

# Plentiful REDEMPTION



*Out of the shadows*  
(pages 6-7)

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# PROVINCIAL'S PREFACE



Dear Friends and Collaborators with the Redemptorists,

On January 17, 2011, I was installed as Provincial Superior of the Redemptorists of the Baltimore Province. It was very difficult for me to leave a parish that I loved and the Shrine of St. John Neumann in Philadelphia where I lived and served for the last five-and-a-half years. I have been touched and inspired by the life of

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*Plentiful Redemption* is distributed quarterly to friends and partners of the Redemptorists. We aim to tell the story of God's bountiful love and inspire our readers to partner with us to continue spreading the Good News to all people, especially the poor and most spiritually abandoned.

## Redemptorist Office for Mission Advancement

107 Duke of Gloucester St.  
Annapolis, MD 21401-2526

Toll free: 877-876-7662  
redemptorists.net

Editor:  
Stephanie K. Tracy  
editor@redemptorists.net

Director:  
Rev. Daniel Francis, C.Ss.R.  
dfrancis@redemptorists.net

Editorial Board:  
Rev. Matthew Allman, C.Ss.R.  
Rev. Andrew Costello, C.Ss.R.  
Rev. Daniel Francis, C.Ss.R.  
Elizabeth Góral-Makowski  
Stephanie K. Tracy  
Kathy Wagner

St. John Neumann, and the many people who practice their faith, and visit the Shrine of this wonderful Redemptorist saint.

We, as Redemptorists of the Baltimore Province, cover a large area. Our province includes: five parishes in New York, and four in Maryland; two parishes, the Shrine of St. John Neumann and a ministry to the homeless in Philadelphia; two parishes in Ephrata, PA; one parish each in Boston, Seaford, DE, and Lima, OH; three retreat houses — one in New Jersey and two in New York; four resident houses for our elderly and sick confreres; a house in Washington, D.C., a development office in Annapolis, MD, and the Provincial House in Brooklyn, NY.

In addition to the many multicultural parishes in our province, we also serve the Hispanic populations in Springfield, MA, and Metuchen, NJ, and we have missionary teams who preach missions and retreats all over the United States and beyond.

We have parishes in St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and in the island nations of Dominica, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and

Tobago. We also maintain a retreat house in Dominica.

Almost all the places where we work and serve are places where the people are spiritually abandoned and poor. That was the call and response of St. Alphonsus Liguori, who founded the Redemptorists. We, as Redemptorists, try to follow his call, response, and life.

We cannot do this work without your prayers and financial support. You are our friends and collaborators. Without your prayers and support very little will be able to be done. With your prayers and support we will continue God's work, for his honor and glory and the blessing on the people of God, especially those in most need and the poor.

Please help us. We want to do God's work. Pray also for vocations as the Church and the people of God need priests and religious to serve him and his people.

Thank you. You will always be very special to us.

Fr. Kevin Moley, C.Ss.R.

## Baby Blankets for Life

Thanks to the generous gifts of donors, the Redemptorists this winter were able to donate specially hand-stitched baby blankets to a crisis pregnancy center that helps women choose to keep their babies. The blankets included messages and prayers of love and hope written on each square. Fr. Daniel Francis carried one blanket to the March for Life in Washington to



show our donors' support for life at all stages and their prayers for all

those eagerly awaiting or hoping to conceive a new life.

# Advancing the Mission



In 1832, three Redemptorist priests and three brothers came ashore to America as pioneers, and within weeks they started preaching and making plans for a permanent mission that eventually became a Region and then the Province known as Baltimore. For many years, until the late 1990s, we were the largest unit in the Redemptorist world. At breakfast one morning, Fr. Blas Cáceres (stationed with me here in Annapolis and a parish priest at St. Mary's) told me that when he professed vows in 1980 he was the 999th member of our Province!

Back to the six pioneers ... these men had to think on their feet and work with their hands. Atop horses and despite prejudices, with mission crosses in hand and a quenchless fervor in their hearts, they traveled in the spirit of St. Alphonsus to work with the poor and most abandoned.

These German immigrants swiftly translated the Redemptorist charism in order to speak to the needs of the Church in the United States. They modified a European model so that the truth of plentiful redemption might reach the souls of a young nation in need of strong, Catholic evangelization and persistent pastoral care.

