



U.S. Catholic Church in mission overseas

MARYKNOLL®

July/August 2020

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Responding
to COVID-19

FROM THE EDITOR

The coronavirus pandemic has changed all of our lives. We at *Maryknoll* magazine, and the leadership of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, find ourselves in a situation that we could not have imagined six months ago.

The impact of COVID-19 has touched us personally, socially and economically.

Unfortunately, because of the financial ramifications of this crisis, we must decrease our printing and mailing costs immediately. To do that, we are producing this July/August issue of *Maryknoll* magazine in electronic format only. While you, our readers, won't receive a copy of the magazine in the mail, we offer you the full contents of the issue—and more—on our magazine website at <https://maryknollmagazine.org>

While you're there, I encourage you to explore the additional material that is available online only, including more Maryknoll stories and Catholic news via Catholic News Service and UCA News in Asia. If you prefer an experience closer to print, we are also making this issue available in PDF format for download on our website. A PDF looks just like the print magazine and works across a wide range of devices, so you can read it on your computer, tablet or smart phone. You can even print the whole PDF or individual stories to read and share.

We sincerely apologize for this interruption in magazine delivery, but we know you will understand that our priority is continuing God's work through the ministries of the Maryknoll missionaries.

Lynn F. Monahan
Editor-in-Chief



U.S. Catholic Church in mission overseas

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"To those who love God, all things
work together for good..."

Romans 8:28

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A nurse in New York City wipes away tears in April 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic.

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Front: CNS/Mike Segar, Reuters
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The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, the Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic and the Maryknoll Lay Missioners share the Maryknoll name and charism of commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ, sharing God's love with people worldwide. While these three Catholic organizations often work together in mission, each is responsible for recruiting and supporting its own missionaries. The Maryknoll Affiliates is a movement grouped into local chapters both in the United States and abroad of lay people who seek to reflect the Maryknoll charism within the context of their own lives, careers and communities.



Photo meditation

OUR BETTER *Angels*

By Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

*What motivates these brave souls to overcome
Fears, doubts and, oft times, it seems
Even common sense to go
No, run towards that from which most people flee?*

*And who are these who lay aside concern
For their own health and safety to minister
To strangers, whose only claim to assistance
Is their desperate need for help and healing?*



*How is it that despite perhaps an indifferent or
Ungrateful public, still these women and men arise
Even after little rest and no relaxation,
Ignoring death and defeat, to do and do again?*

*These are the very soul and conscience of our land
Who do what most dare not nor cannot comprehend
For in their selfless service more than individuals
Are saved, comforted or consoled.*

*For all of us, through them, are ennobled, encouraged,
Inspired and enriched beyond what we deserve
And because of these angels the human race will endure
With brighter eyes, clearer thoughts and purer hearts.*

To Our PARTNERS IN MISSION

We're all in this together. How often have we heard these words during this time when the COVID-19 virus has been ravaging our world! Indeed, the crisis reminds us just how interconnected we are here at home and around the world.

We Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers are more aware than ever of our connection to you. You have been our partners in mission through good times and bad, supporting our work in so many ways. Now we reach out to you in solidarity at this time of fear, uncertainty and suffering.

We know that many of you have lost loved ones to the coronavirus. We understand and share your pain. We too have lost members of our mission society—13 of our elders—as well as relatives and friends during this time of pandemic. The Maryknoll Sisters have lost 12 of their members. We grieve together with you and journey with you as we seek comfort in the risen Christ.

We realize that many of you who have been so generous to us throughout the years have suffered severe financial losses and are struggling to make ends meet at this time. Again, we struggle with you in spirit and offer you now our prayerful support.

We are aware that many of you are on the front line striving to serve others, at risk to your own lives: doctors, nurses, supermarket employees, sanitation workers and countless others. Here at Maryknoll we have witnessed the dedication of our own healthcare workers in ministering to our sick and infirm missionaries, in our essential workers who keep our operations going on a daily basis and in those employees who are working from home to enable our missionaries to continue serving the world's most vulnerable people.

Pope Francis has described you as “ordinary people—often forgotten people—who do not appear in newspapers and magazine headlines nor on the grand catwalks of the latest show, but who without any doubt are in these very days writing the decisive events of our time.”

With Pope Francis, I thank you for responding in love, and I remind



Each evening blue lights illumine the Maryknoll Society center in New York in honor of the healthcare workers and essential services personnel who are selflessly serving others throughout the world during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Daniel Kim/U.S.)

you that it is in self-giving that we find God.

I pray that each and every one of you may take heart in the words of St. Paul to the Romans (8:38-39): “Nothing can separate us from the love of God that we know in Christ Jesus.”

May Our Lady of Maryknoll bless and protect you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Father Raymond J. Finch, M.M.

Father Raymond J. Finch, M.M.

Voices of mission IN TIME OF PANDEMIC

Maryknoll missionaries in various parts of the world share how they and the people they serve are responding to COVID-19

All photos are courtesy of missionaries featured



Sister Ngoc Hà Pham, a nurse, visits Sister Maureen Corr during the COVID-19 quarantine at the Maryknoll Sisters Center in New York.

UNITED STATES

Shortly after I arrived in February for my new mission in South Sudan, where I was teaching nursing students, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Africa. South Sudan began shutting its borders, and we foreigners were advised to leave.

Back at Maryknoll, N.Y., I soon learned that schools had closed in South Sudan and all my students had been sent home.

Reluctantly I had left South Sudan because of COVID-19 only to find myself at the epicenter of the pandemic in New York. Our Maryknoll Sisters Center was already in lockdown. The sisters were practicing social distancing and wearing home-sewn cloth masks.

Within days, many of our sisters were exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. Our nursing staff worked tirelessly to keep the sisters safe. I was asked to help on our nursing home floors since I am a nurse and we were facing a shortage of nurses here. I wanted to be there for the nursing staff and especially for our sisters, who feel the loneliness of enforced isolation. Under all the layers of gowns and masks, the sisters still recognize the connection between us. When they see the Maryknoll Sisters ring on my finger through the gloves, their faces light up and they seem to feel comforted.

COVID-19 has affected all of us. I believe we have a greater appreciation for one another.

Ngoc Hà Pham, M.M.

TANZANIA

I am an assistant priest in a Maryknoll parish in Dar es Salaam, the largest city in Tanzania. With COVID-19 encircling the world, we have canceled all parish activities except for Mass. Parishioners are allowed to sit three to a bench that normally holds six adults. Handwashing is required upon entering the church grounds. Masks are encouraged. Distribution of Communion is in the hand only, and the priest wears a mask and gloves during Communion time.

Within the country, more people are wearing facial coverings, and there is an increased awareness of the benefits of handwashing with soap. Handwashing stations have popped up all over.

The whole country continues to pray for God's protection and removal of this virus.

Jonathan Hill, M.M.

KENYA

At St. Patrick's Parish and Dispensary in the informal settlement of Bangladesh, in Mombasa, Kenya, where I work as a Maryknoll lay missionary, we are trying to be proactive in responding to the COVID-19 virus. Our first project was to buy soap since one of the best ways to prevent the spread of the virus is through frequent handwashing.



Lay Missioner Kathy Flatoff holds soap to be distributed to residents in the informal settlement of Bangladesh in Kenya to encourage handwashing to prevent infection.

That is a challenge in informal settlements, where pit latrines are shared by several households. Here in Bangladesh the people do not have running water; they fill their jugs when the water truck arrives. Educating people about the importance of handwashing seemed a good place to start.

For poor people, soap is a luxury. When you barely earn enough to feed your family, it is unlikely you will buy a bar of soap that costs 30 shillings (30 cents). Thanks to donors, we purchased 124 cartons of soap (50 bars each). At the dispensary we give out a bar to everyone who comes in. With every bar, we include education on handwashing. It is an easy way to make a difference.

Kathy Flatoff, MKLM

HAITI

There are no confirmed cases of the coronavirus in the Grand'Anse Department in Jeremie, Haiti, where I serve as a Maryknoll affiliate, but there has hardly been any testing. Haiti's healthcare system is in no position to deal with COVID-19. The only hope is prevention.

Our non-governmental organization, Haitian Connection, is working with local partners to help people. We have established a group that is sewing masks for the community. We have distributed 100 water buckets with faucets and soap so people can wash their hands. The water buckets have a filter so they also have clean drinking water. In addition, we have distributed 4,000 *konparets* (a kind of sweet roll or scone) to two parishes and several orphanages to combat hunger. And we pray.

Renate Schneider, Maryknoll affiliate



Sister Delia Smith holds Sophie, the child of one of the hospice residents.

GUATEMALA

As a Maryknoll sister, I coordinate a 16-bed hospice care facility for adults with HIV in Guatemala. Since March 13, when President Alejandro Giammattei announced the first case of COVID-19 in the country, we began measures to ensure that our residents would remain free from the risk of the coronavirus. The only "outside" person to visit is the attending physician. Staff wear masks and maintain social distancing.

At present all of our residents are stable. Keeping them mentally and emotionally positive is our priority. We have organized walks in the adjacent farm, karaoke sing-alongs and bingo. The residents have unlimited access to a telephone to call family and friends.

Recognizing that people with HIV are among those vulnerable to the coronavirus, we emphasize the importance of taking their medication and having good nutrition. Each staff member takes extra time to talk one-on-one with the residents to encourage them not to lose heart.

Delia Smith, M.M.



Father James Kroeger wears a mask he helped make to combat COVID-19.

