people."

The pope's affinity for the poor comes from firsthand experience. Born in Argentina to Italian immigrants, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the



PHOTO: GIULIO NAPOLITANO, SHUTTERSTOCK

future pope, spent many hours of his Jesuit life walking among the shanty towns of Buenos Aires. “Pope Francis rubbed shoulders with the poor and homeless,” says Father Pat. “He came to the papacy with a different set of experiences than many popes. It shapes his view of people and the Church.”

The pope often says he wants the Church to make a difference in people’s lives — to be at the center of the discussion. Using his pastoral experience and what Marianists call a “ministry of presence” — his willingness to listen and engage with people, even those with whom he may not agree — has catapulted him into the limelight on the world stage. “Who am I to judge?” he replied in a conversation about homosexuality that had people around the world rethinking their perceptions of the Catholic Church.

Recently, his encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si’* (“Praise Be to You”), brought to the forefront the issue of climate change, economic disparities between rich and poor, and the urgent need for nations to come together for the sake of the planet.

Some Catholics are energized by the pope’s foray into these issues. Others are anxious and uncomfortable. But being uncomfortable can be a good thing. “It may be scary, but it’s also an invitation to dialogue,” says Brian.

Pope Francis put the issue of climate change squarely on the table for the world to address. “It’s really bold,” says Pati. “It’s going to take this discussion to a whole new level. It’s hard for the Church not to take climate change seriously now that the pope has published his encyclical.”

Returning the Church to itself

He is the first pope in 1,300 years not born in Europe, the first to take the name Francis, the first from Latin America and the first to address a

joint session of the United States Congress. But what sets him apart, what his legacy may rest on, is his outspoken stand for the vulnerable and wounded, including the Earth, our “common home,” as he eloquently stated.

Many inside the Vatican say the pope won’t change doctrine. But with the Synod of Bishops on the family, a meeting that convened in October 2015, he set the stage to listen to people talk about the status of divorced Catholics, the annulment process and other “hot potato” issues, as Brother Stephen calls them.



PHOTO: KYLENE CLEAVER

Brian Reavey joined delegates to the United Nations in New York to hear Pope Francis call on all nations to protect the environment. Pati Krasensky gathered with nearly 50,000 people to listen to the pope’s speech at Independence Mall in Philadelphia.

PHOTO: GIULIO NAPOLITANO, SHUTTERSTOCK



POPE FRANCIS: THE PEOPLE’S POPE

PHOTO: SOFDELUSIONER, SHUTTERSTOCK



During Pope Francis’ visit to the United States in September, he presided over worship services, addressed the United Nations and Congress, and canonized a saint. But the most symbolic and touching moments came when he rubbed shoulders with ordinary people, especially the “least of these” — homeless men and women, low-income school children and prisoners.

“He’s not in the position to change Church doctrine overnight,” says Pati. “But he’s got people talking, and he’s inviting people to come back to the Church.” For those who have felt bruised and unwelcomed, it is a step forward.

For now, his biggest contribution may be returning the Church to its original mission — a place of forgiveness and mercy — where broken people come to mend and begin anew. (The pope recently announced a “holy year of mercy.” See below.) The 78-year old pontiff has often referred to the Church as a hospital on a battlefield, taking in all who are wounded, no matter on which side they fought.

The image reflects the pope’s vision of an inclusive Church. “He stands as a beacon of hope and openness,” says Father Pat. “He makes it clear that the Gospel is for everyone — no matter who they are.” ■

Jubilee of Mercy: Beginning Dec. 8, 2015, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the pope has declared a “Jubilee of Mercy” — a year dedicated to reflection, confession and reconciliation. To learn more, go to jubilaemmisericordiae.va/

THE BEGINNING OF HOPE

Mary Magdalen House, under the direction of Marianist Brother Giancarlo Bonutti, helps homeless people reclaim their self-worth.

BY SHELLY REESE

It's a hot and sticky afternoon in Cincinnati. Steam from a midday rain rises from the pavement. Becky, Taz, Tamika and a handful of others are gathered outside Mary Magdalen House (MMH).

There's no room inside. The tiny waiting room of the storefront ministry is already packed with at least 20 homeless people. They have come for the same reason. They want to wash. They want to use a clean toilet. They want to be treated with respect.

"If it weren't for this place, we'd be using a bucket or baby wipes. Some of the churches have baby wipes," says Becky, who has lived in a tent with her husband for the past year. Taz, who lives under a bridge, says if it weren't for MMH, he'd bathe in the river.

