

U.S. Catholic Church in mission overseas

MARYKNOLL®

September/October 2020

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A man with glasses and a black shirt is smiling slightly. He is wearing a brown rosary with a pink cross. The background is a church interior with a white altar and a crucifix.

AT GOD'S SERVICE

FROM THE EDITOR

Let me start by apologizing to all of our readers who missed the July/August issue of *Maryknoll*. Due to the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Maryknoll, like so many other organizations, has been forced to cut costs drastically. One of those cost-saving measures was not printing and mailing the July/August magazine.

However, the July/August issue is available online at maryknollmagazine.org and can be downloaded in its magazine format onto a computer or tablet. To those who cannot access the Internet, we sincerely apologize and hope you will understand our decision was made in the best interests of Maryknoll's ministries.

Sadly, as of this writing, the coronavirus is still on the rise in many parts of the United States and in countries around the world. The toll in human life and suffering and the full economic impact of this crisis are as yet impossible to assess. In light of this and to maintain first and foremost Maryknoll's commitment to serving the world's most vulnerable people, we will be making further changes.

Beginning with the next issue of *Maryknoll*, which will be mailed in late November, we will publish quarterly—four issues a year instead of the six that we have produced for the last decade. We remain committed to telling stories of Maryknoll missions, and we invite you to visit us on the web and on social media as we continue adapting to God's ever-unfolding plan for our world and its inhabitants.

Lynn F. Monahan
Editor-in-Chief

MARYKNOLL

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

Maryknoll, the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, Inc., was established in 1911 by the U.S. bishops to recruit, train, send and support American missionaries in areas overseas. Maryknoll is supported by offerings and bequests.

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Magazine of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers



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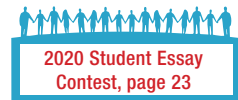
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Maryknoll Brother Joseph Bruener from Port Edwards, Wis., has served the Church for 27 years.

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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 reflection on Creation

THE FIRST SACRAMENT

By Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

*Let all that is and was and will ever be
praise God who made everything
not just to reveal glory and power and majesty
but also to share love and life—eternally.*

*In him all things in heaven and on earth,
the visible and the invisible
were created through him and for him.
He is before all else that is
and in him we live and move and have our being:
the farthest galaxy and nebula no more nor less
than the peacock, the peony and the porcupine.*

*Creation, then, is the first sacrament
instituted by Christ, through Christ
and, finding its fulfillment only in Christ,
the power that compels the heavens
to declare and the seas and all they contain
to proclaim God's grace to all.*

*And so it shall be on that day
the mystic and the scientist shall meet
on the very same mountaintop,
having climbed up from opposite sides
by very different paths over many years.
They shall stand regarding one another in silence
suspicion giving way to admiration
as they exchange gifts
till arm in arm they descend
looking at the world and one another
with new eyes.*

O let there be light!



Spirit of Mission

Upon this rock

By Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

Last Ash Wednesday we wistfully wondered what we might give up for Lent: Movies? Coffee? Dessert? Or perhaps we would do something extra: daily Mass? Volunteer at church? Visit shut-ins?

Little did we know God would ask much, much more of us this year. As the COVID-19 pandemic spread and we had to shelter-in-place, with breathtaking speed, movies, shopping, sports, dining out, work, school, the Mass, even the Eucharist itself were taken from us. Visiting family or friends, shaking hands, hugging, all became verboten. No weddings, wakes or funerals. Bereft of external aids to our faith, we suddenly found ourselves having to rely on faith alone. And all alone.

Surely, the unprecedented and uncertain times in which the world now lives, with the pandemic, protests and political divisions tearing communities and families apart, have tested our faith like never before. In the middle of the lockdown and in the midst of the nationwide protests following the murder of George Floyd, a friend called me up, very upset. "My neighbor made the most outrageous racist remark," she confided. "Out loud and in public. I didn't know what to say, so I said nothing. Was I wrong? What should I have done?"