PHILIPPINES

Here in Manila, at the Loyola House of Studies in the Jesuit Ateneo University where I teach, we are under strict lockdown. We priests and seminarians are using our time to assemble protective gear to be worn by front-line workers (healthcare workers, security guards, drug-store clerks, etc.) to prevent infection. Working as a team on an assembly line, we finish about 200 pieces every day. We're happy to do our part to serve others' needs.

James Kroeger, M.M.

Going *where you are* needed

By Matthew Sim and Charles Ogony

Three young Maryknollers in Bolivia lend a hand in a time of pandemic

We are Maryknoll seminarians doing our overseas training program in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Our missionary training went into high gear in March as Bolivia confirmed more and more cases of the COVID-19 coronavirus and international volunteers were called by their organizations to leave the country.

Hours after interim president Jeanine Áñez declared a 14-day quarantine on March 21, the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers in Cochabamba received a call from Sister Irene Machaca, superior of the Little Sisters of the Abandoned Elderly at Hogar San José, a home the sisters run for elderly women and men in this Bolivian city. With more than 10 of their international volunteers leaving, she said the home was in dire need of assistance during the quarantine period. The home has more than 120 residents of varying needs but only nine sisters living with and serving them. A number of the sisters are elderly themselves.

Recognizing the urgent need, the Maryknoll community asked us two seminarians along with Maryknoll Brother Ryan Thibert to go to support the sisters in their work.

We could see how badly our help

was needed. Shortly after we arrived, we were put to work serving supper to the men in the infirmary and helping them get settled in bed. We helped the sisters clean the infirmary, and finally, hours after we arrived, we ate supper prepared by the sisters.

Now the days continue like clockwork, beginning at around 6 a.m. when we seminarians help the men in the infirmary get out of bed. This includes giving those who can't move easily a bath in bed and helping them get dressed and ready for breakfast. Brother Ryan has been assigned to help a more independent group of elderly men.

We join the sisters for an hour of prayer, which includes Eucharistic adoration, praying the rosary and

At Hogar San José (l.to r.) Seminarian Matthew Sim, Brother Ryan Thibert, Seminarian Charles Ogony assist the elderly during pandemic quarantine. (Ryan Thibert/Bolivia)

reflecting on the readings of the day. Public Masses have been canceled.

After morning prayers, we eat a quick breakfast and then begin our duties: changing bedsheets, cleaning dormitories and bathrooms and serving lunch to the elderly men. We feed those who need assistance. Then, we begin another round of cleaning before having lunch ourselves.

While cleaning sounds like a major part of our day here, we can see it is important mission work too. For an elder care facility, cleanliness and hygiene standards impact the well-being of the residents.

After lunch the sisters have their

own prayer time and we have some time to ourselves. Often, we talk about our experiences or linger with the men as they relax in the small garden.

Seminarian Charles, who is from Kenya, is amazed at how quickly one of the elderly men is picking up Swahili, his national language. Charles has made a lot of friends, who are anxious to talk to him whenever he is available. He was deeply moved by the 90-year-old man who told him, "I miss my wife. We loved each other so much and I asked her not to die and leave me alone." Charles says, "I did not know how to console





Charles Ogony makes a resident's bed as part of his work at Hogar San José. (Matthew Sim/Bolivia)

him, but I could only hear a deep voice telling me to give him time."

"The concept of time changes when we work in this environment," Seminarian Matthew says. "Sometimes when I sit with one of the elderly men, offering him his lunch, one spoon after another ... I am invited to imagine how God is here right now, slowing down the world, telling us to be with each other." He appreciates the opportunity for daily Eucharistic adoration, which has become a space for him to recharge for the day.

Brother Ryan says washing residents' feet and helping them shave make him appreciate the words of Jesus: "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me." But he feels God's presence most, he says, in the moments he spends with residents sharing stories of his own life as they share theirs. "The feeling of gratitude is mutual," he says.

Our day ends with serving supper,

helping the residents get to bed and then cleaning the different areas before we go to bed.

We are experiencing what it means to live a vocation by watching the sisters. Even after they tell us to take a break, we notice that they continue to serve the residents in their different needs. Sister Emanuela, for example, makes sure that the men have clean clothes and sheets every day. Sometimes she has to hand-wash items because they are soiled so badly. She is small of stature, but her determination and perseverance enable her to lift men almost double her size. She is able to joke with the men and maintains a smile wherever she goes. The superior of the house, Sister Irene, is equally amazing. Despite her many responsibilities, she always makes sure to ask us how we are coping and whether we need anything.

Our time at Hogar San José has also been a time for us to reflect on what it means to be part of Maryknoll. While the whole of Bolivia is on quarantine and has been asked to practice social distancing, this has not stopped the Maryknollers in different parts of Cochabamba from being emotionally and spiritually connected. We keep in contact with the other community members and our families through WhatsApp and Facebook, and our community members have stayed in touch with us through video calls. We even celebrated a Maryknoll priest's birthday on a video call and received a blessing from him. Care and concern for each member, we see, is integral to being a missionary community.

We especially appreciate the moments of encounter with the elder-

ly, moments to feel the discipleship call to come and see. We are here to see and touch life itself. We see in the eyes of these men hope, love and patience. They truly appreciate our help. We often hear as we feed them: "*Que Dios les pague*" (May God pay you).

We do not know how long we will be at Hogar San José, as the COVID-19 virus is increasing all over the world, but one thing that we are sure of is we will be here as long as we are needed. We keep before us what Maryknoll Bishop James E. Walsh said, "To be a missionary is to go where you are needed." ✠

Seminarian Matthew Sim from Singapore joined the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers in 2016. Seminarian Charles Ogony from Migori, Kenya, joined the Maryknoll Society in 2017. Brother Ryan Thibert from Ontario, Canada, took his permanent oath in 2019.



Matthew Sim feels God's presence as he feeds a resident at Hogar San José. (Charles Ogony/Bolivia)



The Maryknoll volunteers surround Sister Emanuela and call attention to the message she holds for the elderly: "We take care of you and protect you." (Ryan Thibert/Bolivia)

Starvation stalks East Africa ahead of coronavirus pandemic

By Lynn F. Monahan

Maryknoll priests work to feed those left without food in COVID-19 lockdowns

For many countries in Africa, the steps to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic are exacerbating already dire circumstances, and warnings are mounting of a double tragedy: disease and starvation.

Even as coronavirus preventative measures begin to ease in some developed countries hit earlier in the pandemic, the virus appears to be on the rise in Africa, according to the World Health Organization. And David Beasley, head of the U.N.'s World Food Program, said recently the world is on the "brink of a hunger pandemic" and "a global humanitarian catastrophe."

"That means 135 million people on earth are marching towards the brink of starvation," he said, adding that number could nearly double by the end of 2020. "That's a total of 265 million people."

The worst impact could be in countries across Africa, as well as the Middle East, Beasley told the U.N. General Assembly in April, singling out South Sudan and others.

For Maryknoll missionaries who work in South Sudan and other East African countries—Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania specifically—helping those facing the threat of starvation



Parishioners at the Mukononi outstation in southeastern Kenya gather to receive food funded by the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers through the efforts of Father Nadeau. (Courtesy of Lance Nadeau/Kenya)



Men try to fend off a swarm of locusts in Kenya. Parts of East Africa have been plagued in the past year with locusts that devour much needed food crops. (CNS /Njeri Mwangi, Reuters)

is already a reality as these nations have shut down their economies, halted public transportation and ordered people to stay home. For millions of East Africans who eat only on days they can work, hunger is a daily problem that has become a crisis due to the pandemic.

"Hunger is rising to the level of starvation," says Maryknoll Father John Barth, who works in northern Uganda and South Sudan.

As much as 60 percent of the workforce in East Africa is in what is known as the informal labor force, he says, meaning these workers do not have company jobs but subsist by selling items on the streets or providing manual labor or other services. With governments across Africa, as elsewhere around the world, shutting down everything except essential services, informal workers

are left destitute and hungry.

"These people who were living hand to mouth literally don't have a chance to make the money they need to pay for today's food," Father Barth says.

"What they don't earn today, they don't eat today," he says.

The situation in East Africa is being compounded by the shutdown of transportation, which not only keeps people from traveling to work if they have it, but is preventing people who are sick or who have pre-existing health conditions, such as HIV/AIDS or Hepatitis C, from getting to the clinics and hospitals for their lifesaving medication, he says.

For many people in Africa, the threat of hunger, malnutrition and starvation and the loss of access to critical medical treatment are more urgent than the threat of the



Residents wade through floodwaters in Kenya, where hundreds died and thousands were left homeless in severe flooding and landslides earlier this year. (CNS/Thomas Mukoya, Reuters)

COVID-19 infection, which has not yet reached the rural areas or smaller cities, Father Barth says.

Countries on the African continent reported almost 76,000 cases of the COVID-19 virus, with slightly fewer than 2,600 deaths, as of mid-May 2020, mostly in northern Africa, West Africa and South Africa, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, part of the African Union. Far fewer cases have been reported in East African countries so far.

In Kenya, where a melee occurred over food distribution early in April in the massive shantytown of Kibera, Maryknoll Father Lance Nadeau is working to get food to parishes in several parts of the country, as well as helping families in the capital of Nairobi, where he lives.

In the town of Kibwezi in south-

eastern Kenya, for example, the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, through Father Nadeau's efforts, were able to give food assistance to almost 700 families, consisting of more than 5,000 people. Working from a distance via electronic fund transfers, Father Nadeau has been able similarly to help parishes in western Kenya and in northern Kenya near the border with Ethiopia.

To avoid more chaotic situations like what occurred in Kibera, Father Nadeau works with parishes, women's groups and local governments and police to ensure orderly and fair distribution of food aid.

