

Towards A Franciscan Missionary Spirit

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MEETING THE LEPER TODAY



Francis' encounter with the leper along the roadside is no doubt one of the most famous stories about the renown saint. Not only did this meeting with the poor leper trigger a conversion experience in Francis, one that he would remember even close to his death, but it highlights a key Franciscan value of service to the poor not as a requirement of duty or expediency but from deep concern for a brother or a sister in need.

While the story has been much commented upon it can often seem remote, as, after all, there are very few lepers in the world (though billions of people who are treated as 'lepers') and only a few hundred in the United States. But Francis' encounter with the leper, like any good story from tradition, has power in our modern age. This can be seen in the work of Friar Hoang Trinh, a member of the St. Barbara Province of the Order of Friars Minor, who is co-founder of 'Franciscan Charity', which offers aid to the poor in Viet Nam and Kampuchea (Cambodia), among them colonies of Catholic lepers.

Inspired by his personal history, as well as the story of Francis, Father Hoang founded nine years ago Franciscan Charity (a 501c non-profit) in order to help the poor and lepers in Viet Nam. As a charity it is grounded on Franciscan values and its mission statement says that "Imitating the spirituality of Saint Francis, who served the poor, we minister to the destitute with love." While inspired by Franciscan values Franciscan Charity is a remarkable example of collaboration. Father Hoang serves as the spiritual director and chief fundraiser for Franciscan Charity and he does not work alone. Assisting him is a lay advisory board, comprised of well educated lay people some of whom are Buddhist, that meets monthly and oversees both fundraising as well as the various assistance projects. But the collaboration does not stop there. For while Franciscan Charity has four part time paid workers there are also 20 volunteers who organize fund raising efforts in



BUỔI GẶP GỠ CÔNG TÁC VIÊN VIỆT NAM, CAMPUCHIA CỦA HỘI BÁC ÁI PHANXICÔ 05 - 11 - 2009



San Jose, San Francisco, and Orange County (all in California). To advertise the work of Franciscan Charity DVDs have been produced for distribution and there were 75,000 copies made of the most recent one.

Perhaps what is most remarkable about Franciscan Charity is that it works with partners in Viet Nam and Kampuchea. Donated money is directed to projects which are locally run and supported by religious and bishops to help the poor, as well as a leper colony. Thus there is no management of projects from afar but a co-operation with local religious leaders in Viet Nam and Kampuchea allowing them to oversee how the funds are spent. The extent of assistance given is impressive for an organization which collects slightly over a million dollars a year, mostly from the Vietnamese-American community. Last year Franciscan Charity sent money for food (to over 100 locations); provided blankets and mosquito netting (at over 80 facilities); offered medical care and supplies (with over 4,000 eye operations, 946 heart operations for children and 2,000 wheelchairs given away in the last eight years); drilled wells so that villages could have safe drinking water (over 2,000 wells have been installed in the last eight years); as well as providing job training and school supplies for children (at over 50 parishes).

The work of Franciscan Charity continues as a result not only of Father Hoang's response to Francis' call to serve the poor but also of how others, Catholic and Buddhist, have been touched by the Spirit to reach out and help our poor brothers and sisters in Vietnam and Kampuchea.

www.FranciscanCharity.org

*Submitted by
Max Hottle, O.F.M. and John Kiesler, O.F.M.
St. Barbara Province*

Immaculate Conception Province

On December 18, 2010, at the age of 91 years, Fr. Rocco D. Famiglietti, died in Guatemala.

Dante was born on October 6, 1919 in Medford, MA, the son of Pasquale and Rose (Salerno) Famiglietti. He was received into the novitiate on August 28, 1939 and made his first profession on August 29, 1940. Fr. Rocco was admitted to solemn vows on August 29, 1943 and ordained priest on January 26, 1947.

Fr. Rocco spent his entire priestly life working in our missions in Central America, particularly in Guatemala, in addition to his ministry with the Spanish-speaking of the area and as a parish assistant while living at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in East Boston from 1971 to 1976. His desire to provide a home and school for orphaned and underprivileged Guatemalan children was probably the most challenging but also the most rewarding of his missionary life. Valle de Los Angeles "today is home for 300 children in a complex of buildings; dormitories, classrooms, kitchen and dining room, multi purpose building, assembly hall, music, arts and crafts, outdoor recreational areas and facilities. Also a sister's convent, a friary, medical and dental clinics. Now, at last the crowning glory, the beautiful new church, Our Lady of the Angels"

Fr. Rocco also worked very hard to ensure that when the children graduated from the sixth grade they would go on to junior and senior high school. Even more beyond belief was his success in obtaining full scholarships at the Jesuit University of Guatemala for those who graduate high school and want to go to college.

On March 28, 2006, Mr. Oscar Berger Perdomo, the President of the Republic of Guatemala, presented Fr. Rocco "The Humanitarian of the Year Award" – that country's highest honor given to a civilian – for his 55-plus years of service to the people of Central America but especially the people of Guatemala.

"So many people from so many places and in so many ways doing good for others less fortunate, said Fa-



ther Rocco. This is what brings dreams to life. Thanks to the work and support of the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate Conception Province, the Franciscan Mission Associates and the generous donations given over all these years by our many American and Guatemalan friends. Many hands make light work, they say, and they also can build homes like the Valley of the Angels".

Submitted by: Jim Goode, OFM

From the Desk of . . . Vincent Delorenzo O.F.M., S.M.E., Chairperson

In October, 2011, some of the Secretaries for Mission and Evangelization of the English Speaking Conference met with Aruturo Rios Lara, O.F.M. and Massimo Tedoldi, O.F.M. from the General Secretariat for Mission and Evangelization at the Franciscan Monastery in Washington D.C. During the course of this time together we discussed the importance of communicating with each other the various Mission and Evangelization projects that are happening in the OFM Conferences. It is the aim of this newsletter to be informative and inspiring of the missionary/evangelization projects that the brothers and sisters are doing in the English Speaking Conference and possibly to motivate collaboration with each other.