Her dilemma reminded me of my own personal confrontation with evil over the years. For example, once a visitor in our Maryknoll dining room made a casual, anti-Semitic remark. I was as stunned as I was conflicted. Had a Maryknoller made the comment, I'd have felt freer to say something. But this was a guest. When to speak and when to keep silent?

In our present climate, with frustration, fear and even rage bubbling to the surface, feelings we never knew we had or wish we hadn't now pop up unexpectedly. The good news is that, although we are separated from one another, we do not face these perilous times alone. Jesus promised to remain with us always. He promised to send us the Holy Spirit. And although the Eucharist and Mass were out of our reach for a time, we always have the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, to comfort, guide and strengthen us.

When all else is taken from us, our faith in Jesus as the Son of God is the one steady rock upon which Christ promised to build the Church.

Which brings us to St. Peter. One day, Jesus put Simon on the spot. As recorded in Matthew 16:13-20, Jesus asked him: "Who do you say that I am?" He blurted out a response that has formed the foundation of the



A parishioner at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Alberta, Canada, receives Holy Communion in June at the first public Mass celebrated there since the COVID-19 pandemic closed churches throughout the country. (CNS/Matthew Bodnarek, Grandin Media)

Roman Catholic Church: "You are the Christ, the son of the living God."

So profound an answer merited not just a change of name, but a new identity and role. Henceforth, Simon would bear the sobriquet "Cephas," Aramaic for "Peter," which is Latin for "rock." Christ promised to build his Church precisely upon *this* rock. Jesus recognized in Simon more than someone with the correct answer. Simon displayed the correct attitude. But why "rock"?

A rock is hard; Peter was hardheaded. A rock is dense; Peter was usually clueless. A rock is difficult to move; Peter was notoriously stubborn. But

Jesus turned Simon's weaknesses into strengths and promised that the gates of hell (evil, sin and death) would not prevail against the community of faith built on this rock.

So maybe we don't always do or say the right thing. Maybe sometimes we're afraid to speak up, or defend the weak, or confront injustice. Sometimes we do not live up to our calling as followers of Christ. Like Peter, we cannot let our past mistakes paralyze us. Do we believe Christ is the Son of the living God? Perhaps the only thing God ever asks us to give up, during Lent or during lockdowns, is our ego. ✠

Missioner Tales

On Sunday, Feb. 23, 2020, there was a special ceremony for the blessing of the first child of Emmanuel and his wife Angelina at their modest tent home. Emmanuel is a member of our Church choir at our U.N. camp in Malakal, South Sudan.

During the celebration, the choir sang and we prayed in thanksgiving to God for the gift of this newborn baby boy. When I asked the parents the name of their child, they told me his name is Bedjuok, which in the Shilluk language means “living for God.” What a beautiful name to give a child! It reminded me of what life is all about: to be living for God and making a difference in the lives of those around us. The celebration concluded by asking God to bless and protect Bedjuok as we look forward to the day of his baptism in our church.

Michael Bassano, M.M.

With the COVID-19 sheltering-in-place restriction, my ministries here in João Pessoa, Brazil, have moved online. Even though I miss being physically present with people, technology has opened up new possibilities.

Through a connection at my alma mater, St. Mary’s College in South

Bend, Ind., I was invited to participate in a virtual camp based in South Bend for at-risk adolescents. The camp focuses on lifting self-esteem and building healthy social skills for 10- to 13-year-olds around the world. Every day at noon for two weeks I have been offering a 20-minute session on mindfulness and yoga. Everyone including me needs to adjust to the limits of technology. On the first day after a short, silent meditation, a young girl from Trinidad and Tobago blurted out, “I couldn’t hear the teacher!”

Kathleen Bond, MKLM

Every Maryknoller dreams of going into the Superior General’s office and being told, “You are assigned to ...” be it Japan or Tanzania or Chile, or wherever the missionary hoped to be posted.