"Over the years, I have developed some good working relationships with local clergy and laity," he says. "Local people know the local situation best. They are able to find the most needy in the area and food



Men and women in Kibwezi, Kenya, wear protective face masks while waiting for food distribution arranged by the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers. (Courtesy of Lance Nadeau/Kenya)

suppliers with reasonable prices.”

He says women in both church and civil groups are particularly helpful in food distribution. “Women are concerned about their families and aware of the neediest in the local community,” he says.

“In the past, Maryknoll has offered food assistance through work programs organized by the local parishes,” the missionary from Philadelphia, Pa., says. “Because of the coronavirus, such group efforts have been suspended. But the relationships and community spirit built up through these social welfare projects still serve as the network through which information about need and assistance is passed.”

Similarly, Maryknoll Father Joseph Healey, whose ministry is working with small Christian communities in Nairobi, has switched from physical prayer and reflection meetings to virtual ones using programs like Zoom, WhatsApp and Skype, and those are now his platforms to help in the pandemic shutdown.

“We’ve been trying to listen to what are the felt needs of the people and we’ve been doing that through social media networking,” Father Healey, from Baltimore, Md., says. The small Christian communities provide a network to identify the most needy in the parishes where they are located, he says.

The number one need is food, fol-

lowed by soap and water to maintain good sanitation, he says. In addition, two natural disasters have pummeled Kenya recently—flooding and locusts.

“There’s heavy rains in parts of Kenya and people through mudslides and landslides are losing their homes,” he says. “The other is the locust invasion. Whole areas of Kenya are now being eaten up by locust invasions.”

Father Barth, who works in the Palabek Refugee Settlement in northern Uganda, says that even in the U.N.-run settlement, where the COVID-19 infection has not yet been detected, food scarcity is an issue, and the World Food Program

recently cut the monthly food ration by 30 percent.

“It was already low,” he says. The grain allotment per person is equivalent to a bowl of cornflakes three times a day, he says. Protein comes from beans and amounts to about 4.6 pounds per person a month.

“On top of all this, the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) has told us in the camp just recently, there may be another 15 percent cut in the ration of the food by the month of June,” the missionary from Buffalo, N.Y., says.

In addition to working in the refugee settlement of 30,000 people, most of whom fled South Sudan’s recent civil war, Father Barth returns once a month to the parish in South Sudan where he previously served, bringing food and fuel. Now, however, he can only accompany the supply truck to the border, where he must wait until the vehicle returns from the parish, because only essential workers such as truck drivers are allowed over the border.

Father Barth says that while sparsely populated areas, such as northern Uganda and South Sudan, may be among the last places in sub-Saharan Africa to have a significant impact from COVID-19, such areas may suffer tremendously in the future because of the diversion of resources to fight the pandemic.

“There’s a potential to reverse progress in infant and child mortality by impairing access to medical care in poorer countries,” he says. “There’s fear that as the virus evolves here, it’s going to draw down resources already few and far between in sub-Saharan Africa.”



NEW LIFE *in the golden years*

by Maria-Pia Negro Chin

Maryknoll sister's ministry continues to provide caring and compassionate accompaniment to elderly residents



The New Life Foundation in Panama is living up to its name even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. As this virus swept around the world, Maryknoll Sister Geraldine Brake and her team adapted to ensure their elderly residents continue having quality of life.

"We are a small capsule of what is happening in hospitals and other residences for the elderly," Sister Brake says. "All these places are considered a high priority."

This non-profit residence, officially the Fundación Nueva Vida in Spanish, has cared for Panama's elderly for the last 30 years, and the current health crisis is no exception.

"They are working hard and there is an incredible unity," says longtime Nueva Vida resident Gloria Paz Rodríguez, 79. "We feel completely safe here ... Thanks to God and the Virgin, we have a fundación where we are well taken care of."

As in many eldercare facilities in Panama now, hygiene measures have doubled and visitors have been forbidden. "They miss their families but realize (seeing them) is not possible right now. It's a sacrifice. Everyone has a sacrifice to offer," Sister Brake says of the residents, some of whom are used to seeing their relatives at least once a week.

As of mid-May, Panama, a country of 4 million people, reported nearly 8,500 confirmed cases of the virus. The ministry of health reported 244 deaths nationwide.

Nueva Vida residents, Sister Brake says, range in age from 64 to 101 years old, and many have pre-existing health conditions that could make them vulnerable, so sanitary conditions are crucial.

After a national curfew was ordered in Panama—initially from 5 p.m. until 5 a.m.—Sister Brake's team adjusted their schedule, with

Residents of Fundación Nueva Vida in Panama in a 2019 photo. From left: Elba Angélica Ramos González, Gloria Paz Rodríguez and Cecilia Mendez de Arauz. (Maria-Pia Negro Chin/Panama)





Left: Sister Geraldine Brake greets resident María Alcalá in February 2019.
Right: Sister Brake and caregiver Yazmin Salazar distribute Communion in April 2020.



Volunteers from the community would often visit the residents for activities like bingo before COVID-19 became a global pandemic. (Courtesy of Geraldine Brake/Panama)

caregivers agreeing to work 16-hour shifts with only a day off in between so they could continue providing residents with 24/7 care. “The staff’s willingness to make adjustments personally and in their families is a real blessing,” she says, adding that their selflessness inspires her.

Solidarity among staff, families and residents is not surprising. It is a continuation of the foundation’s commitment to give its elderly residents a healthy, pleasant and dignified environment in which to spend their later years, she says.

Sister Brake founded this ministry after working with elderly Panamanians who were displaced when the U.S. Army invaded the country

and deposed Panama’s ruler Manuel Antonio Noriega in December 1989. The missionary explains that after bombings forced thousands to take refuge at a nearby school, the Maryknoll Sisters spent months helping at the makeshift shelter. With the help of Panamanian Archbishop Marcos Gregorio McGrath and local organizations, Sister Brake was able to establish, in an old hospital, a place where the ill and elderly could feel safe and valued.

Nueva Vida, now located in the former Howard Air Base in Panama Pacifico, has continued serving the needs of the people. “The symbol of the fundación is a butterfly, whose evolution toward the fullness of

life reflects our mission,” says Sister “Gerri,” as she is known.

Beatriz Grando, the residence administrator, says the 78 residents come from all walks of life, including ministers, beauty queens and public accountants. “I like to listen to the stories of their lives, and it gives me peace to help them have quality of life.”

“The elderly can be forgotten in society,” Grando continues. “All of the organizations think about the well-being of children, but sometimes the elderly don’t have support and are abandoned.”

The need for housing and care for the elderly in Panama reflects the global phenomenon of people liv-

ing longer, Sister Brake says. According to the United Nations’ World Population Prospects 2019, by 2050, one in six people in the world will be over the age of 65, up from one in 11 in 2019. “To grow old is not an easy process,” Sister Brake says. “It requires a lot of bravery and humility to accept the limitations of the body and even to grow dependent on others.”

She echoes the sentiments of Pope Francis when he told young people at World Youth Day to treat the elderly as sources of wisdom. “Those who are older need to feel the love and tenderness of friends and loved ones; it keeps them alive, showing them they are important,” she says.

'LOVE ONE ANOTHER'

Her 34-person team shows that love to residents every day, whether by preparing meals, doing laundry, or dressing and feeding them.

"They are knowledgeable and treat you with such care and love that you feel at home," says resident Elba Angélica Ramos González, 90.

Fellow resident Cecilia Mendez de Arauz, 97, also feels the foundation is her home and refers to Sister Gerri Brake as "like a mother to us. When there is something we need, she anticipates it and gives it to us."

Family comes naturally for the tall missionary with the sweet voice and ready smile. Sister Brake, 73, grew up in Wilmington, Del., in a family of 12 children. Her family's faith and her mother's invitation to see the goodness in people made a difference in their lives, she says. "I'm grateful for my family, who instilled in me a spirit of faith and love of God," says the missionary, who entered the Maryknoll Sisters in 1966.

Sent to Nicaragua in 1972, Sister Brake helped people to rebuild their lives after a devastating earthquake that year. During her nine years in that Central American country, she accompanied the people during much of the Nicaraguan Revolution. "I learned a lot from my time in Nicaragua," she says, explaining that people rallied together to help each other build a sense of community.

A similar spirit of solidarity is intensifying in Panama during this time of pandemic, she says. Many families have donated medicines, vegetables, cleaning supplies, masks and hospital gowns to help keep the Nueva Vida residents healthy.

Although forbidden to visit, rela-



Sister Brake hugs Adieris Hernández, one of the caregivers at the residence for the elderly in this 2019 photo. (Maria-Pia Negro Chin/Panama)

tives of the residents and volunteers have come to help disinfect the buildings. "They are not seeing their relatives, but are willing to help us with the extra cleaning of chairs or tables when the residents are in their rooms," Sister Brake says.

"This crisis made us realize how fragile we are and how we need the solidarity of others," Grando adds.

In the face of COVID-19, Sister Brake and her team have made sure the residents' routines remain consistent to keep their bodies, minds and souls healthy. Residents continue with their morning prayer, adapted liturgical celebrations, physical therapy and activities such as bingo, singing and movies while observing social distancing.

"The time to pray the rosary is even more important now," says Sister Brake, adding that their faith has strengthened. "Residents pray in solidarity for world health."✱



Courtesy of Geraldine Brake/Panama

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Maryknoll Sister Geraldine Brake (right) continues to share God's love with the residents of New Life Foundation in Panama. Thank you for helping the Maryknoll Sisters make God's love visible throughout the world.