Mary Magdalen House was conceived in 1985 after concerned citizens noticed people urinating on church steps and public spaces in the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood — a notoriously poor section of



ALL PHOTOS: SKIP PETERSON

Above, Marianist Brother Giancarlo Bonutti welcomes a guest — one of more than 100 a day — to use the services offered by Mary Magdalene House; right, David Zubelik, a volunteer, sorts through bags of clothing in the basement laundry facilities.





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the city — because there were no public facilities in the area for the homeless. In response, two adjacent store fronts on Main Street were purchased and turned into a modern bathhouse providing homeless men and women access to toilets, showers and laundry services.

The Marianists who staff St. Francis de Sales Parish — located a few miles from Over-the-Rhine — have been operating ministries for people in this impoverished community for years.

MMH hired Marianist Brother Giancarlo Bonutti in 1995 to serve as its director. One thing Brother Giancarlo has learned: In a throw-away society, where people can be dismissed or discarded, MMH services help people reclaim their dignity. “It is the beginning of hope,” he says.

Keeping it afloat

Six days a week, guests — often more than 100 a day — have access to seven showers, each with a private changing area, and bathroom facilities. Guests are welcomed by name and given a clean towel and wash cloth as well as toiletries such as soap and shampoo. Toothbrushes and razors also are available.

A free laundry service offering 24-hour turnaround is provided. Guests can exchange their soiled clothing for a second freshly laundered set. If they don't own other clothes, they are given a gently used set. In addition, guests can use the telephone or receive mail at MMH. If they need food, a place to sleep, help finding employment or other social services, staff members and volunteers provide referrals to agencies in the area.

While the services MMH offers are basic, the organization and efficiency with which they are provided is nothing short of astounding. Last year MMH served 1,815 people, nearly a third of whom were newcomers. It provided 21,178 showers, laundered 20,290 sets of clothes and gave away thousands of donated clothing items.

In the two narrow rooms that comprise the stone basement, three washing machines and four dryers hum endlessly. Pants — the facility gives out more than 3,000 pairs each year — hang on clothes racks lining one wall. Shirts — more than 2,000 of which will likely be distributed this year — line another. Undergarments, socks and shoes are stowed on shelves and in filing cabinets. Everything is arranged by size. Hundreds of brown paper bags, filled with clean clothes and clearly labeled with their owners' names, are arranged alphabetically along long rows of metal shelves.

During the course of the week, the seven staff members and roughly 25 volunteers who run MMH tramp up and down the basement stairs hundreds of times with heavy loads of laundry, donations and bags of clothing ready to be returned. To keep everything straight and ensure it's returned to the right person, they make detailed lists of every item a guest leaves for laundering and use different colored pins to differentiate clothes.

David and Mary Zubelik, who attend St. Francis de Sales Parish, volunteer each Tuesday sorting donated clothes and toiletries, washing and folding clothes and working the front desk.



Marianist Brother Giancarlo Bonutti with volunteers Mary and David Zubelik

“It's humbling,” Mary says. “These people have so little, and they're so grateful. To be able to offer a service that most of us take for granted is very fulfilling.”

More important than ever

Cincinnati is working to address the problems facing the homeless. The homeless population in the city and surrounding county fell 5.5 percent in 2014 to 7,810, the lowest level in four years, and three improved shelters are slated to open this year, replacing existing facilities in Over-the-Rhine. But the new shelters will be located further away and, as Brother Giancarlo notes, most of the guests who visit MMH don't stay in shelters anyway.

As a result, guests at MMH say, the facility is more important than ever.

“This place is a blessing,” says Tamika. “There's no other place like it.” ■

Shelly Reese is a freelance writer from Cincinnati.

PAYING IT FORWARD

Grateful for Marianist support, a San Antonio couple share their blessings so others can succeed.

BY JOHN SCHROEDER

As Rubén Escobedo recalls, his first contact with the Marianists didn't seem particularly encouraging. He'd shown up at St. Mary's University in early 1959 to see if he could transfer into the business school as a second-semester junior.

Short on finances, he'd left Texas Tech University in Lubbock the semester before and hoped to continue his education in his hometown of San Antonio. That's when he met the late Marianist Brother George Kohnen, then dean of the business school. Based on an initially gruff reception, "I had the feeling he might not let me in," Rubén says.

Soon enough, though, the inauspicious beginning blossomed into an unparalleled blessing — one that Rubén has been working to pay forward ever since. "At the time, I didn't realize what was happening," he says. "But in essence, I got an interest-free loan: Brother George let me pay tuition week by week."