Well, I got my assignment in the laundry room in the basement of the Maryknoll Seminary at Maryknoll, N.Y., in November 1965. I had just finished throwing my dirty laundry into the washing machine when Father Albert Nevins, the director of the Social Communications Department of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, came by. “Joe, you are being assigned to study journalism,” he said. “Make sure you send

in your application to journalism school by Christmas.” And that was that. My missionary adventure began.

Joseph G. Healey, M.M.

The streets of Arequipa, Peru, were never made for the traffic they have supported in recent years. One day when I went to do an errand, I drove through the Plaza de Armas, where you could never find a place to park. Lo and behold, I found one! I eased our Volkswagen Beetle into the space and went on my way.

About 20 minutes later, I returned only to find a policeman putting some sort of notice on the windshield of the car. “What’s that for?” I asked.

He quickly answered, “You’re in a no parking zone.”

I responded, “There’s no sign here saying I can’t park in this space!”

He answered, “I didn’t put the sign out yet.”

With that, he nonchalantly went up behind one of the archways of the plaza walk, dragged out a NO PARKING sign on a roller, and placed it next to my car. Then he walked on, most likely to catch another poor offender who didn’t see an invisible sign!

When I went to pay the fine, I told the judge what had happened and he tore up my ticket.

Helen Phillips, M.M.



Sean Sprague/Tanzania

OPENING A DIGITAL WINDOW

By Lynn F. Monahan

A Maryknoll priest helps Small Christian Communities in Kenya get online during COVID-19 pandemic crisis

When the Kenyan government ordered the country into lockdown to curtail the spread of the coronavirus earlier this year, Maryknoll Father Joseph Healey remembered a quote from the movie *The Sound of Music*: "When God closes a door, somewhere He opens a window."

Father Healey's primary ministry in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, is with Small Christian Communities, which grew out of the call from the Second Vatican Council for more lay involvement in the life of the Catholic Church. These communities usually consist of 15 to 20 members who meet once a week and focus on the Gospel reading for the next Sunday. Some SCCs are larger, depending on whether they are located in rural or urban centers.

When the government there slammed the door on all gatherings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Small Christian Community meetings were suspended, along with

Father Joseph Healey meets with Charles Ndege, a Tanzanian layman and artist. Ndege does religious paintings about SCCs and African culture. (Sean Sprague/Kenya)





Father Joseph Healey (right, standing) explains how to set up an online meeting in a Small Christian Communities training workshop in Nairobi. (Courtesy of Joseph Healey/Kenya)

Masses and other church services throughout Kenya. In addition, four major cities including Nairobi restricted travel. The 5,500 Small Christian Communities in the capital were left with a simple choice, “go digital or die,” Father Healey says.

“Now a window has opened, namely online Small Christian Communities that are also called virtual SCCs and digital SCCs,” the missionary from Baltimore, Md., says. Instead of going to a home in their neighborhood, the parish or another location, he says, members of the *jumuiya*—as SCCs are called in Kenya using the Swahili word for community—gather online, either via computer or their mobile phones.

Father Healey, who has served in Kenya since 1968, quotes Pope Francis to describe how the Catholics of the *jumuiyas* have responded to restrictions of the coronavirus crisis. “Pope Francis advises, ‘If you have a problem, turn it into a challenge and then turn that challenge into an opportunity.’” Many Catholics in

Kenya have turned the problem of closed churches on Sunday into an opportunity.

Social distancing is not only difficult from a logistical standpoint in a country of 48 million people, it is also foreign culturally as people tend to live in close families and communities, Father Healey says. In the cities many live in densely populated neighborhoods.

“Digital platforms are filling a need, but they are also revealing how important our human interactions are and make us long for their return,” he says. “We experience God in and through human persons, especially Jesus Christ. It is the human closeness that enables us to understand a ‘distant’ or transcendent God.”

Father Healey, who is the founder of the Social Communications Department of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA), has promoted SCCs for decades. He advises the virtual *jumuiyas* to meet on the

same day and time as they would for their physical meetings.