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Missioner Tales

The idea of making protective masks during the COVID-19 pandemic started in our Maryknoll lay missioner house here in Haiti, but we had no big plans in place. Then our Religious of Jesus and Mary friends offered us a sewing machine. Another friend, Geri Lanham, said Mercy Beyond Borders (MBB), a non-profit organization helping women, where she works, had funds available. Diana, a Haitian woman, located fairly priced materials. Fellow Maryknoll Lay Missioners Jill Foster and Sami Scott offered to help cut and sew.

Just as we were getting into the swing of things, our sewing machine went kaput. After two frustrating hours of attempted repairs, I asked Geri if MBB still had access to the old Singers they had used for sewing classes. She jumped to it and got an antique Singer delivered to our house. I researched and quickly had it threaded. However, I failed to get it sewing, never having used a machine with a foot pedal.

Not giving up, Geri connected me with another Haitian woman, Marie Jeanne, who taught me how to use the machine. "Don't get discouraged," she said. "Give yourself time." I felt a connective love that binds us all together. This same love

dictates every good act in this time of uncertainty, pain and fear.

Creating 900 masks is no small task, but those who use them will know love in every stitch, and, I pray, be better guarded against illness.

Abby Belt, MKLM

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I was quarantined after returning from Guatemala. One morning I went to the nurses' station to get my temperature taken. The nurse and I began talking. "I have worked with many terminal-ly ill patients," she said, "but I am impressed at how aware of their mortality Maryknollers here are. They are not afraid and this gives them a great sense of peace." In this time of COVID-19, may Jesus give all of us his peace.

Rodrigo Ulloa, M.M.

One of the sacred rituals we Maryknoll sisters celebrate together during Holy Week is "Tenebrae," which means "darkness." During this prayer 13 candles are lit and gradually extinguished amid singing and praying and contemplating the death of Jesus.

This year when we could not gather because of the COVID-19 pandemic, our worship committee came up

with the idea of using the paging system, which can be heard throughout the hallways in our center, to lead the prayers.

Each sister was given a Tenebrae booklet so she could pray with the rest of the community. Sisters put chairs outside their rooms, being careful to observe the six-foot social distancing protocol as they joined in prayer.

Easter Sunday, we were united again as our paging system rang out with Alleluias. We then joined in a chorus of "In Your Easter Bonnet."


Mary Ellen Manz, M.M.

Many Maryknoll Affiliate chapters have conducted virtual meetings to share community, spirituality and global vision during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Kenya Virtual Chapter is comprised of members from Kenya, Germany and several U.S. states who are Catholics, Muslims and Protestants. Via Zoom, the chapter recently focused on how people in Nairobi and Mombasa, Kenya, are coping with COVID-19. It was eye-opening to see how impossible it is for the poor in those two cities to stay physically distant when they are crowded into very small areas. In this time of separation, Maryknoll affiliates hold onto the spirit that we are all connected.

Robert Short, Maryknoll affiliate



CNS/Matt Stone, Courier Journal via Reuters

A large, dark wooden crucifix stands in the foreground on the left, with a statue of Jesus Christ on it. The background shows St. Peter's Square in the Vatican, with the Pope seated on a raised platform, performing a blessing. The square is wet and reflective, with several small, lit candles in the foreground. The architecture of St. Peter's Basilica is visible in the background.

This is God's strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.

— POPE FRANCIS
*from the Urbi et Orbi blessing
for an end to the COVID-19 pandemic*

Pope Francis prays in front of the crucifix from St. Marcellus Church during an extraordinary blessing "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) in an empty St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on March 27, 2020. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Spirit of Mission

Blessed mourning

By Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

The specter of my mom's inevitable death haunted my thoughts from the time I was 4 years old and saw our pet canary die. My mom consoled me with the simple truth that all living things must die but promised that God would not take her as long as I needed her.

She would live another 50 years, dying when she was a robust 94. When her time came, she left us quickly, without suffering. My sister, Jan, warned me Mom was deteriorating rapidly. I got there in time to say goodbye.

The day she died I recall a deep peace overcame me. It was like Mom was closer than ever. After her funeral Mass, we gathered for her signature recipe: "pasta fazool." It was a worthy send-off for this strong Calabrese woman.

In recent days I have come to appreciate just how truly blessed we were to be able to say goodbye and mourn her in this way.

I am writing this reflection in the middle of the coronavirus lockdown. I can only pray it's lifted by the time this issue of the magazine appears. Besides the minor inconveniences of being restricted to our rooms except to leave the building for a walk out-

side (and only if we wear masks and latex gloves), there exists a greater, unseen sorrow: people are losing loved ones but cannot bid them farewell in person; no last rites, no wake, no funeral, no shared meal.

During quarantine, we've lost several priests and brothers at Maryknoll. Confined to their rooms on the isolation floor of the nursing home wing of our center, they simply died and disappeared. We held memorial Masses attended by just a celebrant and reader, viewed only on private television sets on our in-house TV channel in individual rooms.

Thus, like the rest of the world, we can grieve in private but cannot fully mourn as a community. Public mourning gives expression to personal grief. Only ritually expressed grief opens the heart and spirit to healing.

Surely, the longest and saddest journey a missionary makes is the return home to bury a deceased parent. But the loss becomes even more painful when circumstances prevent the missionary from being there at all.

Father Dennis Moorman, a Maryknoll missionary in Brazil, received word on April 14 that his mother, Martha Ann Moorman, had passed away in a nursing home in Greensburg, Ind.



When Vera Veneroso (left) died, her family was able to say goodbye and have a funeral Mass for her, but when Martha Ann Moorman (right) died, the COVID-19 pandemic deprived her family of those rights. (Photos courtesy of Joseph Veneroso and Dennis Moorman)

Travel restrictions during the pandemic made it impossible for him to return home.

Father Moorman, whose ministry is treating people suffering from trauma, appreciated what his siblings were going through. "It was traumatic for them to be so close but unable to be with Mom in her last days," he said. "And we can't grieve in the usual way: together."

From Brazil he offered a live-streamed Mass to a limited number of online participants.

Like countless others all around the world, they had been deprived of the right to mourn in the traditional way:

in person and in public, using the prayers and rituals of their faith.

Respectfully burying the dead and honoring their memory is the hallmark of human civilization. To be denied this fundamental human need makes an already sad event all the more tragic.

When this pandemic ends and we discover our new "normal" way of life, may we all appreciate the privilege of being once again able to mourn our dead with prayers and rituals, with family and friends gathered around us, as the true blessing it is. And in our blessed mourning may we sense the dawn of resurrection. ✠



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Takada th
(email 未)

ENIWA

- Hiba News Letter
(Deadline: third Saturday
of each month)

CHITOSE

- Forever light News Letter
(Deadline: anytime during third week
of each month)

At Tenshi College, where he teaches courses in ethics in medicine, Maryknoll Father Kenneth Sleyman shows his busy schedule before COVID-19. (Peter Saunders/Japan)

CHANGING COURSE IN A TIME OF CRISIS

By David R. Aquije

COVID-19 changes life for all in Hokkaido, Japan, including a Maryknoll priest

When the first case of coronavirus was reported in Japan last January—the second country to report a case after it appeared in Wuhan, China—the students at Tenshi College in the city of Sapporo, Hokkaido, had already finished their exams. There were only a few students around the campus where Maryknoll Father Kenneth Sleyman has been teaching for 19 years.

“Unfortunately, COVID-19 caused us to cancel all activities in February and March, such as graduation, retirement parties and the overseas study programs. All non-essential meetings were canceled and essential ones were held in



As a Maryknoll lay missionary, Kenneth Sleyman ministered to Hansen's disease patients in South Korea before becoming a Maryknoll priest. (Courtesy of Kenneth Sleyman/S. Korea)

large classrooms allowing two meters between participants. Masks were requested for staff and faculty, and hand-sanitizer bottles were everywhere on the campus to disinfect ourselves," says Father Sleyman, adding that online classes are now the only way students can study until the virus subsides.

"In churches the first edict was to replace holy water fonts with hand sanitizers," he says. "Soon, Masses and gatherings of more than 10 people were forbidden. Most churches locked their doors."

At Tenshi College, Father Sleyman teaches ethics in nursing, medicine, midwifery, nutrition and hospice care, a course on medical nomenclature and another on Christianity—in a college where the majority of students are non-Christians. As pastor at two churches, he responds to the

pastoral needs of a tiny minority of Catholics who live in Sapporo.

On a typical day before the pandemic he could be seen going up and down the college floors, to his office to prepare his lessons and college activities, to the classrooms to teach, and to the chapel to pray with students and religious sisters who work at the school founded by Catholic missionaries in 1947. Then he would drive his car to one parish to celebrate Mass and sometimes get on the road to travel to the other church to celebrate a wedding.

But even as COVID-19 has curtailed Father Sleyman's activities, he continues tending his flock.

"My parishioners are taking the coronavirus panic in stride, assured by their faith that it will eventually be OK. I think that what Japanese Catholics miss most is the sense of



On the day of his ordination as a Maryknoll priest in 1990, Father Kenneth Sleyman gives his mother his first priestly blessing. (Courtesy of Kenneth Sleyman/U.S.)

community through which they receive strength and joy," says Father Sleyman. "Masses have been televised on YouTube from Tokyo by Archbishop [Isao] Kikuchi, and in lieu of attending Mass in person, most of my parishioners have been attending it online. I keep in touch with them by sending out postcards each week to encourage them with a little homily and a promise that I am praying for them in my private Masses."