A sincere "thank you" to George Bugeja, O.F.M. for putting this newsletter together for ESC-SME.



Pax et bonum!

SACRED HEART PROVINCE

Friars in Vietnam Reach Out to People with HIV/AIDS

St. Francis wrote that the sight of lepers was bitter for him. Then one day he showed a leper mercy and what had been bitter became sweet. His life would never be the same.

Care and compassion for the sick remain core values for the Franciscan family throughout the world today. The continuing spread and containment of HIV/AIDS evokes a variety of responses based on these Franciscan values. Among the many stories the world over, I want share my experience with the friars of the Franciscan Province of St. Francis in Vietnam.

In recent years I have been teaching at the Franciscan Seminary in Ho Chi Minh



City. The friar students spoke to me about their ministry to an HIV/AIDS group. I learned that the friars of this Province have reached out to the HIV/AIDS community with the approval of the Vietnamese government, which encourages such social work by religious orders of men and women.

The ministry here at the seminary grew from a simple request. A few years ago the leader of an HIV/AIDS group called Sunrise simply asked about a meeting place for the group at the seminary. The friars not only offered hospitality but also asked to accompany the group in prayerful support. Even though the majority of the membership is Buddhist, the group felt truly welcome. The Franciscan presence of care and compassion without judgment speaks volumes in a part of the world where HIV/AIDS remains a social stigma.

The group pursues a mission of education and support for those with HIV/AIDS. The friars offer a course on HIV/AIDS counseling so that group members can help their peer groups in need. The friars also contribute a personal and spiritual presence, joining the group for regular meetings as well as special events. Several friars invited me to a little party for the children of group members and I helped present gifts during the observance of the moon festival in September.

Then the friars asked me to join the group on a pilgrimage to the mountaintop shrine of the Virgin Mary at Ta Pao. This trip was generously supported

by donations from the FMU. We arrived at the shrine after a five-hour journey by bus. On the way back we stopped at a Cistercian monastery guest house and garden, then the beach at Vung Tau. We enjoyed a final dinner en route home. These simple people enjoyed a rare opportunity for a day trip to forget their troubles for a while, to pray, and to enjoy some good food together. We were expecting 50 but 65 men, women, and their children made the pilgrimage. We returned tired but happy.

This was an unforgettable and moving experience for me. The friars respect the confidentiality of the members so we don't know who has the virus. Children are at risk as well their parents. One little boy was especially attached to me. This bright little five-year old spoke in simple English words with me. He called me English teacher, then Cha (Father), then Ba (Dad). I learned that he is an unwanted child, neglected by his mother and physically abused by his father, a heroin addict. He was happy to be with me that day. One story among so many. Heartbreaking yet hopeful.

While we friars cannot end the suffering of these group members nor provide for all their needs, we can walk with them on a journey toward a sunrise of hope. My life won't be the same, thanks to their invitation to accompany them. In spite of everything, this encounter was sweet.

Submitted by: Joe Rogenski, O.F.M.

HOLY NAME PROVINCE

2011 in Tokyo

The Franciscan Chapel Center (FCC) in Roppongi section of Tokyo, Japan is about 45 years old. It has become the official English-speaking Parish for the archdiocese of Tokyo. It stands right next to the Provincial Headquarters of the Japanese Province. The parish has about 1200 people who come to worship each Sunday. It has numerous activities and groups which offer people ways to be involved in the mission of the Church. The parish offers space to numerous 12-step programs that help the foreign community in Japan, at least two each day. It has a religious education program that has about 175 children and youth in attendance. The best of all at the Center is the rice ministry that feeds the homeless of Tokyo every day.

There are currently five friars living at FCC. Over the years, there have been many friars from the English-speaking Conference serving there. The pastoral team has included friars from Holy Name Province, St. John the Baptist Province, Assumption Province, Immaculate Conception Province and St. Barbara Province. In addition friars from provinces in Japan, Mexico, the Philippines and Italy have also been a part of the pastoral team. The team has also been assisted by priests from Maryknoll and Capuchin friars.

2011 was a very interesting and challenging year. Our world shook on March 11. You could see the cars actually bounce on the street and we did not get the full-force of the earthquake that hit up north. We shook, everything closed down in the city and, when the earthquake stopped and we went back into the building, we turned on the television and saw the devastation of the tsunami in real time. It was very frightening, but nothing like the people up North experienced. And then there was the Fukushima reac-



tor problems that still cause fear. Since cell phones and subways stopped many people were afraid and we stayed open all night providing some shelter to people who could not get home and a place where they could wait till cell phones worked again. Most of us were glued to the television seeing the devastating news .and did not sleep much at all. AND there were months of aftershocks. All of us were challenged every day: is this the one we run outside for? Or is it all right?

A few days after the earthquake, we were approached by the Archdiocese of Tokyo and the Philippine Embassy about the possibility of letting evacuees stay with us. Yes, of course! Soon we got futons, blankets and pillows, food, toys and lots of other things to prepare to welcome 50 people (mostly women and children). We had a lot of big plans for a great Lent, our guests made for an even greater Lent. It was a great blessing.

As everyone settled in, the evacuees became a great part of the community and got involved in the ministry of the parish. The evacuees helped to make possible for our rice ministry to continue without a break. They also taught us some lessons in generosity. Many returned back North to help with recovery, especially for the many senior citizens that we not able to get back to their homes and were surviving only in shelters. By the end of Lent, most everybody got settled, some returned

to their homes, others went back to the Philippines. And Easter came upon us with great joy. The very place where we sheltered the evacuees became a chapel where 6 people were initiated. Christ truly is risen.

Later in the year, were able to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Rice Ministry. Every day for the last 25 years volunteers have helped to prepare food (onigiri) and deliver food to the homeless who gather in some parks in Tokyo.