In total, he says, Kenya has more than 45,000 SCCs around the country. In addition to watching Masses on TV and on the Internet, SCC members send text messages and audio and video clips to their weekly online meetings, which are being conducted on various social platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype and Facebook.

“Certainly, a couple thousand online SCCs have started, but we don’t have solid figures,” he says.

“In our SCC meeting we try to share the same way we share (in person) but online using Zoom,” says Bernard Mberere, the information technology coordinator for AMECEA in Nairobi. “All together through these online meetings they have been able to share the Gospel of the coming Sunday, discuss the challenges they are facing because they can’t meet physically, and how they can assist each other and find a way of doing that.”

Mberere, who is also the moderator, or leader, of the Blessed Holy Rosary Small Christian Community of St. Christopher parish in the Ruiru Kembo area of Nairobi, says many parishes contain multiple SCCs, usually formed around a neighborhood.

Although many SCCs are now able to meet online, there are still challenges for those who cannot get online because they do not have a smartphone or lack access to a computer and Internet service, he says.

“We are not going to the Sunday services as we are used to,” Mberere says. “Now we have resorted to holding Mass over the radio or hold-

ing Mass over the television, but the Catholic Church is also looking for a way of responding, and helping the needs of the people.” Through the SCCs, people can bring their needs to local community leaders, who raise these to the parish level, where they may find assistance, he says.

“Online SCCs present an important opportunity for the members to attend the meetings even if they are traveling or when they have relocated,” says Dr. Alphonse Omolo, the moderator of the St. Isidore of Seville International Online Skype SCC, a pioneer in online SCCs that has been meeting Tuesday afternoons virtually since 2012. “Online SCCs are certainly a sure way to keep SCCs alive for Catholic Christians and to give one another social and spiritual support especially during unprecedented times such as living during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Father Healey, who participates in the St. Kizito Small Christian Community at St. Austin’s parish in the Waruku informal settlement, or shantytown, near the Maryknoll residence in Nairobi, noted that the lockdown stranded the SCC’s moderator, Ben Wanjala and his wife Agnes, the assistant prayer leader, in the northern city of Kitale. Unable to return to Nairobi, they still participate in the SCC from afar, he says.

Digital meetings usually start with a prayer, followed by sharing among the members about what has happened in the past week, he says. They then listen to an audio reading of the upcoming Sunday Gospel.

“In the ‘Gospel sharing’ through sending text messages from our smartphones, we try to connect



Father Healey discusses Bible reflection as central to Small Christian Communities with a group of students from Kenyatta University, Nairobi. (Courtesy of Joseph Healey/Kenya)

the Gospel to our daily life today," he says. "In the present crisis of the coronavirus we are following the example of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and Jesus is the Great Healer and has the power to heal us."

During the online prayer, the members typically mention people who are sick with the virus and their caregivers, Father Healey says.

"I think we can be proud in Maryknoll that for many, many years we have been a leader in humanitarian relief efforts and food distribution," he says, "but now the situation is totally different because of the lockdown, because of the quarantine, because of the closing of borders. I can't go outside of Nairobi, Kenya, right now. So we have to find new and creative means of getting food and soap and help to the people."

Donations from among the SCC members are pooled into a trea-

sury that helped Kenyans impacted by flooding and mudslides in January and February. Since March they have collected donations for those suffering from lack of work due to the lockdown, even as church donations have decreased because of the pandemic, he says.

"What we're giving them is flour, cooking oil, rice: basic essentials," Father Healey says. "The distribution is through the Small Christian Communities." The SCC members know their communities and who are the poorest families, he says. "So we're trying both to continue our practice of prayer—the Bible is essential to our weekly Small Christian Community meeting—and do practical action and outreach."

"The digital Church or the online Church or the virtual Church is a new way of becoming Catholic Church," the missionary says. "We have a new *kairos*. We have a new online practice. Let us seize this moment, *carpe diem*, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people." ✠

WE'RE GOING QUARTERLY

BEGINNING WITH THE NEXT ISSUE OF *MARYKNOLL*, WE WILL PUBLISH **FOUR** ISSUES A YEAR:

- WINTER (December, January, February)
- SPRING (March, April, May)
- SUMMER (June, July, August)
- FALL (September, October, November)

Look for our **WINTER** issue in late November 2020.