In many ways, Father Sleyman's life has prepared him to respond compassionately to difficult situations. Born in Rochester, N.Y., he is the fourth of seven children of a devout Catholic family. When he was in high school, one of his sisters encouraged him to become a nurse. He studied at Shadyside School of Nursing in Pittsburgh. "Nurses and doctors being killed in the line of

duty in the Vietnam War inspired me to also want to help where help was needed," he says.

He went to work at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. There he met Maryknoll missionaries undergoing treatment. They reminded young Sleyman of his great uncle, Joseph Hunt, a Maryknoll priest who had served overseas in Korea and Japan. His example had planted the seeds of missionary priesthood in his nephew that would grow over time.

Treating patients unable to pay their medical bills sensitized Sleyman to the sad connection between healthcare and poverty. Talking with patients and nurses from other countries stirred in him a desire to serve those in greatest need overseas.

Both his nursing and priesthood vocations continued to develop.



Father Sleyman teaches class before courses became online only. (Peter Saunders/Japan)

"There was a Jewish girl who was dying," remembers Father Sleyman. "I would read the psalms to her. I realized that people's spiritual needs are just as important [as physical needs] at certain times."

Work and prayer brought Maryknoll back to Sleyman's mind. He visited Maryknoll Society headquarters in Ossining, N.Y., to inquire about a priesthood vocation and met Maryknoll lay missionaries. He decided to serve as a Maryknoll lay missionary in Bolivia, but a coup d'état there in 1970 changed his plans. He was assigned to South Korea, where he served for seven years.

He worked with Maryknoll lay missionaries, priests and sisters. Serving at a leprosarium on an island where people with Hansen's disease lived in confinement rekindled his vocation to be a Maryknoll priest. "Their ability to overcome pain with faith was an amazing model to me," says Father Sleyman. "I said, 'I want that type of faith.' They were my models for going to the seminary."

Sleyman joined the Maryknoll

Society and received permission to study in Korea. He was the only non-Korean in a seminary with 500 seminarians, he recalls.

With a master's degree in bioethics from Regina Apostolorum Pontifical University in Rome, he is now adapting to a new way of life after COVID-19 and perhaps to a new way of teaching ethics in medicine.

"Medical ethics' most basic definition is 'to do good and to avoid bad practices,' " says Father Sleyman. "And the global assault upon COVID-19 has been toward the collective 'good' and to stop dangerous bad practices that could lead to greater infection of the masses."

COVID-19, he says, has brought new awareness. "The deficit of technology in many places means people die sooner than they might have in other settings," he says. "The heroism shown by medical personnel in this pandemic is magnificent. Those nurses and doctors are living testimony that we as human beings still value one another's lives and that all lives must be saved." ✠

Jesus said, "Follow me..." — Matthew 4:19

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DETAINED MIGRANTS

Face COVID-19 Risk

By Meinrad Scherer-Emunds

Maryknoll lay missionary fights for safety for migrant women in El Paso

Maryknoll Lay Missioner Heidi Cerneka is sounding the alarm about the life-threatening consequences of immigration policies at the U.S.-Mexico border during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cerneka, a pro bono attorney for detained migrants, is representing the immigration cases of two women who, along with four other detained women, successfully filed a federal lawsuit against Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). All six of the women presented high risk for infection, and they argued that the agency was making them vulnerable by not following COVID-19 safety guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for detention centers.

Rosa, one of Cerneka's two clients, is a former law student from Guatemala. She was seeking asylum after fleeing death threats because of her evangelical Christian religion and indigenous ethnicity.

While waiting for her asylum case to be heard, Rosa was held in detention in El Paso, Texas, where she developed multiple health issues. On April 7, she filed a request for release from detention. Her health issues put her at a higher risk of



Maryknoll Lay Missioner Heidi Cerneka leaving Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center in El Paso, Texas, in 2019 (Meinrad Scherer-Emunds/U.S.)

contracting COVID-19, which should have been flagged by ICE, Cerneka said. Rosa was denied.

When Rosa complained of symptoms and asked for medical attention, she was told to “drink water.”

On April 20, Rosa—who had been separated for observation—began coughing up blood and demanded to be tested for coronavirus. She tested positive. “Rosa told me, ‘When I left my country, I had no health problems. Now I have COVID-19 and many other symptoms, and I am only 25,’ ” recalled Cerneka, who works at Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center in El Paso.

Cerneka’s other client who was part of the lawsuit is Mariela, a 60-year-old Colombian woman with a thyroid disorder and other health issues. “She called me crying because she was depressed and scared. She said, ‘I don’t want to die here,’ and I told her, ‘You are NOT going to die in detention,’ ” said Cerneka.

She explained that Mariela, who has a U.S. visa, has visited her fiancé in El Paso since 2012, never violating her visa requirements. However, when she and her fiancé were returning to El Paso from a day visit to Mexico early this year, Border Patrol stopped her and accused her of working in the United States.

She was detained for 10 weeks to await deportation. “In no way is she a threat to society,” Cerneka said. “She is not even at risk of trying to stay here undocumented; she owns businesses in Colombia. She was, however, at risk of catching COVID-19 and dying in detention.”

Rosa, Mariela and the other women who sued ICE had all been held at

El Paso Processing Center, where, as of April 30, nine cases of COVID-19 were confirmed. The six women had been in contact with other detainees who had contracted COVID-19.

“People who have never committed a crime in their lives, who came to the United States to ask for protection and asylum, are now being detained in tinderboxes just waiting for a match,” Cerneka said. Prisons and detention centers—like shelters, hospitals and other places where people live in close quarters—are “known to be places where infections spread at lightning speed,” she explained.

According to the lawsuit, El Paso detainees were sleeping in bunk beds in dormitory-style rooms with dozens of others. The lawsuit alleged that physical distancing was not being observed, as detainees were eating and socializing in close contact and were prohibited from wearing face coverings. And, the lawsuit said, before April 17, ICE rarely cleaned the barracks and common areas.

Recently, prisons and jails in the United States and other countries have been trying to reduce the coronavirus threat for their incarcerated populations by releasing those who have not committed violent crimes or are still waiting for trial, and whose health could be at risk.

But, Cerneka said, in El Paso, immigration detention for people who are not dangerous has remained mostly unchanged.

The more than 300 detainees held at the El Paso Processing Center are part of 28,000 people detained by the agency nationwide. As of May 18, ICE reported 1,073 COVID-19 in-



Migrants detained in an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Basile, La., show signs related to the coronavirus disease in early April. (CNS, Handout via Reuters/U.S.)

fections among its detainees and 44 cases among its staff. Overall, only about 7.8 percent of the 28,000 immigrants detained by ICE have been tested, reports show. Of those, about 50 percent have been positive.

ICE and the lawyers for the women settled the lawsuit just minutes before a hearing at the end of April. ICE agreed to release the women from its custody, and the women, who were released on April 29, agreed to comply with the ICE “alternatives to detention” program, which sometimes includes wearing an ankle monitor. Upon release, the

women were tested for COVID-19, quarantined themselves and were able to access medical care and to reunite with their loved ones safely.

“Today we celebrate their release, but they should never have been detained,” said Cerneka, adding that the lawsuit is believed to be the first time ICE has settled such a suit.

“It will take years to recover their health, their sense of trust and safety after the physical and emotional trauma and damage caused by unnecessary custody. Justice delayed is justice denied. Today’s release of Mariela and Rosa is extremely de-

layed justice for them.”

The women were given hospitality for up to two weeks at El Paso’s An-nunciation House, which has set up a COVID-19 protocol. Ruben Garcia, the shelter’s director, told *El Paso Mat-ters* that they were prepared to take in more ICE detainees if the agency agrees to an orderly release as part of efforts to slow COVID-19 infections.

“We are proud to represent such brave women. They stood up be-cause ICE was not protecting them or the women around them,” said at-torney Christopher Benoit. “Release was the only safe outcome for these women. While we remain concerned for those who remain detained, we expect ICE to maintain the improve-ments in conditions at [the detention center] that were hastily put in place after the lawsuit was filed.”

In an April 22 letter to the local heads of immigration enforcement agencies, six state lawmakers from El Paso urged them to coordinate

with local stakeholders “to plan for both the release of nonviolent de-tainees as well as protocols for the spread of COVID-19 within your fa-cilities.” On April 27, after hearing from several experts, the El Paso Commissioners Court voted 4-1 in favor of a resolution calling on ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Pro-tection to prioritize the immediate release of nonviolent migrants.

“As people of faith, we must do what is right for our sisters and brothers, for our neighbors, and not just protect our own households,” said Cerneka, who has been a Maryknoll lay missionary since 1996. “We must trust in the God that guides us, and we must seek justice for every one of God’s beloved people.”✠

Scherer-Emunds is director of commu-nications for Maryknoll Lay Missioners.

Maryknoll Lay Missioners published the original version of this article.



Heidi Cerneka, a pro bono attorney for detained migrants through Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, talks to clients in El Paso, Texas. (Meinrad Scherer-Emunds/U.S.)