The rice ministry was begun by Fr. William DeBiase, OFM, who came to Japan as a missionary and ended up the pastor the Franciscan Chapel Center. Bill is one of those rare people who can actually hear a call for help. He ran into all these homeless people in Tokyo and just started to feed people. He got others excited about helping and he started with donated rice, donated time to make and deliver the rice cakes and to organize. When Bill left, (he works in a soup kitchen in Philadelphia.), other people took up his lead. One of the best compliments to someone is that you inspire people to take up what you started. This was, from the very beginning, a truly ecumenical project. The Union Church, the Anglican and Lutheran Churches and the Mor-

mon Church all are still a part of this ministry. Companies and schools in Japan encourage social service and these groups are also an integral part of the ministry. A large part of the parish community and the Secular Franciscans are dedicated to this ministry and welcome everyone else.

On November 23, we had an event to give thanks for 25 years and commit ourselves to find even more ways to help the homeless and hun-



gry. We gave medals of appreciation to Fr. William, who spoke at the event, to three Japanese men who are sometimes homeless who help us each day to organize the delivery of the rice cakes and Second Harvest a group that collects food and distributes it to those in need in the Japanese and foreign communities and are currently doing remarkable work to help the people of the North where the tragedy hit the hardest.

There is a wonderful story from Hasidic Wisdom about a very holy rabbi who was heart-sick at the suffering of the poor and he prayed to God: Lord, what are you going to do for all the poor and hungry? A deep voice replied: Rabbi what are you going to do for the poor and hungry? A lot of people for 25 years and counting have answered the question in this remark by actually helping. We have not missed a day, because at just the right time someone came along and helped.

Not a bad year, Easter won in so many different ways.

Written by: Russell Becker, O.F.M.

Submitted by: Thomas Cole, O.F.M.

ASSUMPTION BVM PROVINCE

LIVING AND MINISTERING ON THE BORDER

In 1984 three friars from the Assumption BVM Province accepted an invitation to begin a domestic mission in the Brownsville Diocese of Texas, which is on the border between the United States and Mexico. They were not the first Franciscans in the area, since friars had been passing through, living and working there at various times from the early 1500's. But they were long gone before the three friars arrived.

Perhaps that is undoubtedly why in 1849, Bishop Eugene De Mazenod, founder of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, sent seven missionaries from France to the settlement of Brownsville in the Diocese of Galveston. Some Fifty years later, in 1904, the Cavalry of Christ, as they were known, traveled by horseback and provided for the religious needs of the settlers. They established churches and parishes throughout the Rio Grande Valley in the area which is now the Brownsville Diocese.

In 1984, as the Oblates were becoming older and fewer in numbers, the Bishop of Brownsville extended an invitation to the friars of the Assumption BVM Province to minister in the diocese. This was the beginning of a 22 year experiment, a new initiative in Hispanic ministry for the Assumption BVM Province. Three friars answered the call. After experiencing struggles and successes as all new missions do, they in time left the diocese and returned to the Province.

In 1996 two friars began anew. They are still there living and working in the Valley. And in 2006, the friar presence was stabilized with the arrival of three more friars who assumed the administration of Sacred Heart Parish in McAllen, Texas and established Sacred Heart Friary. At present there are five friars who make up the Sacred Heart Community, three friars living at the friary in McAllen, while miles away one friar serves as pastor of the parish in Alamo, Texas, and another as pastor of the parish in La Grulla, Texas.

This mission is known as a domestic mission, because even though it is in the United States, nevertheless a friar serving in this mission needs to learn a new language,