This past January, Redemptorists met in Chapter (our governing body that meets every four years) to give direction for our ministries. The question needs to be asked: How can we Redemptorists be missionaries on the digital continent, the New World of the 21st century? Here are some ways we are trying to do just that:

— If you've not discovered already, we offer two daily audio reflections (English and Spanish) and a weekly video on our website, [redemptorists.net](http://redemptorists.net). During Advent, Lent and other special feasts, there will occasionally be an online retreat or words of inspiration.

— We recently launched an app ("application") for iPhones and iPads that allows users to pray a Novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help. Thanks to Father John Hamrogue for writing these nine reflections.

— Soon to be ordained a priest, Deacon Jim McCabe has been blogging his experiences as pastoral associate at St. Martin of Tours in Bethpage, NY. If you've ever wanted to know what the final stages of the journey to priesthood are like, don't miss his entries on our website.

— We also have a growing presence on Facebook and Twitter.

— Breaking news and monthly updates can be delivered directly to your email inbox if you so wish — just sign up online.

We've come a long way since those brave six were missioned to a young America 279 years ago. I'm proud to say that our missionary spirit continues to push us out and beyond, looking to find new methods to evangelize people. Weekly, my confreres minister in Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Vietnamese, Chinese and American Sign Language. Daily, many are at hospital bedsides or atop their pulpits giving folks a glimpse of plentiful redemption. Often at ROMA and in Redemptorist communities across the province, we pray for you who help us in our quest to serve as missionaries in today's world — on the earthly continent and the digital one.

*Fr. Daniel Francis C.Ss.R.*

Rev. Daniel Francis, C.Ss.R.

**Redemptorist  
preaching near you!**

**For updated mission  
and retreat information,  
visit [redemptorists.net](http://redemptorists.net)**

## **April 3-6**

St. John the Baptist  
Ottsville, PA

Fr. Paul Bryan & Sr. Mary Sninsky, OSF

St. Marie  
Manchester, NH  
Fr. Bill Gaffney

## **April 3-7**

St. Joseph  
Ronkonkoma, NY  
Fr. John McGowan & Patrick Woods

Our Lady of Fatima  
Bensalem, PA  
Bilingual  
Fr. Gerard Brinkmann & Alex Ortiz

## **April 9-14**

St. Theresa  
Barataria, Trinidad and Tobago  
Fr. Kevin MacDonald

St. Mary  
Unionville, CT  
Fr. Joseph Freund

Blessed Sacrament  
Erie, PA  
Fr. Sean McGillicuddy

*Continued on page 11*

**P.S.** I take very seriously the prayer intentions that come to our office as well as the Masses so many good people request on behalf of loved ones who are ill, in need of a job, pregnant (or want to be), fearful, at a crossroads, and the list goes on. They come through the mail, our website, our Mass requests and by phone. We gather daily as staff to pray for these intentions, and Masses are celebrated daily in a number of Redemptorist chapels for our donors and those they have enrolled in Masses.

Recently I was deeply hurt to receive a note asking me: "Do you really read these or just want our checks?" I want to assure you that we do read all notes, respond to each with prayer, and send replies to as many people as we can. It is my honor to celebrate Mass for our benefactors at least twice a week.

Thank you for entrusting us with your prayer needs and Mass intentions.

# Neumann: Our friend for the journey

By Rev. Richard Boever, C.Ss.R.

(First in a four-part series)

Welcome to the Neumann Year. What's this about? We're celebrating with more bravado the life of Redemptorist St. John Neumann, the only male citizen of the United States to have, as yet, been canonized by the Church. On March 28 we sing "happy birthday" to him; the date this year marks the 200th anniversary of his birth.

St. John is one of us! Like most of our ancestors, he himself was an immigrant to America. In 1836, without the assurance of ordination from a bishop here, he sailed across the Atlantic on the *Europa* to be a missionary in the New World.

He had been raised in Bohemia and completed his seminary training there. Inspired by the missionary journeys of St. Paul and letters being sent back to Europe by early missionaries who wrote of the need for pastoral care, he committed himself to the missionary life. During Neumann's years in America (1836-60), he was one of 4,370,000 immigrants to arrive on these shores.