Handwashing station set up by Kathy Flatoff at her clinic in Kenya

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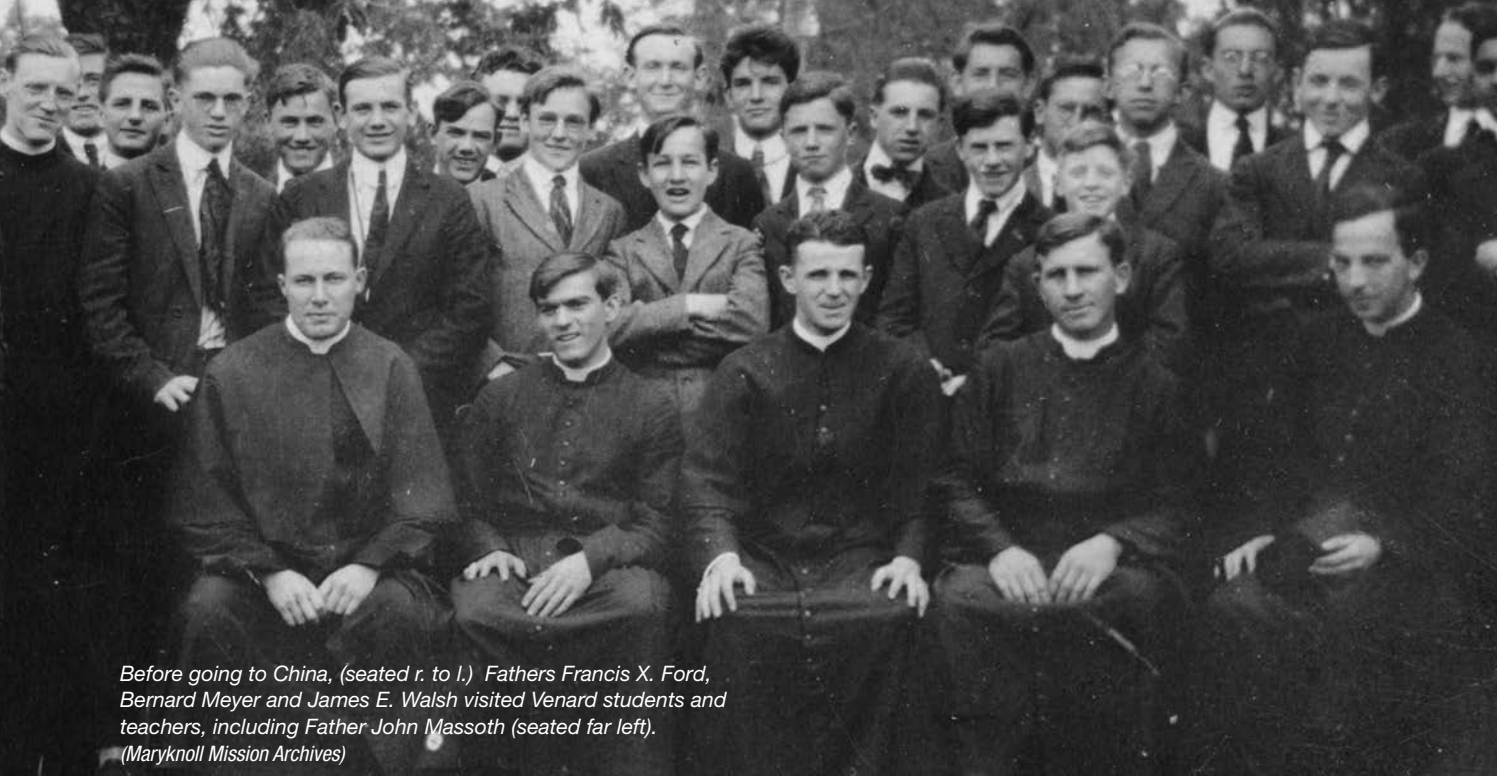
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Dr. George Stablein presenting on COVID-19 in Tanzania



Ann Greig delivering food in a remote area of El Salvador



Before going to China, (seated r. to l.) Fathers Francis X. Ford, Bernard Meyer and James E. Walsh visited Venard students and teachers, including Father John Massoth (seated far left). (Maryknoll Mission Archives)

The Year of *Departures*

By Jennifer Halloran

Amid COVID-19, looking back at the influenza pandemic of 1918

No vaccine. No antibiotics. Worldwide control efforts: isolation, quarantine, good hygiene, use of disinfectants, limitation of public gatherings.

These words, so resonant amid the COVID-19 pandemic, were used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to describe the influenza pandemic that ravaged the world more than a century ago. According to the CDC, an estimated 500 million people worldwide, about one-third of the population, were infected. At

least 50 million people died, 675,000 of them in the United States.

As the flu raged, the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America sent its first missionaries to China, on Sept. 7, 1918. That departure came at the beginning of the second and deadliest wave of flu in the United States. In October alone, an estimated 195,000 Americans died.

How influenza touched the mission society is recorded in its publication, *The Field Afar*. According to those accounts, the first wave of flu

in the spring of 1918 almost passed over the Maryknoll Society entirely, but for one priest who contracted the virus on a mission promotion visit to New Jersey. He was nursed back to health by Franciscan Sisters at St. Michael's Hospital in Newark and sent home to Maryknoll.

The second wave, in the fall of 1918, was not as kind, as 27 cases of flu, one-third of the Society's membership, were reported at "Mary's Knoll" in New York. All recovered.

The third wave, in the winter of 1918-1919, finally brought death to the Society's door. The first to succumb was Richard Fitzgerald, of Albany, N.Y., a student at the Venard, Maryknoll's junior seminary in Clarks Summit, Pa. He died on Feb. 23, 1919, at Mercy Hospital in Scranton. The April 1919 *Field Afar* said: "Fortified with all the sacraments,

Dick uncomplainingly resigned himself to the will of God, cheerfully making the complete oblation of his life for foreign missions."

The same issue reported, "Father Massoth, one of the Venard faculty, showed symptoms of the fever while in New York and was hurried to Maryknoll, where every possible care was given, but after a strong fight for life, the young priest, fortified by the sacraments, expired on Sunday, March 9."

John J. Massoth, a native of Piqua, Kans., was ordained at Maryknoll on June 2, 1917. He was described in *The Field Afar* as "large in stature ... and large in heart." *The Field Afar* noted that the day after his death, "a funeral Mass was sung...in the Seminary chapel, where Father Massoth had received his early orders... [and] offered his first Mass."

The Society knew the effects of influenza on its members was a microcosm of the effects on its supporters and the U.S. population at large. *The Field Afar* reflected: "Those were dark days, such as we know many of our readers have recently passed through, but God was good and we are thankful. Those who were stricken on the Knoll, all, through God's mercy, were preserved."

At the Venard, as the school year closed in the spring of 1919, a fitting moniker was applied to the year past. "The Year of Departures ... this scholastic year that we are now closing at the Venard - departures for China, our earthly destination, and for heaven, our eternal abode." ✠

Jennifer Halloran is director of Maryknoll Mission Archives, www.maryknollmissionarchives.org.

Forming Online Communities of FAITH

By Giovana Soria

Maryknoll mission promoters accompany missionary disciples during pandemic

When the COVID-19 quarantine began in March, Deacon Arturo Monterrubio and his wife Esperanza were isolated at home. "Do not go out, please; you are elderly people," their children and friends told them. Esperanza, who suffers from high blood pressure, knew she was at risk.

Parishioners from their St. Paul the Apostle Church in Houston, Texas, responded immediately, leaving food, face masks, gloves and cleaning products at the front door of the couple's home. "My heart was filled with gratitude and I started to cry because I felt we didn't deserve it," Esperanza says.

In their own isolation, the Monterrubios, who serve in their parish and work for the Maryknoll Society as mission promoters, felt the need to do something to help others through these difficult times. Working remotely with their colleagues in the Church Engagement Division (CED) of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, they organized webinars through which participants could find strength in their faith and learn how to help others struggling

through the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are attempting to create opportunities for cross-cultural experiences in which people can share and learn from each other," says Matt Dulka, associate director of CED. "For example, waiting in line and food shortages may be a new experience for people in the United States, but, unfortunately, these have been more common experiences for those in developing countries. What can they teach us about trusting God and even finding simple joy in challenging times?"

The CED team began offering the webinar series in English and Spanish during the latter part of Lent, and continued through Holy Week and the Easter season. Following the See-Judge-Act methodology, webinars, which last an hour and a half, include input from missionaries serving overseas, prayer, singing and Scripture reading. Participants are divided into small groups to share their reflections.

The Monterrubios and other Maryknoll mission promoters like Deacon Leonel Yoque help facilitate the small chat groups.

Maryknoll mission promoters (from top) Brenda Noriega, Jorge Rivera, Yvonne Dilling and Esperanza Monterrubio, who are working remotely from home, are ready to start a new Maryknoll webinar. (Brenda Noriega/U.S.)



"We are instruments of God," says Deacon Yoque of the facilitators' role, "and perhaps we do not calm participants, but it is the process itself and listening carefully to the word of God. The Bible gives us the words of peace that we need in these times of pandemic."

After attending a webinar and reflecting on the Gospel story of Jesus calming the storm at sea (Matthew 8:23-26), Iris Lai-Zayas, a high school teacher from Houston, began thinking about how afraid of the COVID-19 pandemic her students must be. While teaching her students online, she said to them, "God never abandons us even though it

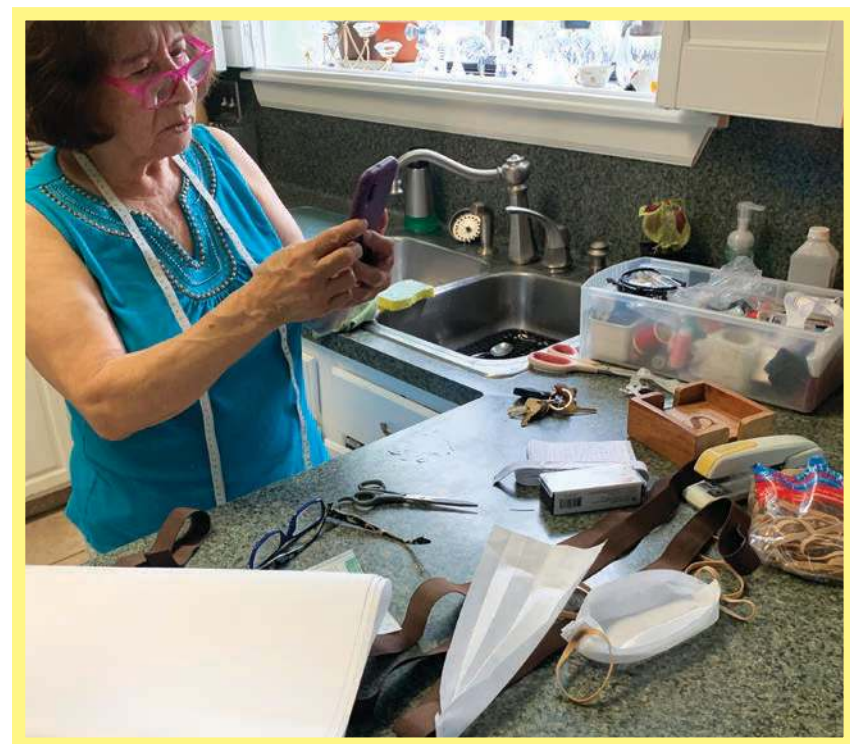
seems that we are alone."