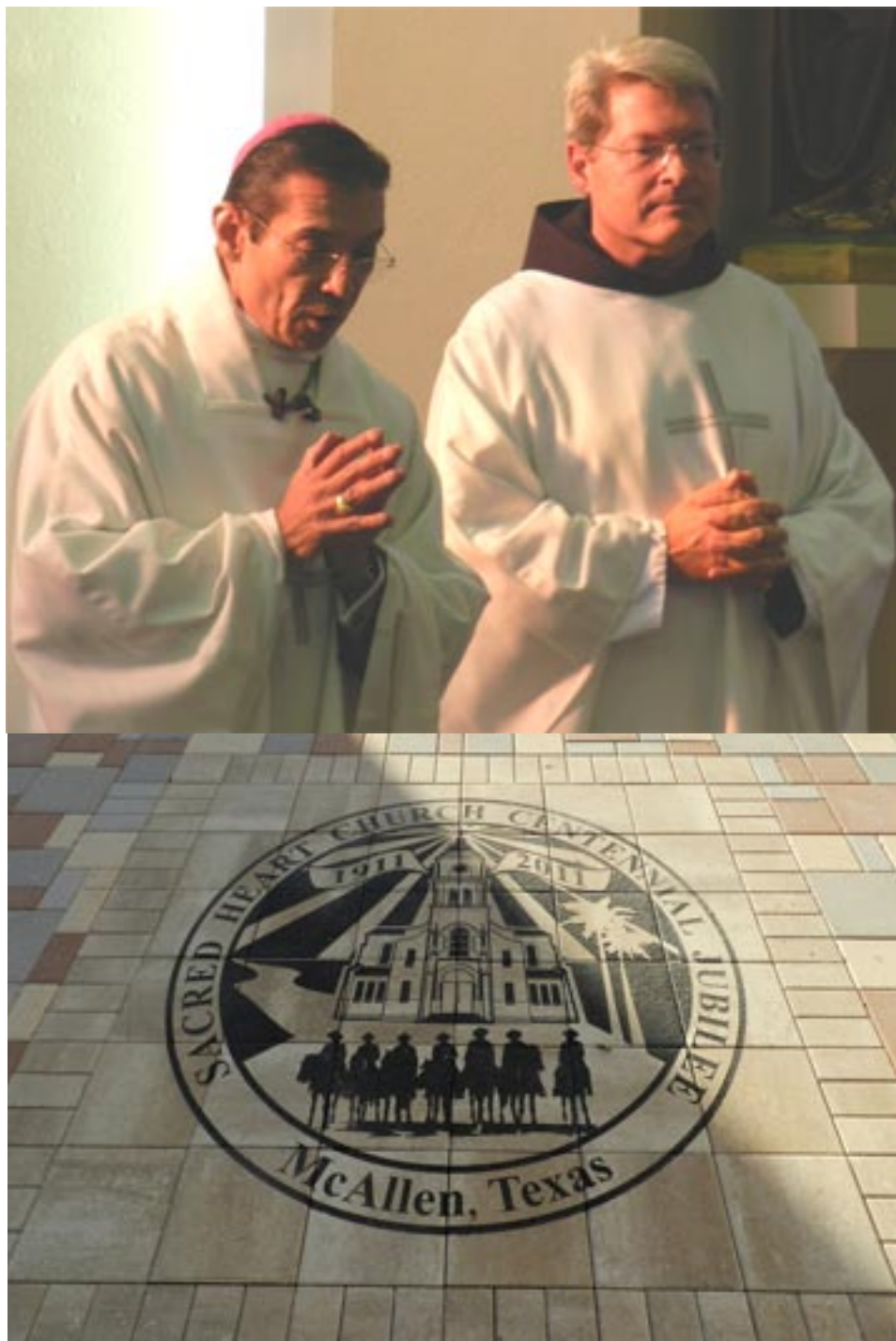


and to adjust to a different culture, while ministering among a Poor and Immigrant (documented and undocumented) community. The friars also find themselves far from the center of most of the Province and its ministries (1,512 mi. /2,433 km.) Likewise, mission is often viewed as an experience that takes us out of our comfortable places and stretches a friar beyond the familiar as does the mission on the border.

In recent years, life on the border has significantly changed. A few years ago, persons were able to park their cars at the border bridge and walk across the Rio Grande River to such cities as Matamoros, Reynosa, and Nuevo Progreso in Mexico. But in the last four years or so, since the drug cartels started to fight for territory, and the President of Mexico declared war on the cartels, it has become rather dangerous to cross into Mexico. The river and border are only about 9 miles from the friars' parish in McAllen and only about 1 1/2 miles from the parish in La Grulla.

It is not surprising then, that much of the violence has spilled over onto the U.S. side of the border. Nevertheless, many families from Mexico have come to live in the U.S., especially the women and children, while the men stay behind to work. And there are almost daily many more persons at the friary door asking for food, and so, the friars serve them sandwiches and something to drink. Kidnappings for ransom are also a common occurrence with some victims coming even from among families of workers who assist the friars.

Sacred Heart Parish in McAllen, Texas, where the friars serve, recently celebrated its Centennial Celebration. The parish goes back to 1911 when the Oblate Missionaries built the first church in McAllen, Texas. In time, the area experienced a period of tremendous growth for the Catholic Church in the area. Other chapels, churches, and parishes



were established with Sacred Heart Parish as the establishing center. Due to the efforts of the Oblate Priests and parishioners 15 chapels and churches were established between 1917 to 1967.

There are presently six Catholic Churches in McAllen, five of them originating from Sacred Heart parish, which is situated in the center of the old downtown area. It is the poorest of the churches in McAllen and also the one that uses the most Spanish

Members of the Provincial Administration of the Assumption BVM Province were present for the Centennial Celebration, and together with the friars ministering there, discussed the future of the mission and some new possibilities of fraternal living. One such possibility is living together in one friary while going out to serve in parishes; another is team ministry. And so, the friars decided to continue discussing, searching and experimenting with new missionary lifestyles in their ministries while continuing to live and minister on the border.

*Written by: Bro. Mario Nagy, O.F.M.
Submitted by: Hugh Zurat, O.F.M.*

Province of St. John the Baptist

Taking it to the Streets....

For various reasons, the St. Aloysius Community Center building in downtown Detroit, Michigan had to be vacated. This building was home to the various outreach programs that the friars and staff of St. Aloysius Church offered to the homeless and seniors who call downtown Detroit home. As Fr. Tod Laverty, O.F.M., pastor of St. Aloysius writes in his quarterly newsletter, "We are experiencing the convergence of several factors upon our community ministry at St. Aloysius parish in downtown Detroit. As we strive to define our response we are reminded of the dying words of St. Francis of Assisi to his brothers, 'Let us begin again, for up to now we have done nothing.' We are aware of the reality that we will not have the kind of space available to us that the former Community Center afforded us. We look upon this in many ways as a blessing. We

are now challenged to respond to the Spirit of God in a way that transforms our ministry in the form of 'ad gentes', that is, 'out to the people.' We are challenged to live our Gospel lives in the streets, neighborhoods and businesses of downtown Detroit.

We are developing our ministries in three areas. The Street Ministry literally takes the Canticle Café hospitality far beyond the confines of a single building—carried by street ministers using roving carts or bikes or shoe leather to serve the downtown area. The Street Ministers bring them smiles, hugs and essentials like food and warm clothing that were so familiar in the center.



Al Mascia, O.F.M. offering "Franciscan Hospitality" on the streets of Detroit.

The Health and Wholeness Ministry performed by the Parish Nurse will now be more intentionally directed out towards residents in downtown apartment buildings as well as serving the whole health needs of those encountered by the Street Ministers.

While there is a sense of sadness and mourning over the transition from past ways of ministering and the structures that had developed, we trust and are hopeful that the Spirit will lead us to a more enlightened and fruitful ministry in the 'ad gentes' approach to our service to downtown Detroit."

Ministry in Namibia, Africa....

In 2009, Joe Hund, O.F.M. joined the friars who staff a parish in Namibia, Africa in the Diocese of Windhoek. Being a friar who has enjoyed being a foreign missionary in the Philippines, Africa, and Jamaica, no one was surprised that Joe requested to return to



Joe Hund, O.F.M. with some of his parishioners in Namibia, Africa

Meeting of the Secretaries for Missionary Evangelization Directors with the General Secretaries from Rome

The English-speaking Secretaries for Missionary Evangelization Directors met with the animators for Missions and Evangelization from the Curia Rome, Fr. Massimo Tedoldi e Fr. Arturo Rios Lara, at the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land, in Washington, DC from 24 – 27 October 2011.