A year later, the dean's guidance and mentorship proved even more valuable. Though Rubén ranked second in his graduating class, he didn't attract job offers from local accounting firms. Brother George arranged to have him interview with a national firm, encouraging Rubén to escape the vestiges of discrimination against Mexican-Americans in south Texas.

It was "life-changing" advice, Rubén notes. He worked for more than three years at an accounting firm in New York, gaining confidence in his skills as he worked alongside Ivy League graduates. "That was the best graduate school training I could ever have," he says.

Returning to San Antonio, Rubén founded a highly successful CPA firm and reconnected with the Marianists. Although he'd spent only three semesters at St. Mary's, his time there had been formative.



Rubén and Verónica Escobedo

"The Marianists believe there is no social or economic illness that cannot be cured by education, and I can firmly attest to that," he says, proudly noting that two of his adult children have earned advanced degrees from his alma mater.

The Marianists also instilled in him a spirit of servant leadership. "We are stewards here," he says. "We have a duty to help others, to love as Jesus loved and put our faith into action." Rubén's leadership abilities were put to use when he was named to the university's board of trustees, serving as its chairman for several years.

Rubén and his wife Verónica also have been generous in sharing their treasure with St. Mary's as lead benefactors for the 2011 renovation of Assumption Chapel in Reinbolt Hall, and through a 2014 pledge of \$1 million to establish the university's Center for Catholic Studies.

This year they extended their generosity to the Marianists by making a donation to the Marianist Province "Join Her Mission" (JHM) endowment campaign. Their gift will help ensure Marianist formation of lay leaders — people who will carry forward Marianist schools, retreat centers and ministries in the future.

Their generosity is driven by a conviction that "other young people of limited means have the same opportunities that we had," Rubén says. "It was a godsend to have the Marianists in my life, and I want to share that blessing with others." ■

John Schroeder is a freelance writer from St. Louis.

Join Her Mission: If you are interested in learning more about the JHM campaign, go to marianist.com/endowment or call Allison Hewitt, executive director of development, at 314.338.7215.



Participants of the Lay Marianist international encounter gather outside the Catacombs of San Francisco in Lima, Peru.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY CLARE ACOSTA

An International Encounter

A cross-cultural encounter in Peru helps Lay Marianists open their hearts to one another, strengthening international Marianist Family bonds.

BY JOHN SCHROEDER

Ask any of the 12 young adult Americans about the Marianist-sponsored trip they made to Peru this summer, and you might be surprised by the response.

The travelers don't start by showing photos of all the sights in and around Lima. Rather, they talk about relationships — the profound friendships that grew out of their conversations at dinner tables, in group discussions or in spontaneous moments throughout the week.

Billed as an encounter, the experience was designed to be distinct from a cultural immersion,

“We no longer see racism or gender inequality merely as ‘issues,’ but rather for what they are: the oppressive reality of a friend’s life. If we’re not doing something about the problem, then we’re essentially saying it’s okay for my friends to suffer.”

– Clare Acosta

says Clare Acosta, a leader of the Adèle Social Justice Project (ASJP), a Marianist organization that sponsored the trip. “With immersion trips, there’s a pretty clear ‘us’ and ‘them’ aspect to the activities,” says Clare, minister for social justice at St. Mary’s University, a Marianist school. “Our intent was more about relationship building — giving Lay Marianists from both countries a chance to explore what it means to live the charism in different places and cultures.”

At the heart of the experience was the concept of *convivencia*, a Spanish term for which there is

no precise English translation. “It means ‘a living together,’ but it goes much deeper than sharing everyday tasks like cooking and cleaning,” says Clare, who is bilingual and facilitated the encounter. “It’s about surrendering to one another: I’m going to reveal who I am, and you’ll do the same for me.”

Family spirit imprint

The 12 visitors (most of them graduates of Marianist universities) came from seven cities across the United States. Arriving in Peru in late June, they spent a week living in community at a Marianist retreat center in Callao along with five Peruvian peers. Throughout the week they also met with other Lay Marianists from the Lima area.

Native Texan Kevin Matula, one of the 12, was making his first trip outside the United States, so he expected to uncover cultural differences. But he quickly discovered his Peruvian peers shared many similarities. “We didn’t speak the same language, yet we connected on a beautiful level right away — probably because of our connection through the Marianists.”

Curiosity drew Peruvian participant Ricardo Cisterna. A member of Lima’s Soy de Cristo (I am of Christ) Lay Marianist community, he was interested in meeting Marianists from another country so he could compare their experiences of the charism with his own. He was surprised how quickly he felt at home among the U.S. visitors. “Despite coming from different realities, an authentic sense of community erupted spontaneously during our very first contact,” says Ricardo. The entire week was “a gift from God.”