Inspired by the Scripture passage, Lai-Zayas composed and recorded a song. "It was as if God was telling me the lyrics and it was impossible for me not to play the guitar and put the music together," she says.

Carola Cerezo-Allen, a nurse at a children's hospital and parish leader at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart in Washington, D.C., was another participant. "Meeting with people who speak the same language of faith and sharing what I feel outside the hospital was important," she says. "The doors of the church were closed, but we were all open to Christ."



After attending a Maryknoll webinar and reflecting on a Scripture passage, Iris Lai-Zayas was inspired to compose and record a song. (Iris Lai-Zayas/U.S.)



Rosario Gonzales, who attended the Maryknoll webinars with her family, makes masks to distribute to her neighbors during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Sergio Rodriguez/U.S.)

Cerezo-Allen shared a reflection guide used in a webinar with one of her many parish ministries. "I have a group of parents who have children with special needs," she says. "We organized a meeting via Zoom to reflect on the Easter reflection guide."

Sergio Rodriguez, of Houston, and his family, including his wife, mother-in-law and two children, got together to participate in the webinars. Rodriguez had lost his job at a restaurant and had not received unemployment checks because his employer had not filled out the necessary paperwork. Although he has permanent U.S. residency, Rodriguez did not receive a stimulus check from the government because his wife is undocumented.

Rodriguez says participating in the webinars has helped his family feel at peace and view things from a different perspective. "We really are in God's hands and the Lord is going to do his will," he says. "The

best we can do is pray to God for our concerns."

He and his family put their faith into action. Each week they prepare food containers to leave at the doors of their neighbors. Rodriguez's mother-in-law is making face masks to donate to people in need. "After participating in the sessions, it became very clear to all of us that we are all missionary disciples," he says. "When we want to do something for others, we don't need much."

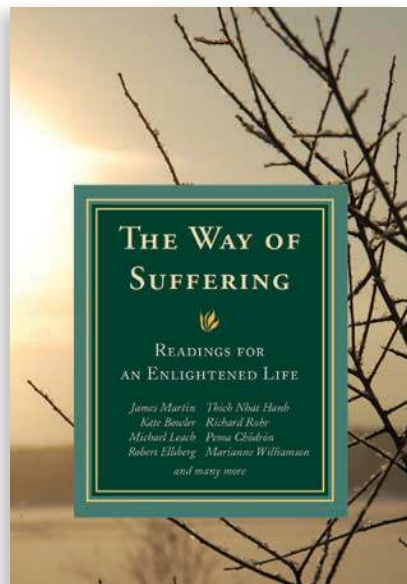
Deacon Arturo and Esperanza Monterrubio hope the webinars have helped people feel part of a community of faith.

"Knowing that someone listens to you, supports you and is watching over you has been essential during this pandemic," Esperanza says.

Arturo values the sharing and generosity of the many people he has met. "That is priceless," he says. "It shows us that God is present in the most difficult times, as promised."✠

Orbis Books Spotlight

Preview by Michael Leach



This moving experience of faith meeting fear is followed by more than 60 other true stories, poems, quotes and meditations on how suffering—mental, emotional, physical—can bring us to a turning point that leads to spiritual healing.

Contributors from many faith traditions include writers you may already trust, like Henri Nouwen, Anne Lamott, Thich Nhat Hanh, Dorothy Day, Richard Rohr, Joyce Rupp, Pope Francis and many others whom you will surely appreciate once you meet them in their stories.

Among the many short quotes sprinkled throughout the book, my favorites are from Jesus:

“In this world you shall have trials and tribulations, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Jesus showered compassion on everyone who suffered, and he promised that we, too, could do what he

did: helping those who are in pain and even rising above our own sufferings (John 14:12).

The Way of Suffering: Readings for an Enlightened Life is the fourth in a series of books that include *The Way of Gratitude*, *The Way of Kindness* and *The Way of Forgiveness*.

You might want to read *The Way of Suffering* first because it begins at the very beginning, with our broken world.

As the late Canadian singer, songwriter, poet and novelist Leonard Cohen sang:

“There is a crack, a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.”

The Way of Suffering and its companion volumes encourage us to trust in God, be patient, forgiving, grateful and kind, to ourselves as well as to others. ✝

Michael Leach is publisher emeritus of Maryknoll’s Orbis Books.

The *Way of Suffering: Readings for an Enlightened Life* begins with a story from a young friend of mine, Therese Borchard, who writes:

“I had suffered a nervous breakdown. The suffering was unbearable. My husband rushed me to Johns Hopkins Hospital.

“Fear consumed me.

“Until I saw Jesus.

“In the lobby was a 10½-foot-tall marble statue of Jesus, his arms extended toward those in desperate need of healing.

“The inscription, written in capital letters on the pedestal, read: ‘Come unto me all ye that are weary and

heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’

“I stood in front of Jesus for a while, tempted to touch his robe like the hemorrhaging woman who got her miracle in the Gospels of Mark and Luke.

“She had bled for 12 years, ‘had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and she was no better’ (Mark 5:26). Just by touching the hem of Jesus’ cloak, this ailing woman was healed of her disease, because her faith was so great.

“‘I believe, Jesus,’ I said to the statue, imagining myself touching the hem of Jesus’ real robe, ‘I believe.’

“And I wept at his feet.”



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COVID-19 jubilee debt relief

By Kathleen Kollman Birch

As the dire economic consequences of COVID-19 have emerged, religious and secular institutions, including the Holy See, have advanced a worldwide campaign to provide debt relief for impoverished countries struggling to fight the pandemic. Their goal is to avert financial ruin for low- and middle-income countries during the crisis, and to help mitigate a global financial crisis, which experts say could be the worst since the Great Depression.

The campaign has secured temporary debt relief for many countries. But the fight is far from over.

This new campaign is inspired by previous debt relief campaigns that have become legendary for their success in gaining global momentum. The most famous of these was the Jubilee 2000 campaign.

In that campaign, global leaders, including Pope John Paul II, used the biblical concept of “jubilee” debt cancellation on special anniversaries to garner support for mass debt cancellation for impoverished countries at the turn of the millennium. The campaign was eventually able to ensure \$100 billion of debt cancellation for 35 of the world’s poorest countries, allowing them to invest the money they would have paid to major or-

ganizations, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, in development and anti-poverty efforts.

Subsequent debt relief campaigns were initiated for Haiti after the 2008 global financial crisis and again after Haiti’s devastating earthquake in 2010, as well as for several African nations fighting the Ebola outbreak in 2014. For these crises, the IMF created the Catastrophic Containment and Relief Trust, a fund that can cover debt payments for countries experiencing a crisis for a certain number of months. The fund relies on contributions from wealthier countries.

Following pressure from the new Jubilee campaign and other international actors, the IMF activated the use of the trust for 25 of the world’s poorest countries, canceling debts for six months. Likewise, the G20, the group of the world’s 20 largest economies, suspended debt payments to the end of the year for 73 primarily low-income countries.

Jubilee USA Network, the U.S. branch of the international Jubilee movement, representing over 700 religious organizations, has called this short-term debt cancellation a “positive step,” but argues that much more needs to be done to expand access to financial relief for these and other



People receive food distributed through a Haitian government program in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in April 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. (CNS/Jeanly Junior Augustin, Reuters)

countries whose economies will be devastated by the financial crisis and left unable to recover in the long term.

Eric LeCompte, director of Jubilee USA Network, said, “All of the countries [chosen to receive debt relief] could benefit from more than a six-month debt cancellation. As the poorest countries in the world, they really need full cancellation [of their debts].”

On Easter Sunday, Pope Francis re-

iterated his support for the debt relief campaign, saying, “May all nations be put in a position to meet the greatest needs of the moment through the reduction, if not the forgiveness, of the debt burdening the balance sheets of the poorest nations.” ✠

Kathleen Kollman Birch is communications manager at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

FAITH IN ACTION:

- Learn about U.S. Jubilee debt relief campaign: <https://www.jubileeusa.org/>
- Read Pope Francis’ words in support of the campaign: <https://bit.ly/PopeDebtRelief>
- Sign the petition to the IMF to cancel debts for low- and middle-income countries so those countries will have more money to invest in their response to the coronavirus pandemic. <https://maryknollogc.org/alerts/urgent-tell-imf-stop-global-coronavirus-economic-crash>

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, based in Washington, D.C., is a resource for Maryknoll on matters of peace, social justice and integrity of creation, and brings Maryknoll’s mission experience into U.S. policy discussions. Phone (202) 832-1780, visit www.maryknollogc.org or email ogc@maryknollogc.org.