Immigrants helped settle the vast lands of the young nation, but they also suffered terrible prejudices against them. For the Church, "like adolescence, with its spurts, the task was to stay alive and to develop correctly" (Jay Dolan, "The Immigrant Church"). Bishop John Dubois of New York was in dire need of a German-speaking priest, and ordained Neumann almost immediately after he stepped off the boat.

His first assignment was to the wilderness north of Buffalo, up to Niagara Falls. For four years, Neumann was the parish priest in this vast area. His life as an American missionary had begun, and it would see him through a number of

changes in his apostolic work. Never, however, did he lose his missionary perspective.

In 1963, Pope Paul VI beatified Neumann. In a celebration of the event, Bishop Fulton Sheen preached a sermon on the man. By the end of his life, Neumann had not only served as parish priest but also as missionary, superior of all the Redemptorists in America, and finally as bishop of Philadelphia.

Bishop Sheen's sermon captured the glory of the man who would be canonized a saint in 1977. He noted that Neumann held the title *sacerdos magnus* — high priest. For some, the emphasis would be concentrated on the second word (*magnus*), but Bishop Sheen simply stated that for Neumann, the emphasis would always remain on *sacerdos*. He remained first and foremost always "priest" to his people. The pope himself categorized this man as one who always did "the ordinary, extraordinarily well."

The Neumann Year celebrates our saint as an example of a man who lived out his vocation in life, the call each of us has in our daily Christian life. On the day of his death in 1860, the



ROMA

rector of St. Charles Seminary in Philadelphia reported to Rome that, "the American Church had suffered a terrible loss."

With his canonization, the Church has given him back to us as a companion on our way. His intercession has proven powerful in many miracles, and his life is an inspiration. The Neumann Year is worth celebrating.

*Fr. Boever began his acquaintance with St. John Neumann 30 years ago while writing his doctoral dissertation. He recently published a new biography, "St. John Neumann: His Writings and Spirituality," written in the first person and based on major personal documents of the saint. A member of the Denver Province, he is currently stationed at the Neumann Shrine in Philadelphia.*

# Embracing our crosses

By Rev. John Murray, C.Ss.R.

August 27, 2010 was a day that changed my life. I was stationed at San Alfonso Retreat House, in Long Branch, NJ on the coast, and I went out for a walk on the boardwalk. I tripped, hitting my head on the railing, and was immediately paralyzed from the chest down. In an instant I became a paraplegic.

I have spent the past five months at the St. John Neumann Residence in Timonium, MD. What a blessing for our sick and elderly confreres to have such a beautiful place and a wonderful staff to care for us. I am so blessed with a large family that has been a terrific support, and to have a religious community that emphasizes strong family ties. That same sense of community drew St. John Neumann to the Redemptorists. I certainly notice that same sense of family here, in the residence named for one of our great saints.



I have had an amazing 37 years of priesthood, with a wide variety of ministries. I was vocation director for seven years, worked in an inner-city parish and a large parish in Annapolis, MD. I spent six years at San Alfonso Retreat House and finally 11 years as a preacher and mission coordinator.

After my accident, it is time to turn the page to a quieter form of ministry — preaching, not by what I say, but by patiently carrying my newest cross: being a paraplegic. St. Francis of Assisi said it so well: “Preach often, and sometimes use words.” I now gallantly preach my wordless homily.

St. Alphonsus spent the last 19 years of his life in a wheelchair, which he called his cross. I can do no better than follow my sainted founder and call my wheelchair my cross.

We can never understand Jesus without the cross. The cross is a necessary ingredient of Christian life, but the Gospels have a number of meanings for the cross. Matthew, Mark, and Luke see the cross as two pieces of wood that the Romans used to execute Christ.

The Gospel of John saw the crucifixion as Christ’s glorious victory leading to new life. Jesus descended from heaven in his Incarnation and returned to the Father by way of the cross. The cross is Jesus’ throne of victory.

Finally, Christ himself sees the cross as our daily trials and burdens, every adversity that we have to deal with. He tells us, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Mt 16:24).