Social justice: Up close and personal

In planning for the *convivencia*, participants agreed to focus on two social justice issues — gender inequality and racism — to give form to the cross-cultural exchange. Using the ‘See-Judge-Act’ model (a form of theological reflection promoted by Latin American bishops) to enter into discussion, both the U.S. and Peruvian contingents prepared presentations and described how injustice affects each country.

The conversations were eye-opening. Americans were surprised to learn about what amounts to a caste system in Peru. “An ad for a job might say, ‘Position available for a white male,’” says Cincinnati resident Laura Ebetino. “There’s a great deal of discrimination against *mestizos*, those of mixed descent.” The Americans noted that while racism may take less blatant forms in their country, its impact is real — and can boil over into situations that grab headlines worldwide. Similarly, women in both countries experience significant wage gaps and persistent stereotypes that can limit their career choices.

“Everyone in the room had a personal story to tell,” says Clare. “That changes the filter through which we see justice. We no longer see racism or gender inequality merely as ‘issues,’ but rather for what they are: the oppressive reality of a friend’s life. If we’re not doing something about the problem, then we’re essentially saying it’s okay for my friends to suffer.”

Trained as a chemical engineer, Laura recognized a familiar pattern in the stories told by her Peruvian peers — how women are often paid less than men for doing the same job, and how they can be discouraged from taking manufacturing jobs in the first place. The discussions kindled in her a determination to make a difference back home: “I need to encourage young women to stay involved in science and technology,” she says.

Kevin drew inspiration from the conversations, too. Through the Marianists, he’s learned that privilege and poverty are global issues. This expanded worldview is helping to fuel the work he does today as a legislative director for a state representative in Texas.



Peru encounter participants: Rob Brodrick (ASJP core team), Clare Acosta (ASJP core team and facilitator), with Peruvians John Caiazza and Marianist Brother Phil “Felipe” Melcher

“I’d like to focus on systemic issues, the heart of injustice,” Kevin says. “It helps to be with people my own age who share similar commitments.”

The week’s activities didn’t focus exclusively on the two justice topics. The Americans received a helping of Peruvian hospitality, too. The highlight: A chance to participate in a *noche cultural* (cultural night) festival at a local Marianist parish.

In the end, the experience of *convivencia* offered all participants an unexpected blessing. “Marianists truly are one big family, willing to serve God with the same ideals and values everywhere,” says Ricardo. “We may speak different languages, but the language of love and justice is present in all of us.”

Adds Clare: “If I’m going to live my Marianist charism, I don’t have the luxury of staying on the surface. I have to go deeper. That’s where we find community and solidarity — the gift of being part of the Marianist Family.” ■

John Schroeder is a freelance writer from St. Louis.

Beyond His *Wildest* Imaginings

From rural India to bustling Rome, Marianist Brother Raj Mohan could never have predicted the path his life has taken.

BY CAROL DEXTER

It's 4,480 miles from Brother Raj Mohan's home village in Tamil Nadu, India, to the Marianist Seminary in Rome, Italy. That's 4,480 miles, plus a staggering leap in culture, language and lifestyle.

For Brother Raj, it's also been a leap of faith — or perhaps more accurately, a leap *for* his faith.

Growing up in rural southern India, Brother Raj would not have pictured his life today. The fifth of seven children and the first son in a traditional Catholic Indian family, Brother Raj knew his parents had certain expectations. "In India, male children are very special, and I was given much love and

"We don't see immediate results, but the things we teach, the examples we provide ... they make a difference over time."

— Marianist Brother Raj Mohan

PHOTO: CAROL DEXTER



support,” he says. But with four daughters, Raj’s family paid out a considerable sum in wedding dowries — a practice that is technically illegal but commonly practiced among all faiths and social levels of Indian society.

“My parents were expecting that when I married they would finally get something back,” he says, laughing softly.

Instead, their son’s riches have come in the spiritual form of a vocation with the Marianists. Brother Raj professed his first vows as a Marianist brother in 2006. At age 30, he’s now in his second year of seminary studies and, if all goes as expected, he will be ordained in 2017.

A heart for the poor

Brother Raj first encountered the Marianists by happenstance. “I went with a friend who was interested in a vocation with the Marianists,” Brother Raj says. “Until that time, I had never heard the word ‘Marianist.’”