Those present were Frairs Russell Becker, Thomas Cole, Giles Bourdeau, Vince Delorenzo, John Kiesler, Joseph Nelson, and Joseph Rogensky. The secretaries from Immaculate Conception, England, Ireland, Malta and Western Canada were unable to participate. The host for this gathering was Fr. Tom Cole. Also participating were Richard Chartier, OFS (Montreal), Jason Welle (Assumption) and Kim Smolik (Franciscan Mission Service).

These days of prayer, meeting and fraternity included time for sharing about the structure of the

secretariat and the provinces, the reality of what is being done in the English Speaking Conference in the area of missions and evangelization, and in the missionary projects and new initiatives for evangelization in the Order.

As a result of our gathering, we have committed ourselves to work towards better cooperation in the following areas: better communication between the secretariat and the conference, regular updates on the projects of the Order, financial transparency of the budget, more mutual assistance in the work of our offices.

A highlight of our time together was a visit to Franciscan Mission Service. Franciscan Mission Service was founded by Anselm Moons, at the request of the Provincials of the English Speaking Conference, has trained and supported lay missionaries from the

United States for these last twenty years. (www.franciscanmissionservice.org)

On World Mission Sunday, the General Animators participated in the Multicultural Liturgy at St. Camillus Church, a Franciscan parish, followed by a visit to Holy Name College which is the theological center for Holy Name Province.

We were most appreciative of the welcome and hospitality of the friars of the Custody of the Holy Land during our time together.



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Africa after his time in Jamaica. According to Provincial Jeffrey Scheeler, "Joe has learned that Namibia is 92% Christian, 22% Catholic, with 52% of the population unemployed and 16% of the people are HIV positive. Many of the people come from the rural areas who settle in very large shanty type settlements. The previous Provincial Minister, Vincent Zungu, currently General Definitor for Africa, told Joe that the main purpose of the mission was to foster peace

and reconciliation. The country is still dealing with the effects of tribalism and apartheid, and the friars were asked to serve a parish which had recently experienced some internal division. Joe feels they are gradually moving forward in this mission."

Joe also works with the Poor Clare Sisters having daily mass for them and offering monthly conferences on different aspects of Franciscan Spirituality.

Submitted by: Vincent Delorenzo, O.F.M.

PROVINCE OF ST. JOSEPH - CANADA

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE MISSIONS

At their last Provincial Chapter in May, 2011, the Franciscans from the St Joseph Province of Canada looked into the question of the international collaboration of the Province from 1890 to 2011. We present an extract from this reflection which concerns the missions.

Involvement in the missionary service of the Order has given rise to many decisive partnerships. According to the legislation and constant practice of the Order, the missions were and are a field of action and decision reserved to the Minister General. Each Entity shares this common task by receiving for discernment the requests of interested parties or by taking on, according to resources and circumstances, requests of the Minister General to accept mission territories or to collaborate in missions already undertaken by other Provinces.

From 1890 to 1920, it was as part of the commitment of the St Peter Province that missionaries were sent to China, Japan, Vietnam and the Holy Land. The statistics compiled by Léandre Poirier (see *Statistiques missionnaires*) and which cover the years 1903 to 1977, speak for themselves. They need to be completed by factors from 1890 to 1903 and from 1977 to 2011.

Several cultures, languages and regions of the world have dominated the missionary life and imagination of the Province from 1890 to 2011. Our collective memory of collaboration goes back to the period when the Province was being canonically erected, a period during which it took on simultaneously three mission territories: Japan, Korea, Peru and an Apostolic Vicariate, and gave support to the Africa Project.

Let us note for the record the following missionary collaboration:

- In the Holy Land which covers a good part of the Middle East and where more than 60 friars have been at work, not counting the brethren at the service of the Commissariat and Community in Ottawa from 1919 to 2011.
- In the Far East with definite commitment from 1910 in China as part of the commitment of the Province St Louis of Anjou and, later in 1932, as an aide to the St Pascal Province of Strasbourg, in Japan (1907) until the formation of the Japanese Province in 1977, and in Korea from 1938.
- In Peru, from 1936 to 2011: a presence, an Apostolic Vicariate, a Custody up till 2005, brothers recently integrated into another Peruvian Entity. This mission dominated the life of the Province for more than 70 years.
- After 1984, friars would go to Central America, to Chili, to Ecuador, for specific collaboration.
- In the Africa Project (1982) as a special international project of the Order. The Province participated with human and financial resources but always under the direction of GSME (General Secretariat of the Franciscan Missions) at Rome and, progressively, in partnership with the St Francis Province.
- Must be mentioned other commitments to Zaire/ Republic of the Congo, to the Ivory Coast.
- Haiti from autumn 1987, not as a responsibility of the Province but as the making available of Raymond Mailhot as part of an implantation assumed by the Central American Province for this island.
- On the North American continent, the reality of mission was lived for decades among the Amalécites of New Brunswick.
- Should also be recalled that the Société des Missionnaires des Saints-Apôtres is the product of a charism of a Franciscan confrere, Fr Eusèbe Ménard, ofm.
- To give concrete support to the missions, the Province has taken on or initiated two permanent Offices: the Commissariat of the Holy Land (1888-2011) founded even before the restoration had begun, a review *Les Missions franciscaines* at Quebec in 1922-1923 and a Procuracy for the Missions at Montreal in the same year, then a single Missions' Office at Montreal.

Before the generalate of John Vaughn (1979-1991), the Province undertook a gradual retreat from missions entrusted solely to one Province under form of territories or Custodies. In accordance with post-conciliar trends and the spirit of the CCGG (General Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor) of 1967, it



collaborated more in projects where other Entities had the leadership or were created with this in view. The Africa Project is a typical example. The transfer of the Custodia San José del Amazonas to a Peruvian Province, at the Provincial Chapter of 2005, would be the last act of this lengthy process.



Rare have been the projects where friars, lay and priestly, were not involved together and differently in a mission, at home or abroad. The model of community witness of Martha and Mary inspired the goals and the daily life as much in witness as in proclamation, in material organisation as in contemplative dynamism.