The life of faith is about embracing our cross. Too often, our everyday crosses become “a stumbling block” (Gal 5:11). We complain about or fight our cross. God’s will often comes in the form of the **cross**, and I embrace my cross rather than resist or bemoan the cross.

How we carry our cross is what matters most. If we can learn to recognize every cross as an invitation to die with Christ so that we can come to life again, we will grow in our faith. We learn that we cannot carry the cross on our own and that we need to depend on God’s grace rather than on ourselves.

Being a paraplegic is never an easy cross, but it has taught me to see my cross in the light of Christ. And that is an invaluable lesson.

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*Fr. Murray professed vows as a Redemptorist in 1966 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1973.*

*‘Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.’*

(Mt 16:24)

# Out of the shadows

*Redemptorists serve the material and spiritual needs of today's abandoned*

By Stephanie K. Tracy

On any given day, the hallway outside the parish office at Immaculate Conception Church in the South Bronx could be mistaken for Grand Central Station.

People line the halls, speaking in several different languages, though mostly in Spanish. They wait patiently to speak with the pastor, Father Frank Skelly, or another staff member. They're willing to wait because, for this mostly Mexican community, the Church is their safe place.

Their boss may not pay them a fair wage. Their landlord may be threatening to kick them out because they don't have papers. The measure of a good day is how invisible you were able to make yourself.

But here, at Immaculate Conception and in Redemptorist communities throughout the U.S., it's safe to come out of the shadows.

You'll oftentimes see Doc there, a longtime parishioner and a community leader.

"I feel very protected here, I feel like I'm in my house," he said.

When he's not rehearsing to sing *mañanitas* for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Doc visits homes as part of the Guadalupe groups. Every Friday night, the groups visit in the community, pray a rosary, and talk about current needs.

"They're living in the shadows because many people, we know they're undocumented," Doc said. "They feel they don't have a right. That's why we bring them to the church. We show them



Dan Begel/WaterView/Courtesy

we have a right over here. We keep doing things, pushing people not to lose the faith of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Many people are changing their religion. I always say to them, don't lose your roots because you lose your roots, you lose your faith."

The Redemptorist St. John Neumann, an immigrant himself, who became the fourth bishop of Philadelphia, came to the U.S. from his native Bohemia with the goal of making sure the German immigrants didn't lose their faith. Redemptorists today continue to follow his example even as they mark the 200th anniversary of his birth.

In the Hudson River Valley, Father Tom Deely and a local family, the Goulds, help the seasonal migrant workers hold on to their faith. Many of the workers spend the winter on farms in Florida, and return to New York for the season between April and October. The trip is full of risks for the many who are undocumented.

As part of the Reaping the Harvest pastoral outreach program in the Archdiocese of New York, Father Deely accompanies Deirdre and Kenney Gould to several area farms, offering Masses, praying with people, preparing children and adults for various sacraments, and building up the community.

"The little rooms they have, it's almost like visiting a Mexican apartment in the Bronx," said Father Deely, who until recently spent the majority of his ministry in the Bronx and the Caribbean. "There's a woman who's always making food; they have common meals all day."

Workers don't have transportation, so Reaping the Harvest provides rides to the Spanish Mass at the local parish. When someone dies, they make arrangements to send the body back to the



A shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe at Immaculate Conception Church in the Bronx, NY.

person's home country. When someone's sick, the Goulds bring them to a local clinic. Despite the organized efforts, though, sometimes these missionaries have to seek out those who remain in the shadows.

"I was visiting a family once, there was a man dying, living in a trailer out in the middle of nowhere," Father Deely said. "I wouldn't have found the place without a GPS."

Fathers Ronald Bonneau and James Gilmour also rely heavily on their navigational skills to both locate their people and find ways to best serve them. As the co-directors of the Office of Hispanic Ministry in the Diocese of Metuchen, NJ, their concern is for the immigrant communities throughout the diocese. Transportation and the availability of Spanish-speaking priests are a concern in this suburban diocese just as they are for the migrant farm workers.

"We're challenged pastorally from a time standpoint and just to do the ordinary work like Masses," Father Bonneau said. "We have priests who can pray the Mass, who can read the Spanish. But to hear confessions and provide pastoral counseling, people need someone who's fluent."