We regret that the financial impact of COVID-19 has forced us to reduce our printing and mailing costs, but we know you will understand that our priority must be supporting our missions around the world.

We remain committed to bringing Maryknoll stories to you, even though less frequently in print.

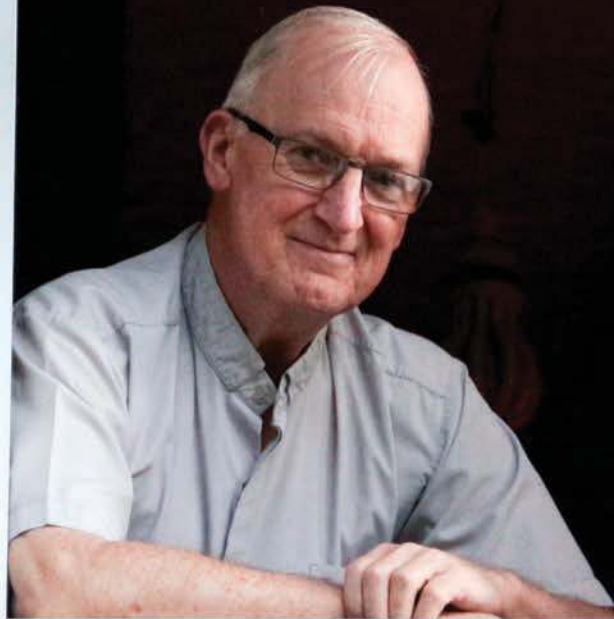
We invite you to visit us on the web at maryknollmagazine.org, where we are expanding our online coverage of Catholic news worldwide.

Thank you for your faithfulness to the Maryknoll Society and the people we serve.

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Maryknoll priest associate Daniel Chapin at the rectory of Our Lady of La Salette parish in Cochabamba, Bolivia. (Courtesy of Daniel Chapin/Bolivia)



A heart for mission

By Giovana Soria

Priest from Malone, N.Y., lives out his call to mission as a Maryknoll priest associate in Bolivia

When Ronald Alvarez began his internship in psychology last year, he dealt with cases of domestic violence, sexual abuse and suicide attempts. Feeling discouraged about how much violence and cruelty there is in the world, Alvarez turned for spiritual support to Father Daniel Chapin, who serves at Alvarez's parish, Our Lady of La Salette in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

"He encouraged me to pray because it gives us strength," says Alvarez. "Young people always need someone to talk to and it helped me to release the pain I was carrying from others and to continue my studies."

Father Chapin, 73, has been serving as a Maryknoll priest associate at Our Lady of La Salette parish for the past four years. "Father Chapin is enriching our community by sharing his missionary life that strengthens



From left to right: Father David Cardozo, pastor of Our Lady of La Salette parish; Father Daniel Chapin and Father Cruz are ready to celebrate Mass. (Nile Sprague/Bolivia)



Father Chapin shakes hands with Ronald Alvarez, a young parishioner and psychologist, who is helping other parishioners deal with COVID-19. (Nile Sprague/Bolivia)

our faith," says Father David Cardozo, the parish pastor.

Parishioner Magda Atiare describes Father Chapin as a person full of peace. "I like his calm, simplicity and how he welcomes us," she says. "He is like a person who carries a treasure in a clay pot, because he seems so frail, but he is very rich as a priest."

"I do try to listen to people in many different situations; this is important in both pastoral and spiritual ministry and in general human interaction," says Father Chapin. "Parish ministry can be hectic and people's needs are great and varied, so listening—really listening—is key in the ability to respond."