He was drawn by what he saw. “The family spirit of the Marianist community was much like my own family — everyone gathered together. It was very different from what I knew of diocesan priests who lived alone,” he says. He also was impressed with the ministries of the Marianists. “When I saw how the Marianists worked with the poor, it was very attractive to me.”

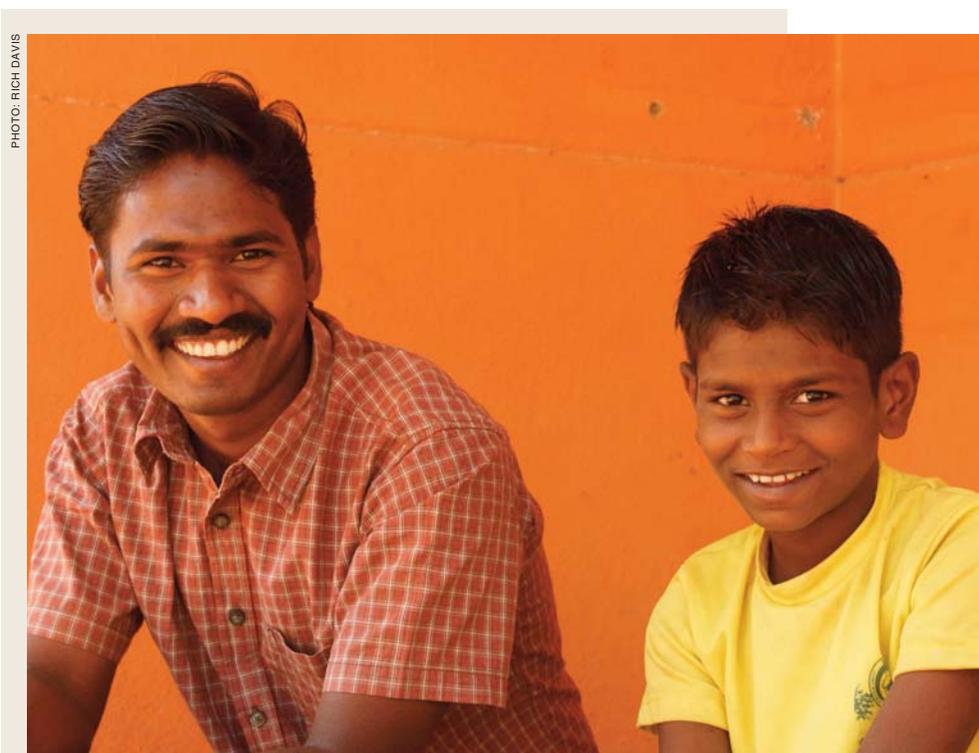
Brother Raj’s ministry as a Marianist began among those at the bottom rung of Indian society — street children living in the slums of Bangalore. He served at REDS Centers, which offer slum children a safe haven, schooling and basic health care. (In India, slum dwellers are sometimes known as “ragpickers.” They search waste dumps for recyclable materials to sell for a few pennies. REDS stands for Ragpickers Education and Development Scheme.)

“I was a reserved person, so I didn’t think I would be good at social work,” he says, “but after a time of working with the slum children at the REDS Centers, I became a different person. I was very happy in my work, and I felt I was making a difference for these children.”

At the young age of 25, Brother Raj was put in charge of the REDS Skills Training Center in Bangalore. There he helped young men, most of them former street children, learn a trade such as welding or plumbing. Living in the dormitory as a supervisor, he got to know the students. “We had time to share about our lives and to learn from each other. That was something very special,” he says.

At Skills Training Centers, young men don’t just learn a trade. They also learn how to function in society and how to be polite and punctual. These are lessons not available to those who grow up on the streets. “We don’t see immediate results, but the things we teach, the examples we provide ... they make a difference over time,” says Brother Raj.

When Brother Raj traveled to Rome in mid-2014 to begin seminary studies, he joined other Marianists from around the world who are



Brother Raj Mohan with Michael, a boy once living on the streets of Bangalore

EDUCATION: A PATH OUT OF POVERTY

The Marianists invite you to sponsor a child.

Marianist Brother Raj Mohan’s first exposure to poverty in a large city in India was unsettling. “I had never seen anything like it,” he says. Before attending seminary, he worked with street children to get them into school or a skills training program.

You can join the Marianists in helping children out of poverty by sponsoring a student at a Marianist school.

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preparing for priestly service. It was Brother Raj’s first trip outside of India. Yet he says he quickly felt at home among the international cadre of Marianist brothers. “I think the Marianist culture — the sense of warmth and community — that is the same anywhere.”

At first, he says, his family and friends in India asked the same question: “Have you seen Papa Francis? How is Papa Francis?” They believe because I am in Rome I must know the pope!”