"To have a quality formation for lay ministers and catechists is important, and there are a few good programs online," Father Gilmour said. "But how many of our people have access to the Internet? In New York City, it's easy to participate in a formation class just by catching the subway or the bus. Here, we're talking about an hour-long ride in the car and having to deal with weather issues."

The two missionaries are also helping the diocese learn how to build unified, diverse parish communities.

"It's the missionary in us that gives us the orientation to turn our parishes into tremendously multicultural places," Father Gilmour said. "Having all these different cultures means having to reach out as missionaries to include all the people in the parish."

In East Baltimore, the Redemptorists at St. Michael's Parish have been a longtime resource for the city's itinerant and growing Hispanic population. Later this year, due to rising maintenance costs, St. Michael's will close its church building and relocate activities to Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, also run by the Redemptorists.

"One of the leaders of our parish said, we came here — we left our homes and our families — and we found a new home and a new family here, and now we're being told we have to move again," said Father Robert Wojtek, pastor of St. Michael's. "That's part of the challenge now is to make everybody feel at home."

At St. Michael's and at Immaculate Conception, much of the day-to-day service to the community is very practical — food, shelter, safety.



Fr. Tom Deely (center) with several young adult migrant workers who received First Communion last spring while working in New York.

Immaculate Conception has offered citizenship classes since 1994.

"We went from 15 to 20 people then to now 100 people a week," Father Skelly said. "This is their first contact with becoming a citizen. Sometimes we have to tell people they don't qualify. But this is the place they can come without being vulnerable. People know this is where they can come with their issues."

Those issues run the gamut from fighting for a fair wage to heading off eviction to navigating the court system.

"Because of the immigration situation, so often they have to pick up and move," Father Wojtek said. "We often have to respond to that by writing letters for things like medical services because the place will accept a letter from the pastor stating they're part of our community. Sometimes it's writing letters for immigration purposes. A young lady came to me last weekend with her mother to say thanks for a letter I wrote for her sister who was able to get her residency."

At Immaculate Conception, parishioners have picketed upscale restaurants to protest low or non-existent wages. They've lobbied to change state law to make it easier for undocumented immigrants to marry and donate during blood drives. They've traveled on buses to Washington, D.C., to rally for immigrant rights.

"They're Catholic. They have confidence in the Church and until you destroy that, they trust you because you're the Church," Father Skelly said.

"You can sometimes get caught up in the letters and the food and worrying about where they're going to live," said Father Wojtek. "But beneath it all is this tremendous faith. I think we as ministers of the Gospel have to remember to take care of all those other needs, but also to transmit the faith to our people and be open to be evangelized by them."

*Stephanie K. Tracy is the communications manager for the Redemptorists of the Baltimore Province.*



Fr. James Gilmour (left) and Fr. Ronald Bonneau are co-directors of Hispanic Ministry in the Diocese of Metuchen, NJ.

Monica Baumann/The Catholic Spirit/Courtesy

Courtesy Photo



# Become one of our heroes

## *I wish I had known ...*

I was working on our first edition of *Plentiful Redemption*, thinking about the generous friends who support the Redemptorists and our work throughout the world.

Then I got the call.

“Father, my uncle recently died and has left the Redemptorists something in his will. I’d like to talk to you about what the Redemptorists do.”

I later had the opportunity to meet the caller personally, and I was moved as he spoke about his uncle’s love for the Redemptorists.

## *I wish I had known ...*

I wish I could have thanked this dear man, but I never had the chance. I would have loved to hear from him firsthand how the Redemptorists made an impact on his life, and how he wished to continue our mission through his very generous gift. I regret that I did not have this opportunity.

His generous support, and the support of countless other “unnamed heroes,” makes it possible for the Redemptorists to share the Good News of Our Redeemer with people from all walks of life, especially the poor.

If you have already remembered the Redemptorists in your will or other estate plans, please let us know so that we may include you as a member of our newly formed **Liguori Legacy Society**. Membership in this group is reserved for friends who choose to make a lasting impact on the work of the Redemptorists through a bequest or other legacy gift such as a life insurance policy. The Liguori Legacy Society provides a way for the Redemptorists to recognize and thank these generous men and women during their lifetimes.