In addition to pastoral and sacramental ministries, the parish offers a school support program, providing hot lunches to about 200 students, who are attending public schools.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Bolivia and a lockdown took effect, the parish closed on March 22. Father Chapin moved in with the Maryknoll community in Cochabamba. Though still unable to return to the parish, he remains in touch with parishioners like Alvarez, 25, who has just begun his professional career.

"Using his skills as a psychologist, Alvarez has been helping people in the parish who are experiencing difficulty adapting to the pandemic," says Father Chapin. "Other youth leaders and catechists have been reaching out virtually, including confirmation candidates."

At the parish, Father Cardozo had been supporting eight soccer players from Colombia, who were in training in Cochabamba when the pandemic began and Bolivia's borders were closed. "The parish has been assisting the players, providing

meals and housing. Recently they raised funds for the purchase of airline tickets for a solidarity flight being arranged by Colombia and the Bolivian Foreign Ministry," says Father Chapin. "Maryknoll Father Juan Zuñiga and I have contributed money from our mission accounts to cover the cost of two tickets."

As for when the apex of the coronavirus will occur, Father Chapin says, "It is difficult to predict, as the virus determines the timeline." For now, he will continue to live at the Maryknoll house.

Looking back on his life, Father Chapin, from Malone, N.Y., traces the roots of his vocation to growing up with a father who was Methodist and a mother who was Roman Catholic. "She raised us four children Catholic," says Father Chapin. "That helped me understand what it means to be a missionary. I grew up

in a small rural community. It was a very ecumenical spirit."

The missionary says he was inspired to serve at an early age. When he entered fifth grade at St. Joseph's school in Malone, he says, he only knew how to print while the rest of the class had already learned cursive writing. He fondly recalls his teacher, Sister Veronica, helping him catch up. "She was this frail little nun with glasses," remembers Father Chapin. "She was so full of joy with such a generous spirit to spend the extra time with me. That sister was so sweet and kind and that struck me. I began to think that is something I would like to do, help people."

He was ordained in 1972 as a diocesan priest from Ogdensburg, N.Y. He served at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg for four years before leaving for the town of Mollendo, in Arequipa, Peru, where his diocese



From left: Parishioner Magda Atiare with her three children and Maryknoll Affiliate Jason Obergfell at Our Lady of La Salette parish in Cochabamba. (Nile Sprague/Bolivia)

had founded and staffed the parish of San Martin de Porres.

During his 10 years of pastoral ministry in Peru, Father Chapin came to know Maryknoll Society members serving in Arequipa. "We collaborated with each other. Since we were from the States, we had a certain bond," Father Chapin says. "I enjoyed serving the people in Peru as they knew my heart as a missionary. I promised them I would return to serve in Latin America some day."

Returning to the Ogdensburg Diocese, and for the next 27 years, Father Chapin served as pastor in six parishes, did chaplaincy work in correctional facilities and hospitals and reached out to Spanish-speaking migrant farm workers. In the Archdiocese of Kingston, Ontario, Canada, along with Holy Cross Sisters, he worked with refugees and asylum seekers from Mexico and Central America. He retired in 2016 with the permission of his bishop.

In 2016, Father Chapin

joined the Maryknoll Priest/Brother Associate Program, which offers religious priests and brothers and diocesan priests an opportunity to participate in overseas mission for five years. Since this program began in 1965, 120 priests and brothers have served as Maryknoll associates. Currently three priest associates are serving overseas.

In Bolivia, Father Chapin is waiting for the day the pandemic is under control so he can return to Our Lady of La Salette parish to accompany his community of faith and mentor young people like Alvarez.

In the meantime, Alvarez follows the example of his mentor. "There are no words to thank Father Chapin. He shows people the kingdom of God," Alvarez says. "I always keep him in my prayers." ✠



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2020 Maryknoll Student Essay Contest

*Pope Francis calls us to build a
"Civilization of Love"*

1st Place Prize:
\$1,000 per division

2nd Place Prize:
\$300 per division

3rd Place Prize:
\$150 per division



ASSIGNMENT: Write an essay explaining what you think the pope means by "a civilization of love." What signs have you seen during these extraordinary times of people building a civilization of love? How will you build that civilization going forward?