When Brother Raj makes the roughly 4,480-mile journey home at the conclusion of his seminary studies, he will be richer spiritually, intellectually and emotionally. His hope is to return to work among the poor. ■

OPENING DOORS TO HISPANIC YOUTH

Campus ministry at St. Mary's University is doing what few Catholic universities have done: reach out to Hispanic youth, the fastest-growing group in the United States.

BY ALEX Z. SALINAS



ALL PHOTOS: ROBIN JERSTAD

When Marianist Brother José Julián Matos-Auffant arrived at St. Mary's University in 2012, his job was to start something this Marianist university badly needed: Hispanic ministry.

With about 70 percent of St. Mary's undergraduates of Hispanic origin — an increase of 50 percent since the 1980s — and another 30 percent enrolled in graduate and law school, it was time for the oldest Catholic university in the American Southwest to open new doors for its Hispanic students.

But Brother José soon learned that finding the keys to open these doors — the right blend of spiritual, cultural and personal connections — required mobilizing the faith and assistance of others.

To help him with the task, he teamed up with the campus ministry staff — Wayne Romo, director of university ministry, and Maria Smith, minister for liturgy and music — to form “Hispanic Ministry,” a campus outreach to this youthful population.

“Hispanics age 35 and under are the fastest growing population of Catholics in the United States,” says Brother José.

A 2014 study revealed that Hispanic Catholics age 30 and under comprise 55 percent of all U.S. Catholics. Slowly, Catholic universities and churches around the nation are waking up to the challenge of engaging this massive group.

According to Brother José, of about 200 Catholic universities in the United States, St. Mary's is one of only three schools that are seriously taking on Hispanic outreach.

The first key to attracting them? “Bilingual outreach is a must,” says Brother José.

Key No. 1: Español, anyone?

The St. Mary's community has gathered for Mass for years at Guadalupe Chapel, originally built in the 1960s as a prayer space for Marianist religious in formation. Four years ago, the university began offering Spanish Masses, which were usually held a few times a semester in a small room inside a residence hall — and



Spanish Mass celebrated in Guadalupe Chapel at St. Mary's University

often canceled. Spanish Mass was initially seen as an afterthought, Brother José says.

But about a year after Hispanic Ministry was established, Spanish Mass was revitalized.

“For the past two years, we’ve been celebrating a 9 p.m. Mass in Spanish the last Sunday of the month at Guadalupe Chapel,” Wayne Romo says. “We now have Spanish translations of prayer cards, and offer presentations to new parents in Spanish.”

Wayne remembers when he first noticed the need for a Spanish Mass. After meeting Spanish-speaking students and their parents at new student orientation, Wayne thought he would see the students at Mass. He discovered that many of them preferred going off campus to Spanish Masses.

“Although they spoke English, many did not pray in English,” says Wayne. “I describe them as ‘students whose first prayer-language is Spanish.’”

“You can’t put all Hispanic students into one pot. Although they may have a common language and some cultural similarities, they are not all alike. Social, spiritual and economic backgrounds vary from one country to the next.”

– Maria Smith, minister for liturgy and music, St. Mary’s University

Key No. 2: Who are you? Sorting out Hispanic identities

The largest group of Hispanic students at St. Mary’s comes from families who moved to the United States in the mid-20th century. Most are first-generation college students. “They grew up learning Spanish and now speak English. But they learned their catechism in Spanish,” says Brother José, a native Puerto Rican who is bilingual.

Other Hispanic groups on campus fall into three categories: Foreign-born Hispanic students are primarily from Mexico, but others come from Honduras, Venezuela, Puerto Rico and El Salvador. Two other categories include U.S.-born, English-speaking Hispanics, mostly from old Hispanic families who have been living in the United States

since the 18th century, and U.S.-born (often bilingual) Hispanics that came during the 19th century.

“You can’t put all Hispanic students into one pot,” Maria Smith says. “Although they may have a common language and some cultural similarities, they are not all alike. Social, spiritual and economic backgrounds vary from one country to the next.”

Because of these nuances, “we try to be sensitive to the spiritual

and worship practices of our Hispanic students when preparing programs for them,” says Maria.

The approach seems to be working. When Julie Sanchez, a senior biology major and ministry assistant for liturgy and music, first arrived at St. Mary’s in 2011, “maybe five people would go to Spanish Mass,” she says. “Now, from 150 to 200 people attend.”