If you have not yet completed your will or trust, I urge you to do so. This is an important step in providing for the needs of your family and loved ones. In addition, you may choose to support ministries such as ours and other charitable organizations.

If you decide to include the Redemptorists in your estate plan, please use our legal name:

Redemptorist Office  
for Mission Advancement, Inc.  
107 Duke of Gloucester St.  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Your estate planning should be done in consultation with your legal and financial advisors.

When you choose to remember the Redemptorists in your will or other estate plans, please let us know. I want to personally thank you.



*Fr. Daniel Francis, C.Ss.R.*

## **On the Web**

You may request additional information about the Liguori Legacy Society by visiting [redemptorists.net/support.cfm](http://redemptorists.net/support.cfm).

## **Liguori Legacy Society**

The Liguori Legacy Society recognizes the enduring commitment of friends who support the Redemptorists through their will, trust, or other planned gifts.

If you have remembered the Redemptorists in your estate plan, or if you would like more information on how to do so, please call 877-876-7662 and speak with Elizabeth Góral-Makowski.

# Many faces, many tastes, one community

By Rev. Richard Bennett, C.Ss.R.

A dear friend of mine often says he would “rest in peace” if he could be assured a daily meal of meat and potatoes with orange soda. Actually, mashed potatoes always seem to be his preference.

My friend is a Redemptorist who was once my American Literature professor in our seminary. When I travel with him and we look for a place to eat, the deciding factor is always “meat and potatoes!” When I challenge this seasoned professor about repetition and the human desire for some variety, he often responds with something like: “I never tire of the Eucharist, nor of meat and potatoes!”

But I’ve always preferred and appreciated a bit more variety. I get tired of the same old songs, and I get bored eating the same food. I value a good mix.

Recently, Father John Gauci, who professed vows as a Redemptorist in 1954, sat with me, the other two vocation directors, and a group of candidates and spoke of his days in the seminary. He shared photos of dozens of young men, mostly teenagers, sent from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic for their seminary training at our formation house in North East, PA.

As we were struck by the diversity in those old photographs, when a guest visits our students today, one thing

stands out immediately: the delightful diversity of the group. Our initial formation residence, the Mission House in the South Bronx, is made up of about 25% Anglo students, 25% Latino, 25% Caribbean, and 25% Vietnamese.

Our community is where we do ministry together, live and pray together, and where we may quickly discover that our own ideas, values, and customs are sometimes in conflict with those of others.

I often take great pride in convincing myself that I am completely comfortable embracing other cultures and traditions. Recently, our Vietnamese students celebrated the Lunar New Year with its corresponding wishes of good fortune, new beginnings, and of course, food.

After the meal, we were introduced to a Vietnamese dessert — sweet, white and brown beans with crushed ice and coconut. My face was trying to say, “Yum! Yum!” But my stomach was screaming, “No way!” The Caribbean students look for fruit, the Mexicans for spice and tortillas, the Vietnamese for noodles and spring rolls, and all I want is something a bit more “normal” for me. Yet, our community reflects the diversity found in Redemptorist parishes. Within our community, we test the belief system we pledge to practice in daily Christian life.

That system might be tested in something as simple as a haircut. Our seminarians have limited funds, so they try to find ways to cut corners. In most of their cultures, having a family member cut your hair is a common cost-saver. It can be quite comical to walk by our make-shift barber shop to see a Mexican trying to cut Black hair while the next “customer,” with his own head of straight or curly hair, waits in line.

In chapel in the mornings, I sometimes feel like the house slob when the Caribbean students walk in with their clothes ironed and creased just before our



Fr. Richard Bennett/Courtesy

Jacky Merilan, C.Ss.R. (left), from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and David Chunn from Missouri, cooking dinner.

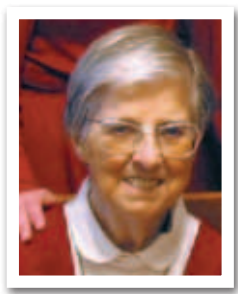
community’s morning prayer. Typical motherly protocol in the islands would carve into her son’s social consciousness the principle of never leaving the house without first pressing your clothes, lest you embarrass the family. I, on the other hand, pray — in thanksgiving — that my mom is at home and has no idea of the wrinkled mess her son finds himself in on any given morning! (Sorry, Mom!)