The Province and the friars have lived the Missions as constant collaboration with local Churches and, in particular, with the government of the Order and other Entities. More than two hundred friars have participated or still participate in this missionary endeavour by facing the unavoidable challenges of mission: the learning of languages, the demands of inculturation, the immersion and integration into realities different from one's own original milieu, the witness and service of the Gospel where one must live and work with other friars on the basis of criteria different as much for daily living as for the task of evangelisation.

Deserves to be mentioned here the fact that some missionaries have been capable of transferring more than once from one mission to another and, in some cases, of living successively in three milieu totally different in language and culture. Of such witnesses, there are still some among us.

*Gilles Bourdeau, O.F.M.
Secretary for Missions and Evangelisation*

*Submitted by: Richard Chartier, O.F.S.
Director, Missions des Franciscains*

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE PROVINCE

Respecting Native Cultures in the Southwest Franciscan Missions An interview with Bro. Maynard Shurley, OFM, Navajo

Maynard, you mentioned that in teaching RCIA you help your people to understand the faith by comparing the Navajo Way and the Catholic Way. How do you do that?

Maybe I could start off by saying that growing up I grew up with two spiritualities, the Catholic Way and the Navajo Way. My Dad's side of the family were converts to the Catholic faith through my maternal grandfather. Growing up, every Sunday was a big deal. I always went to Mass at Fort Defiance at Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church. That was the only Catholic Church back in the late 60's and early 70's. So we would drive down every Sunday as a family with aunts and uncles and cousins and go to Mass there and observe all the things, like fasting and then come back around 11 o'clock and then I'd have my breakfast. My mother's side of the family was mostly traditional; they practiced their own Indian ways. And so I had both, growing up on my Dad's side and my Mom's side. And I see values on both sides; the Catholic way and the Navajo way compliment each other. My grandfather on my Mother's side always told me that the Catholic Church is the only Church that respects our Navajo way, they kind of walked side by side, and every once in a while they would kind of go apart, and then eventually they would get back together again. My grandpa was very Catholic, but respected the Navajo way also.



So I grew up with both. As a Franciscan Friar I still practice both. When my family has a ceremony, if they call me and I can make it, I'll be there to participate. I think my family appreciates that I'm able to still participate. My mother was a little concerned when I joined the friars that I would do away with all my Indian way and just be 110 percent Catholic, but that didn't happen. I think she is grateful for that, that I didn't toss everything out.

Where there are some similarities between our Navajo Way and our Catholic way is some of our creation stories. We have a story very similar to our Blessed Mother in the Catholic way. In the Navajo way we have a woman who conceived without any human intervention. She was impregnated by the Sun Father and gave birth to two holy twins. One of the little boys was a little more robust and the other was a little more, as my mother would say, on the soft side, he was a little mellower. So the way I look at those two holy twins is: The former one would be the divine side of Christ and the latter would be the human side of Christ. Then of course with the blessed Mother she gave birth to Jesus by the Holy Spirit and Jesus had two natures both human and divine. So that is kind of where I see the similarities in that particular story.

Also, when I joined the friars, prayer was very important for the friars. And in our Navajo way prayer is very much a part of our life. It is not just for special occasions but every day was a special day. Here again my maternal grandfather was a role model of a prayerful person. I would always see him praying in the morning, before he had his meals, and in the evening when he went to bed. Especially at Church, right after communion he would pray out loud and everybody could hear his prayer. So I think my grandfather was very instrumental in my prayer life, he was a good example. And then the Catholic Church emphasizes that prayer is very important if we are going to be Christians. When I joined the friars they have the morning prayer and the evening prayer. And then when I was in formation we had the other hours and I just thought this is very similar to what I was brought up with in my Navajo way that certain hours of the day would be devoted to

prayer. Early in the morning we would go outside and use our corn meal and make an offering to the spirits of the East, and I always included Jesus because he is also a spirit person. We would use white corn meal early in the morning. Then in the afternoon we would use yellow corn pollen that was our noon time prayer. In the evening we would use yellow corn meal. If you were still up at midnight you would use blue corn meal. For me that was our different hours that we prayed which was kind of like hinges of our prayer, morning and evening. And so again, I saw that similarity in the Navajo Way and the Catholic Way.

What about the sacraments?

I teach RCIA at Tohatchi, or actually at Coyote Canyon at St. Joseph mission. I just did a little mini course on the Sacraments. We have a lot of elders that go there so, of course, some of the course was in Navajo and some was in English. I compared the ceremonies that we have to the sacraments of the Catholic Church. Of course we have a lot more ceremonies than seven. I told them that the Catholic Church has seven ceremonies, but in our Navajo way we have more than seven ceremonies. But if we were going to combine some of those ceremonies we would probably end up with seven ceremonies.

Most of our ceremonies are for blessing, healing, and also for reconciliation. And I took the blessing way ceremony. My grandfather always told me that that was the backbone of all the ceremonies that we have. The blessing way ceremony I compare a little bit to the reconciliation ceremony because on the Friday evening is when we have a reconciliation ceremony. You think of all the bad things that you have done – to yourself, to others, to creation and ask for forgiveness. You also ask to live a very good holy life, or, as we would say, to walk on the path of the corn pollen. And then Saturday we have some more prayers. Probably right before noon time we would take a bath and dry ourselves with corn meal. If you are male you would use white corn meal, if you are female you would use yellow corn meal to dry yourself. The meaning behind that is that you are now a new creation, a new being, you are now a holy person. I think that is to remind us that we are all called to be holy people in our every day, ordinary way of living. And then we put on clean clothes and put our jewelry on such as turquoise necklace, rings – whatever you have. That is to let the people that participate in the ceremony and the holy people, our main spirits, see that their child has now become a new creation. So they will come and participate in the ceremonies and give blessings. Also in the ceremony the medicine man gives you corn pollen at certain times of the ceremony. For me that part of the ceremony is the Eucharist because my Grandfather (and my mother) always told me that the corn pollen is our food for life from the time that we are born to the time that we die. The corn pollen that we use in our prayer, that is our Eucharist because corn is life. Every time you take the corn pollen and put it on the tip of



Sunrise-Navajo-Nation-Monument-Valley

your tongue and then swallow it, that is to remind us that we are always to walk on this corn pollen path, the path of harmony with others and with God's creation.