Partners in Mission

On the front line with Jesus

By Serena Sook Lim

I have been working at North Central Bronx Hospital in New York for 27 years as a registered nurse. Right now, our hospital is a war zone as we battle COVID-19.

When elective surgeries were canceled, several units, including mine, were converted into COVID-19 patient units. We healthcare personnel must wear personal protective equipment. Initially, like many of my colleagues, I was very anxious about caring for patients with COVID-19. We were concerned about how this coronavirus could compromise our own health and the health of our loved ones at home.

Then I heard Pope Francis' talk during his special blessing on March 27. He reminded us we are all together with Jesus on this journey. "Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them," Pope Francis said. I could feel the energy of God fill my heart. I needed to give Jesus my fears. Without my faith in the Risen Christ, I wouldn't be as calm and focused as I am today.

The situation has been overwhelming. We healthcare workers cry when we see COVID patients die alone after fighting so hard to stay alive.

I never experienced war, but in my homeland, Korea, I grew up hearing

stories of the Maryknoll sister doctors and nurses helping the sick during the Korean War. I also met Maryknoll Father Gerald Farrell, a medical doctor who served in Korea. Here in New York, as I visit Maryknoll and meet many sisters, brothers and priests who dedicated their lives for my country when we were in need, I am inspired for my own work.

We are in an unknown moment of life with this pandemic. However, I am experiencing the miracle of being united with the other hospital workers.

As we attend those in need, we encourage one another. When I feel powerless, I keep moving with the other medical workers. Most of us come from different countries, cultures and religions, but it seems we are all united in this struggle in the presence of God. We are concerned for one another, asking how we are doing, how our families are making out. Beyond being professionals, we relate to each other as human beings. Together we are fighting to save the precious gift of life. Many are mentioning the word "God," asking God to be with the patients and with all of us.

At home, with my husband Peter and 27-year-old son Paul, I take every precaution to protect them: social distancing, washing hands and wear-



Serena Sook Lim (seated, left) and some of her co-workers at North Central Bronx Hospital in New York take a break in between caring for patients with COVID-19. (Courtesy of Serena Sook Lim/U.S.)

ing masks. Paul has autism and I was afraid he would not understand what is happening. He understands and he wants to embrace me to help me carry my cross. I tell him "not now" and hope he comprehends.

But God is moving and changing all of us. My husband and son join me in prayer each night. I believe God is listening to each of us in our struggle, for as St. Paul says, "Who shall

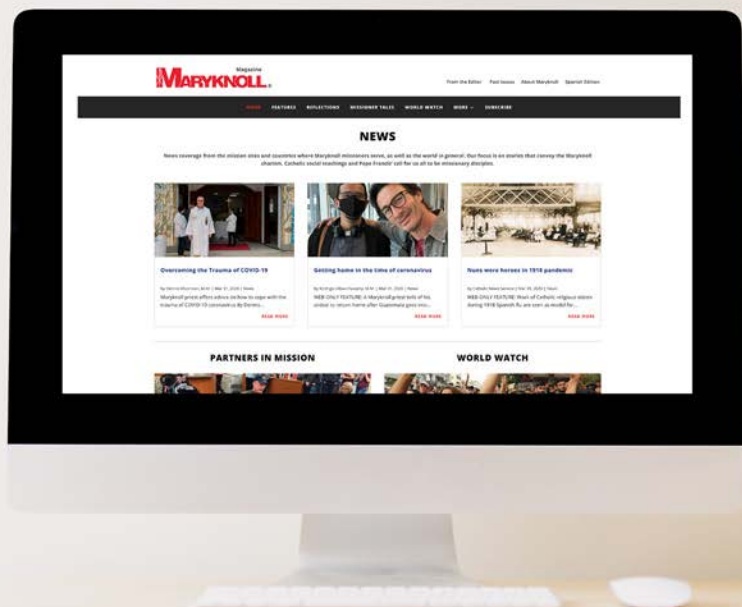
separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? ... No, in all these things we have complete victory." (Romans 8:35, 37) ✠

Serena Sook Lim was born in Buan, South Korea, and raised in Seoul. She came to the United States in 1990 and lives with her family in Ridgefield, N.J.

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We're expanding our online offerings with a NEWS section.

In addition to all the content of our print Maryknoll magazine, our online edition now includes MORE Maryknoll stories—more than we can fit into our print pages—and we've added CATHOLIC NEWS via Catholic News Service and UCA News in Asia.



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Readers' Responses

INDEED SAINTLY

The account of the course of Maryknoll Father Joseph Cappel's life as observed by Maryknoll Father Kevin Hanlon in your May/June 2020 issue of *Maryknoll* magazine is indeed a saintly suggestion. As this priest ministered to the rural inhabitants in remote regions of Chile, he did so with a sustainable practice in mind. By riding his bicycle, he practiced an alternative form of transportation. Father Cappel in a sense was ahead of his time and a forerunner to Pope Francis' announcement in *Laudato Si'* that to care for our common home is essential.

As an avid cyclist myself, I'm all in with this ecological effort. Protecting the biome of rural Chile may or may not have been what Father Cappel had in mind. Although, in this particular South American region, where protective measures for the environment are necessary, such steps to prevent erosion and pollution are a blessing. Here in the southeastern sector of Michigan, we just have too many automobiles. I, like that young man who tried to keep up with this missionary on a bike, "would love the company" as well.

Mark A. Sleboda

Redford Township, Michigan

THRIVING MISSION

I was a Maryknoll seminarian for six years and attended the high school

and college preparatory educational seminary called the Venard, located in Clarks Summit, Pa., from 1963 to 1967. Upon graduation, I went to Maryknoll College in Glen Ellyn, Ill., for my first two years of college seminary. I left at the end of my sophomore year, knowing someday I would want to be married and have a family. On May 1 of this year, my spouse, Ann Marie, and I celebrated our 49th anniversary. We raised four children, each of whom have lived and studied abroad—India, England, Spain and Costa Rica.

One of my classmates while at Maryknoll College was Maryknoll Father Joseph Thaler. He and I were roommates for a semester during our sophomore year. As you know, he has been in Nepal for 40-plus years and was recently featured in the online *Maryknoll* magazine.

My wife and I have traveled internationally over the years, and when we were planning a trip to India and Nepal, I contacted my former classmate to see if we could connect with him on our trip. Last November, we visited India for 12 days and then traveled to Nepal, where we linked up with Father Joe in Kathmandu. Based on our advance conversation with Father Joe, we brought with us 70 pounds of school supplies in suitcases for the teaching staff at one of the schools that he supports.

We spent a day with Father Joe,

touring the Tibetan refugee camp and the handicraft center, the health clinic and the early child development center, delivering the school supplies to the Shree Panauti Basic School, then seeing the brick factory and the water filtration system in Bagmati, and meeting many of Father Joe's friends and the people he works with.

The mission, vision and spirit of Maryknoll is alive and thriving! That is, serving others and making a difference in their lives was most evident in the long-lasting projects and long-term relationships that he has established and fostered throughout his time in Nepal. Most importantly, Father Joe has supported and sponsored individual Nepalese to lead and manage each of these projects, knowing he will transition from Nepal in a few years. Every project has been sustained over the years through Father Joe's insight and collaborative relationships. The projects will continue, and his vision of launching social service and health-related projects and self-sustaining employment projects, led by local Nepalese, demonstrated to us the true mission of Maryknoll missionaries—putting a punctuation mark behind the “social gospel.”

Rocky Weinburger

*Ann Marie Michaels-Weinburger
Alexandria, Virginia*

MOST ABANDONED

It was such a joy for me to read Father Joseph Veneroso's Spirit of Mission column in the March/April 2020 edition of *Maryknoll*. He understands

that Jesus suffered most when he felt abandoned. Very few people realize this and it made me grateful to see it expressed so well in Father Veneroso's essay. Thank you.

Judith Cutting

Via Maryknoll magazine website

MOST NEEDED

In the past I have sent contributions to Maryknoll to be used at your mission in Santiago, Chile. Now I would like for you to use my gift where it is most needed. When *Maryknoll* magazine arrives, I read every article. The accounts of the missionaries and volunteers are totally inspiring. Faith plays a major role in their lives and in those lives of the people they serve. Miracle upon miracle! Thank you for your tireless work and prayers.

Eleanor Fenton

Sacramento, California

MISSIONARY DISCIPLE

I am so far behind in my reading, but I want to respond to the article in the September/October 2019 issue of your magazine titled “How I became a missionary disciple.” The two-page autobiography was by Maryknoll Father Joseph R. Veneroso. Over these past years I have been collecting his prayer cards, most recently the lovely “Christmas” and undated “Prayer for a better world,” so current for today. Father Veneroso speaks to God in such a beautiful way in words that become mine. Thank you, Father Veneroso.

Nancy Krupa

Shoreview, Minnesota



Courtesy of Michael Bassano/S. Sudan

The need for mission never ends. And at this time of pandemic, the need for the work of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers in 22 countries is greater than ever.

Your gift and prayers can bring God's love and hope to vulnerable people like those Maryknoll Father Michael Bassano continues to serve in a U.N. camp for displaced people in South Sudan.

Yes, I want to share in the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers' mission of love throughout the world.

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Maryknoll Father Michael Bassano keeps his distance in the COVID-19 pandemic as he greets a boy carrying a baby in a U.N. displaced persons camp outside the city of Malakal, South Sudan, where the missionary works. (Read about a double crisis in Africa, page 18.)

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