Our seminarians learn daily to embrace, celebrate, and respect the wonderful gift of diversity that we enjoy as a religious community. After all, when we profess our vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, we commit to an international and multicultural missionary community. We all profess the same creed and preach the same gospel, but we understand those beliefs and that gospel within our own cultural traditions. As a result, Redemptorists are provided with a wealth of diverse experience — experience that brings an added flavor to the Christian faith and our expression of it.

*Fr. Bennett is vocations director for the Baltimore Province.*



Ever Baca (left), from Mexico, Garvey Blanc, from Dominica, and Phoung To, a Vietnamese student from Philadelphia, in the “barber shop” at the Redemptorist Mission House in the South Bronx.



## Sr. Margaret "Peg" Banville, O.Ss.R.

Born: October 9, 1925

Professed: January 23, 1951

Final vows: January 23, 1954

Died: February 21, 2011

Redemptoristine Sister Margaret "Peg" Banville died February 21 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Monastery in Esopus, NY, after a long illness. She was 85.

Sister Peg was born October 9, 1925 in Toronto, Canada. She served in the Canadian Women's Army Corps from 1943-46 and was discharged as a sergeant. She professed vows as a Redemptoristine January 23, 1951 and took the name Sister Mary Gemma of the Blessed Sacrament.

She professed final vows in 1954, and in 1957 she was one of five Redemptoristines who came from Toronto to Esopus, NY, to establish a new monastery on the grounds of Mount St. Alphonsus, which

was then the Redemptorists' North American seminary.

Sister Peg served in a variety of roles in the community, including prioress and novice mistress. She became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1968.

The Redemptoristines are an order of contemplative monastic sisters founded in 1731 in Scala, Italy, by Venerable Maria Celeste Crostarosa. Venerable Maria Celeste was a friend of St. Alphonsus Liguori, who founded the Redemptorists a year later.



*"Let us not lose the beautiful crown which I see prepared for everyone who lives in observance and dies in the Congregation." — St. Alphonsus Liguori*

## Mission to Cuba

*In a small town of this island nation, the poor live with less and less, but have a richness all their own.*

*Redemptorist Father Ruskin Piedra recently returned from his annual mission trip to Martí, Cuba, where he and a small group of missionaries distributed needed items to the poor, visited people in their homes, and conducted a parish mission.*

*Here is a brief report of his visit:*

We arrived without any problem. How nice not to be pulled out of line and made to wait in a solitary room, feeling unwelcome and having to answer questions for an hour. This time we heard: "Welcome to Cuba."

The mission was announced on a Sunday in St. Anthony, a church in Itabo, which belongs to the principal church in Martí, San Jose, at a distance of about 15 minutes by car, and 45 minutes by cart. Each day, morning and evening, the mission team of three or four, together with the cart driver and his obedient horse, went to Itabo.

We gave out what little we could obtain in the poorest areas: dry pasta, cubes for soup, soap, powdered juice drinks, sweets for the children. In the evening, we had the rosary, Mass and a mission homily. A 9-year-old girl, blessed with a clear strong voice, did one of the readings. Just as well since not all can read, nor are they inspired to, among the poor in Itabo.

There were unforgettable moments, like the lady in a very poor shack who showed us on the wall a coffee grinder from



Fr. Russ Piedra with some of the young mission attendees.

the 1800s, handed down from her great-grandparents. From her own mini coffee plantation, she took the beans that had dried out in the backyard, threw them in the coffee grinder, and put the ground coffee into a large stocking, which she then brewed. While we awaited the coffee, she served us marmalade from oranges grown in the back yard with a white cheese made at home. They may be living below the poverty level, but to me they were rich in other ways.

# “IN THE FOOTSTEPS” OF ALPHONSUS

## Loving life

By Casey Hill

*Editor's Note: Six young adults and six adults from the Redemptorists' Sacred Heart Parish in New Smyrna Beach, FL, recently traveled to the Redemptorist mission in Desruisseaux, St. Lucia, on a mission trip. The group painted the interior of Holy Cross Church.*

When the mission trip was first announced, something happened inside of me, as if I had a calling. Right after Mass, I went to Father John Murray, one of our parish priests, and told him to sign me up. I had never been on a mission trip, but I have always wanted to go.