ENTRY: Entries should be 500–750 words. *Note: Spelling and grammar count.* Students may 1) submit essays online (preferred method) at MaryknollSociety.org/Essay (if 13 or older) OR 2) mail essays to the address below. Mailed essays should be typed or neatly handwritten in ink and stapled, each attached to an **ENTRY COVER SHEET** (available at MaryknollSociety.org/Essay).

ELIGIBILITY: Students in grades 6–8 (Division I) and grades 9–12 (Division II) are eligible. See MaryknollSociety.org/Essay for official rules.

DEADLINE: Entries must be submitted online or postmarked by **MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2020**. First-place essays will appear in the May/June 2021 *Maryknoll* magazine. All winning entries will be published online at MaryknollSociety.org/Winners by April 1, 2021.

For more educational and catechetical resources, please visit <https://discoveryourneighbor.org/>.

MAIL TO: 2020 Student Essay Contest, **Division _____**, P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302
Call 1-914-941-7636, ext. 2487, or visit MaryknollSociety.org/Essay for more information.



An informal memorial to George Floyd drapes bus stop next to the store where he had been right before his death.

HONORING GEORGE FLOYD ON 38TH & CHICAGO

Text and photos by Gregory Darr

On the site of the murder of George Floyd, a Minneapolis man renews his resolve to combat racism

Late in April 1992, as I made my way home after dark in a West Philadelphia neighborhood, I was set upon by a small group of youths carrying bats and boards. Hours earlier, a largely white jury had acquitted Los Angeles police officers of the brutal beating, captured on video, of Rodney King, an African-American man detained after a high-speed car chase. Los An-

geles exploded into riot and arson. Across the country, Philadelphia hunkered down in fear. Even the homeless men with whom I worked at Mercy Volunteer Corps were unusually subdued.

As I walked the final blocks home that evening, the group of youths caught sight of me. They laughed and jostled each other as they crossed the street to trap me.



Darr's wife Charito (l.) and daughter Louisa hold banner to divert traffic from the area where signs denounce police brutality.



I had no time to think or even experience much fear before one of them struck me over the head and shoulders with a board. As I fell to the pavement, he leaned over and explained, "Tonight, we're white and you get to be black." And, with that, it was over. He leaned back up and, together with his friends, ambled away in laughter, leaving me sprawled alone on the sidewalk.

As I lay in shock, I soon felt an arm reach down and hook itself under mine. It belonged to one of the youths. He didn't say anything. He didn't even look at me. He just lifted me up and, when I was steady, let go and walked away just as silently to rejoin his friends.

After arriving home, I leaned back in safety on the closed door and started laughing and sobbing in



In the Minneapolis suburb of Edina, three students from Edina High School are among the many who came out to protest the May 25 torturous murder of George Floyd and other victims of racism and police brutality.

the same halting breaths—laughing from relief that I returned intact and largely unhurt, and sobbing for reasons I still don't quite understand.

This memory returned to me on the corner of 38th and Chicago a few days after George Floyd, an African-American man, had been tortuously killed there by Minneapolis police officers. My family and I had come to lay flowers at an improvised but rapidly growing memorial for him and other victims of police brutality. A few blocks to the north, a commercial neighborhood lay in smoldering ruins. Later that night, the riots and fires would return.

At 38th and Chicago, however, my family and I experienced a surprising sense of peace. People of all colors and all walks of life—many of them together as families—came to

share their grief, their stories, their fears and their hopes. In a frightened and besieged city, this intersection emerged as a singular place of personal and spiritual refuge.

It wasn't long before my wife and two high-school-age daughters were enlisted by strangers to help paint banners, signage alerting arriving protesters or police of what we and many others already sensed: this was sacred space. In the meantime, organizers broke open boxes and distributed masks to those in need of COVID-19 protection. People did their best to maintain social distancing but, with that crowd size, it was nearly impossible.