How would you tie in Baptism?

The baptism, I think, would be the washing, where you bathe, where you wash yourself and then dry yourself with corn meal. The reconciliation would be Friday night and the corn meal would be the Eucharist. So when I explained that to the elders, they could really understand the sacraments. I told them it is not the same as the seven sacraments, but they are similar in many ways.

I always emphasize that long before the Franciscan Missionaries arrived on the reservation, we really had a sense of spirituality and a sense of a creator. I think it was easy for the Navajos to accept the friars when they first arrived at St. Michaels in 1898 because the friars respected the culture and the spirituality of the Navajo people. I think they also tried to find how the Navajo spirituality fit in with the Catholic way and vice versa. So that made it very easy for the friars. From the very beginning I think the friars were very much in tune keeping the Navajo culture alive with the different teachings.

Are there any other similarities?

There is another ceremony which is connected with the blessing way ceremony where the medicine man again feeds you with corn pollen; it is more like a blessing. While he is chanting he would give you a pinch of cornmeal four times and that again is much like the Eucharist. The Navajo word for it means "to be fed,"

What about anointing of the sick, would that be in your healing ceremonies?

All of our ceremonies are healing ceremonies. Now that we are into our winter season we have our winter ceremonies. The main one is called "yeibicheii". That's a nine day healing ceremony and it is usually for problems with your hearing, or with your eyes and also for mental illness. Again there is a lot of corn pollen involved in that, so again the Eucharist is very much a part of it. That is a public ceremony. Not only patients participate in it, but there is a medicine man and his helpers, they also have dancers. The climax of this nine day ceremony is on a Saturday night when the dancers come out and dance and do a healing ceremony. Our dancing is a form of prayer and healing. So that would be one example of a healing ceremony.

The other similarity I see between the Catholic Way and the Navajo Way is this. In the Catholic Church we have the angels and the saints, and we ask them to pray for us. In our Navajo way we have the spirits, sometimes referred to as the holy people, they are like our mediators, the go-betweens. So, if we pray to the Holy People, or we use our Sacred Mountains or anything like that it is a channel for us that we use to get to the creator.



Gathering Corn pollen

It sounds like it would be very Franciscan.

I always tell people that if St. Francis was alive today he would really blend in with the Navajo people. As with the Canticle of Creation where St. Francis calls fire, "brother" fire, in our Navajo way we greet the fire as our grandfather, the moon as our mother, mother earth as mother earth. So we have a relationship with all of God's creation which Francis was very much in tune with, the world was very much alive because it were created by God.

There is one elderly lady at Coyote Canyon, who told me, about a month ago. "When we walk on this earth, we are all on a journey, a spiritual journey as well as a physical journey since we are constantly moving around. When you come to a beautiful place and you want to show your appreciation for that place, you pick something from the ground, mother earth, whether it is a stone or a twig or whatever. Then place that

some place that has a special meaning for you. Then you offer thanksgiving by offering corn pollen, you say a prayer for creation and appreciating and acknowledging that this creation is for all, not just for me but for everybody. Then when you say your prayer and express your gratitude for this beautiful place where you are, the holy people see that and then they say, 'This is my child; our child has made an offering of thankfulness.' Then you continue your journey and you are walking in harmony with all of creation. That includes the animals, the plants, and what we would call "the five fingered people", humans. And I told her, "You know there was a man called St. Francis who greeted God's creation as his relative." And she said that everything we see around us is our relative.

I told Sr. Carol Ann at Tohatchi, that in the Old Testament God has many names. And we in the Navajo way have all kinds of names for different spirits and in my mind those are the different facets of and a glimpse of how we see God, names that we have for God. So in reality, we don't have many gods, we have only one God, but we have lots of names for God. So if I call fire my grandfather that's only one aspect of how we see God, by honoring the fire, we are actually giving honor to God. When a Navajo eats they always feed the fire and thank the fire for giving us protection, warmth, light and for cooking our food. When I make an offering to the fire I am really thanking God for it because

the fire is only one face of God. After all, God created everything with his breath, and he created us with that same breath, and because He created everything we are all relatives – animals, and plants and mountains and whatever. My mother always told me, "Never think of yourself as being a lonely person, because even if there were no five fingered people around, you are still not a lonely person because you still have a lot of relatives watching you, namely the plants, the hills, the mountains, the stars, the sun and the moon. To tie that in with the Catholic way, we say that God says, "I am always present to you, I am always with you, until the end of time I will never abandon you."

Bro. Maynard has been interviewed by Joe Nelson, O.F.M.



Sunrise prayer

Blessing

***May the Lord bless you
and keep you;
may the Lord show his face to you
and have compassion on you!
May he turn his face to you
and give you peace!***

Amen.



Il-Mulej il-Blata Tiegħi

FRANCISCAN MISSION SERVICE

LAY AND RELIGIOUS PARTNER IN FRANCISCAN MISSION

By Kim Smolik, Executive Director of Franciscan Mission Service

At Franciscan Mission Service, we are proud to create partnerships between lay missionaries and Franciscan religious in Africa and Latin America, for solidarity and a ministry of presence with the poor. Our current service sites are Bolivia, Zambia, and South Africa, and we are expanding to Kenya in January 2012. Our missionaries are well-trained and multi-talented, but part of what makes their ministry fruitful is the gracious welcome and guidance of Franciscans who have been serving for many years in the host communities. I'd like to tell you about a few of these thriving partnerships.