This was the first time I had traveled abroad without family, but I felt very comfortable. I felt a deep bond among all of us missionaries, because we were all going to St. Lucia for the same reason. I left with an indescribable feeling of joy at the thought of meeting new people, making new friends and helping them live better lives.

The humility, generosity and love I saw in the people of St. Lucia changed the way I look at life.

In America, many of us look at people in communities like Desruisseaux and think that they are just poor. They may be worse off financially, but they're rich in many other ways! God has blessed them with a beautiful country and their appreciation of his gift is evident in their joy.

The local people were also more practical than I ever imagined. I'll never forget the ladder the three young St. Lucian men made — one young man standing on the shoulders of two others! When I got home I realized I had way too many unnecessary things. Bigger and more is not necessarily better. The people of St. Lucia showed me how to love life.

*Casey Hill is a parishioner of Sacred Heart Parish in New Smyrna Beach, FL, and a student at Daytona State College.*



Missionaries from Sacred Heart Parish, including the author (third from left), Fr. John Murray (second from right, kneeling) and Brother Darrell Cevalco (fourth from left) with some of the local villagers.

Courtesy Photos



Painting the inside of Holy Cross Church in St. Lucia.



Holy Cross Church after painting.

## Redemptorist Preaching

(from page 3)

### April 10-13

St. Barnabas  
Bronx, NY  
Fr. Paul Bryan & Sr. Mary Sninsky, OSF

### April 10-14

\*St. Mary  
Annapolis, MD  
Fr. Daniel Francis

### April 17-20

St. Mary  
Roslyn, NY  
Fr. Paul Bryan & Sr. Mary Sninsky, OSF

### April 17-21

St. Gregory the Great  
Bluffton, SC  
Fr. Daniel Francis

### May 3-5

Our Lady Star of Sea  
Bayonne, NJ  
Fr. Daniel Francis

### May 8-19

St. Catherine of Siena  
Hillside, NJ  
Spanish  
Frs. Sean McGillicuddy & Alex Ortiz

### May 7-19

St. Frances of Rome  
Sparta, NC  
Bilingual  
Fr. Sean McGillicuddy

### May 21-June 2

St. John  
Wilkesboro, NC  
Bilingual  
Fr. Sean McGillicuddy

### May 22-25

St. Joseph  
North Plainfield, NJ  
Bilingual  
Frs. Ronald Bonneau & James Gilmour

*\*Indicates a Neumann Year mission*

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## MINI MEDITATION

### Iron Woman

*By Rev. Andrew Costello, C.Ss.R.*

She hated ironing.

She jokingly would say at times, “I don’t remember ironing for him was part of our marriage vows.”

He? He never said anything to her. However, she did hear it from her sister-in-law who said, “He joked about you behind your back about you not ironing.”

Her mother-in-law dropped a hint — at least she thought it was a hint — when she said in the kitchen one Thanksgiving afternoon while five of the women were preparing the gigantic big extended family dinner, “I never met a wife who didn’t do ironing.”

She still didn’t like ironing, so she didn’t do ironing. “Hey,” she said, talking out loud to herself, “I’m a ‘70s woman — liberated — so if he wants shirts ironed — there is the iron on the shelf and the ironing board in the cellar leaning against the wall — just three feet from the washing machine and dryer.”

And that’s what he did. Her husband did his own ironing. And she was telling her walking partner and buddy one day, “My husband is a liberated man. He does his own ironing.” Her walking partner said, “That’s interesting.” Then she added, “I love ironing. When I’m doing my husband’s shirts I’m thinking of him — hoping he’s having a great day — and then I add a prayer for him.”

“Whoops! That’s an interesting take. I never thought of that,” came back the comment. And as they walked they spotted



Luyen Le/flickr.com

some geese flying south. And the conversation changed to winter and Christmas in the wings.

Two days later she set up the ironing board in the cellar and ironed all her husband’s stuff — including underwear. Interesting ... and added a prayer or two as she smoothed everything out.

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*To read more of Fr. Andy’s work and some homilies, visit his blog at <http://reflectbay.blogspot.com>.*