Key No. 3: Nurturing a sense of belonging

Denisse Vargas, a senior Spanish major and ministry assistant for Hispanic Ministry, remembers feeling lost when she came to St. Mary’s in 2012. So, in her second semester, she did what many college freshmen do: She joined a Greek letter club.

But as she was making new friends, her spiritual identity was fading fast. “I was not close to God because Mass was in English, and I didn’t connect with God like that, so I slowly stopped going to Mass,” she says.

Then she took a theology course taught by Maria. The two became friends just when Hispanic Ministry was launched.



St. Mary’s Hispanic Ministry team: Wayne Romo, Maria Smith and Brother José Julián Matos-Auffant



Hispanic Ministry sponsors workshops to inspire and equip young adults for effective campus outreach.

“Hispanic Ministry helped me realize there are a lot of students like me who pray in Spanish,” Denisse says.

In addition to Spanish Mass, Hispanic Ministry started Latin Nights, a campus social offered three times a semester that attracts students with music, dance and free food. Yes, *free food* — the clarion call for most college students.

Julie says Latin Nights have helped unite and “loosen up” the different groups of Hispanic students.

Denisse believes that keeping a finger on the pulse of these young Hispanics is vital. “Because Hispanic Ministry is led by young Hispanics, we know what’s important to them,” she says. Their greatest need, says Denisse, is a sense of belonging — the feeling of being at home.

“Many of us grew up in a tightknit family,” she says. “We’re homesick, and we want to stay connected to what we grew up with.”

Taking the long view

Beyond the walls of St. Mary’s, more students from Hispanic backgrounds whose first prayer language is Spanish are entering college campuses, and the Catholic Church “needs to embrace this wave,” Brother José says. “Otherwise, they will go ‘dry’ for four years. After that, it can be hard to get them back.”

To help St. Mary’s and other Catholic schools and parishes address this issue, Hispanic Ministry began offering summer workshops to equip young adults and campus ministers for Hispanic youth outreach in higher education. The third workshop, attended by participants from throughout the Southwest, was offered this year.

Hispanic Catholics in college now number about 1.6 million. “Without more Hispanic leaders in higher education,” say Wayne, “the Church won’t catch up with the growing number.”

The task is daunting, and the Hispanic Ministry team knows that identifying the needs of Hispanic youth is a work in progress.

“Ministry is a trial-and-error process, and you have to try a little bit of everything to see what the community wants,” Denisse says.

Brother José agrees. “We need to keep positive, hopeful and persevere.”

“After I graduate from St. Mary’s, I want to come back to see how Hispanic Ministry has grown,” Julie says. “I’m confident that it’s going to get better and better.” ■

Alex Salinas is communications coordinator for the University Communications Office at St. Mary’s University.



Hispanic Ministry assistants Denisse Vargas and Julie Sanchez

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AN INVITATION TO LIFE

After years of volunteer work, a Marianist staff person recounts her journey to a deeper spiritual life.

BY DEBBIE JUNIEWICZ

"Serve generously" was a belief already etched into Deanna Snyder's being when her son, Ryan, began his freshman year at St. John Vianney High School, a Marianist-sponsored school in St. Louis. So when she was asked to serve as a volunteer, Deanna didn't just test the water, she dove right in. "People who knew me kept saying 'get Deanna involved,'" says the 50-year-old mother of two, "and they did."

But it took another four years before Deanna listened to her inner yearnings for more quiet time and a lifestyle change that would lead her on a path to greater spiritual fulfillment.

A passionate volunteer

Like many people, Deanna's exposure to the Marianists grew from hours in school meetings and working the phone as a volunteer. So while Ryan navigated high school, Deanna dedicated the next four years to "Night of the Griffin" — the school's single largest fundraising event of the year. She worked two years as a committee member and two more as chairperson.

"She was at school as much as I was," says Larry Keller, former St. John Vianney principal and current assistant to the Office of Sponsorship for the Marianists. "She came to Vianney early in the morning and was frequently there until 9 p.m. or later coordinating auction activities. I would have to get after her to go home."

More than 75 volunteers are needed each year for the event that packs the gym with more than 500 attendees. Deanna worked to recruit anyone interested in building the Vianney community and helping the school. That included her husband of 26 years, Bob, and sons, Ryan and Nolan.

"I always joke that whatever I volunteer for, my husband and kids come with the package," she says.

Though sometimes exhausted, her motivations were clear. "I wanted to set an example for my kids, hoping it would come full circle one day," she says.

An invitation to prayer

But while Deanna was spending 30 or more hours a week as a volunteer, something was missing. "I don't sit still easily," she concedes.