In Kitwe, Zambia, Sandra and Bryce Bradford have such full days they can't believe they have already been in mission for nine months. Partnering with Fr. Innocent and Fr. Andrew, OFM Conv., they started by renovating the friars' guest house. Fr. Andrew told us, "Before the Bradfords came, the two of us had to bear the work of maintaining the retreat house, friary and school." Sandra and Bryce now oversee day-to-day operations of the facilities, offering guests three meals a day.

The Franciscans are delighted to have them. For Fr. Innocent, "There are a lot of things to learn from FMS... in terms of ideas, community life, survival skills and spirituality." He continued, "Partnership with FMS has brought vitality and novelty to our ministry. I only hope this relationship can be part of our provincial project for a long time."

The Bradfords take good care of their visitors, most of whom are Zambian. Sandra wrote of a recent group, the One to Fives: "These were eight young OFM Conv. priests, all ordained within the past five years, who stayed with us during their annual Continuing Growth Week. We shared Mass, prayed together and socialized with them at meals."

On the other side of the globe in Cochabamba, Bolivia, recent college graduate and FMS lay missionary Nora Pfeiffer works with Br. Ignacio Harding, OFM of the Provincia Misionera San Antonio, formerly of Holy Name Province. In collaboration with the local JPIC office and Franciscans International,





Captions:

1. *Fr. George Corrigan, O.F.M., serving as a lay missionary in Kenya with FMS before being called to the priesthood.*
2. *Lay missionaries Bryce and Sandra Bradford run a retreat house for Franciscan friars in Zambia, in addition to teaching at a local school.*
3. *Lay missionary Nora Pfeiffer hosts a radio program on local environmental issues. She regularly works with Br. Ignacio Harding, O.F.M.*

she offers eco-theological retreats and hosts a radio program on local environmental issues. But that's not all: Nora lives at Cochabamba's Franciscan Social Center, where she organizes regular social activities for children recovering from severe burns. It's the perfect place for "someone who loves hugs and also being around kids," as Nora describes herself.

As you read this newsletter, one of our newly-commissioned missionaries, Susan Slavin, is beginning her ministry in Nairobi, Kenya. Susan left the active practice of law in New York City in 2010 to participate in FMS' lay mission formation program. She now joins the human rights education office of the JPIC center in Nairobi, partnering with Fr. Joe Erhardt, an American Franciscan who has served in Kenya for thirty years. Susan also hopes to assist in setting up a free legal clinic. She recently said, "I especially look forward to working with unrepresented IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) who lost their homes as a result of regional conflicts and political unrest, especially during the post-election violence of 2008."

With Susan's presence in Nairobi, FMS renews relationships with Franciscans in Kenya that go back many years. In last year's newsletter, you may have read about Br. Paul O'Keeffe and Fr. George Corrigan, OFM, friars of Holy Name Province who were drawn to Franciscan life while serving as FMS lay missionaries. Both men served in Kenya; Fr. George, currently president of FMS's Executive Board and pastor of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Tampa, FL, provided pastoral, social, and educational care to 1,000 refugees from 1996 to 1999, and was a youth leader in a poor Kenyan parish. He has said, "I can hardly begin to describe the effect of mission on enhancing the Spirit with me – as well as opening me up to new graces of the other people, their culture, and vision of God and the Kingdom."

At FMS, we hope to continue working closely with Franciscans for many years to come, in communities around the globe where a ministry of presence is urgently needed. If you know any lay people in the US or Canada, single or married, who might be interested in overseas mission in the Franciscan tradition, please put them in contact with us!

The Canticle of Brother Sun

**MOST HIGH, ALL POWERFUL, GOOD LORD,
YOURS ARE THE PRAISES, THE GLORY, THE HONOR, AND ALL BLESSING.
TO YOU ALONE, MOST HIGH, DO THEY BELONG,
AND NO MAN IS WORTHY TO MENTION YOUR NAME.**

**BE PRAISED, MY LORD, THROUGH ALL YOUR CREATURES,
ESPECIALLY THROUGH MY LORD BROTHER SUN,
WHO BRINGS THE DAY; AND YOU GIVE LIGHT THROUGH HIM.
AND HE IS BEAUTIFUL AND RADIANT IN ALL HIS SPLENDOR!
OF YOU, MOST HIGH, HE BEARS THE LIKENESS.**

**PRAISE BE YOU, MY LORD, THROUGH SISTER MOON
AND THE STARS, IN HEAVEN YOU FORMED THEM
CLEAR AND PRECIOUS AND BEAUTIFUL.**

**PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD, THROUGH BROTHER WIND,
AND THROUGH THE AIR, CLOUDY AND SERENE,
AND EVERY KIND OF WEATHER THROUGH WHICH
YOU GIVE SUSTENANCE TO YOUR CREATURES.**

**PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD, THROUGH SISTER WATER,
WHICH IS VERY USEFUL AND HUMBLE AND PRECIOUS AND CHASTE.**

**PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD, THROUGH BROTHER FIRE,
THROUGH WHOM YOU LIGHT THE NIGHT AND HE IS BEAUTIFUL
AND PLAYFUL AND ROBUST AND STRONG.**

**PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD, THROUGH SISTER MOTHER EARTH,
WHO SUSTAINS US AND GOVERNS US AND WHO PRODUCES
VARIED FRUITS WITH COLORED FLOWERS AND HERBS.**

**PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD,
THROUGH THOSE WHO GIVE PARDON FOR YOUR LOVE,
AND BEAR INFIRMITY AND TRIBULATION.**

**BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ENDURE IN PEACE
FOR BY YOU, MOST HIGH, THEY SHALL BE CROWNED.**

**PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD,
THROUGH OUR SISTER BODILY DEATH,
FROM WHOM NO LIVING MAN CAN ESCAPE.**

**WOE TO THOSE WHO DIE IN MORTAL SIN.
BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOM DEATH WILL
FIND IN YOUR MOST HOLY WILL,
FOR THE SECOND DEATH SHALL DO THEM NO HARM.**

**PRAISE AND BLESS MY LORD,
AND GIVE HIM THANKS AND SERVE HIM WITH GREAT HUMILITY.**

AMEN

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