But in the thick of busyness, "I had forgotten to take time for prayer, to quiet myself down. Yet that's often what gets you through."

Not long after Ryan graduated from Vianney, Deanna took a full-time job working with the Marianist Provincial development and sponsorship teams. While that was a major professional change, it was her spiritual life that underwent the

greatest transformation when she was asked to join a local Lay Marianist community. Studying the Marianist charism, bouncing ideas off others in the group and gaining valuable insight about her faith "has been a life changer," she says. Like a spiritual GPS, the time she has taken in prayer and formation is reorienting her life. "It gives me a road map," she says.

Jeanette Pence has known Deanna for a decade and has observed her friend's spiritual growth since the two joined the lay group. "Some may see Deanna as a sports mom, but those who know her well see how deeply she loves her sons and wants Marianist spirituality to take hold in their lives and the lives of others."

That hope is starting to come alive for Deanna. Ryan recently started a prayer group with fellow baseball players and other athletes at Quincy University where he is attending college. Deanna is proud that he is sharing his faith, but even happier that he chose this path on his own.

"As a parent, it's more about what you do than what you say," she says. "Ryan has seen me living out my faith and now he is choosing to do the same in his own way." ■

Debbie Juniewicz is a freelance writer from Dayton, Ohio.

Opposite page: Deanna Snyder with her husband, Bob, and sons Ryan (top left) and Nolan

MARY, DO FOR US
WHAT YOU DID FOR
JESUS. INSTILL IN US
THE DESIRE TO LEARN
CONSTANTLY, THE
GOODNESS TO SERVE
GENEROUSLY AND THE
COURAGE TO LEAD
WHEREVER JESUS CALLS.

— Marianist prayer



With Grateful Hearts

The Marianist Family gathered in Cleveland to pay tribute to 159 years of Marianist service.

BY JAN D. DIXON

Vocations, careers, life callings — the directions we take on our way to adulthood — are often discovered during the formative years of high school. No one makes these important life choices without teachers, coaches, chaplains — people who see something special in us. Years later, these are the people we look back upon with grateful hearts. In the Marianist world, these close relationships are woven from the fabric of Marianist spirituality and caring, committed adults.

During the past 159 years in Cleveland, the Marianists have been at the center of these formative years, weaving strong bonds through schools and parish ministry. The most enduring legacies formed around two schools: Cathedral Latin School and St. Joseph High School (now Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School —VASJ). In 1980, they also began ministry at St. Aloysius Parish (affectionately called “St. Al’s”), a historic church near downtown Cleveland with an adjacent grade school. Together, the schools and parish formed a network of loyal and enthusiastic friends and Marianist Family members.

In honor of the Marianist presence in Cleveland, more than 300 people and 35 Marianist brothers and priests gathered in September at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist to commemorate the

Society of Mary’s 159 years of service in the Diocese of Cleveland. Bishop Richard Lennon celebrated the Eucharist of Thanksgiving. Several Marianist priests participated as concelebrants. Retired Bishop Anthony Pilla also was present.

The legacy continues

The diocese spawned hundreds of vocations in the Society of Mary and in the wider Church. “Many members of the Province came to the Society of Mary through the schools that we served in Cleveland,” says Provincial Father Martin Solma, who is an alumnus of St. Joseph. “We hold fond memories of the schools, the parish and the vibrant communities attached to them.”

The diocese has been good to the Marianists. The Marianists responded in kind. “We have given the people of Cleveland our best: our faith, love for Mary, community building, inclusivity and our collaborative model with the laity,” says Father Marty.

But changes in demographics within the Society of Mary have led to consolidation of personnel and new direction in ministry. In June, the Marianists turned the leadership of St. Al’s back to the diocese. Throughout the 35 years of service to the parish, nearly 30 Marianist brothers and priests served at St. Al’s.

The greater Marianist community in Cleveland is comprised of more than 12,000 people — alumni from Marianist schools, current students, St. Al’s parishioners, Marianist donors, Lay Marianists, and friends of the brothers and priests. The Province continues to sponsor VASJ. “Along with the school, the Marianist spirit will continue well into the future through the strong commitment of Marianist friends and Marianist Lay Communities in the diocese,” says Father Marty.

In a final tribute, he adds, “Thank you, Cleveland. Thank you to the Church in Cleveland. Thank you, Lord, for such a long

and graced engagement in service of the Gospel in this wonderful city and diocese.” ■



At the reception, Father Martin Solma, Marianist provincial; Sister Karen Somerville, SND, with her brother, Brother Jack Somerville; Father Ken Templin; and Brother Ron Luksic

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