As I listened to speaker after speaker relate experiences of police brutality and racism, protests and prayers intermingled to the point



Following the example of a young man she had seen earlier, a little girl prays at a mural painted to honor George Floyd and others who were victims of police violence.

where they were no longer distinct. "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever ... Having sorrow in my heart all the day?" (Psalm 13) Psalmists and prophets would be "homies" in this crowd, their inspiration, if not their words, rendered now in hip-hop cadence.

It wasn't hard for me, a white man, to recognize there's not much systemically stacked against me. Even as a Maryknoll lay missionary in East Africa, I lived and worked in a bubble of racial privilege conferred upon me at birth. I can't change

my skin color. But I can broaden my awareness and do my part, in solidarity with others, to lift unjust burdens that people of color carry on my behalf. It won't be easy, certainly for me. It's going to take patience, perseverance and, most of all, grace.

As I watched the bouquets, signs and written condolences pile higher in memory of George Floyd, I felt that grace move my heart. It was then I recalled that long-ago Philadelphia night and remembered, with gratitude, the youths who ambushed me and then helped me

to my feet again. I gave thanks for the lessons they taught me. In a moment of violence and then compassion, they mocked my privileged innocence to a point where I could see it. They lifted me out of my lethargy and indifference in matters of race. And, they helped me to understand how racism stunts the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual health of everyone touched by it, including those privileged enough to believe it's not their problem. Most of all, considering the violence and poverty these youths faced daily, I expe-

rienced an extraordinary degree of mercy from them. I walked home a few bruises wiser and my wallet still in pocket. These young men, on the other hand, walked from the scene down a far harder road. I wondered where it had taken them. Or, for someone like George Floyd, how far.

As I asked myself these questions, I watched a young man walk solemnly up to a mural painted in memory of George Floyd and other victims of police violence. He knelt, made the Sign of the Cross and prayed. He again made the Sign of the Cross as he stood up and walked away. Nearby, a little girl apparently took note of the man's prayer. She stepped from her caregivers, returned to the mural where I had seen her wandering earlier, and knelt alone in her own sacred way of stillness.

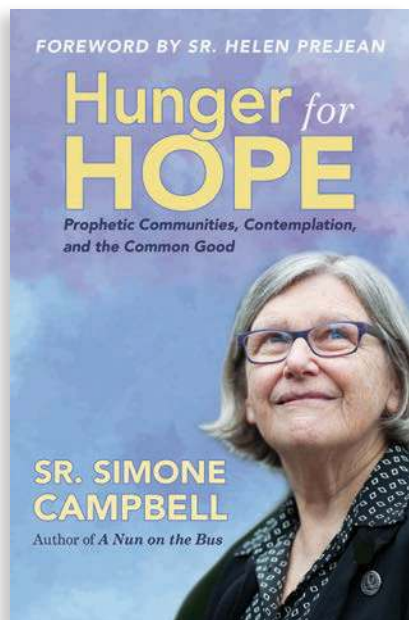
Abraham Joshua Heschel, the Jewish scholar who, in 1965, participated in the Selma march with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., observed, "Prayer is meaningless unless it is subversive, unless it seeks to overthrow and to ruin the pyramids of callousness, hatred, opportunism, falsehoods."

Prayer brings us to our knees. But, in matters of racism, justice and peace, it also hooks its arm under ours, lifts us up and sets us walking together on that hard, uncertain road ahead. I stepped anew from the corner of 38th and Chicago and, in memory of George Floyd and countless others, resolved to continue, with my brothers and sisters of color, on our way to the Promised Land. ✚

Gregory Darr is a vocation minister for the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers based in Minneapolis, Minn.

Orbis Books Spotlight

Preview by Paul McMahon



Sister Simone Campbell is known to many of us for the inspirational endeavor that she and her team at NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice undertook in 2012 through Nuns on the Bus. Traveling over 2,700 miles across nine states, she motivated people to get out and vote to prevent the U.S. House of Representatives' budget plan from cutting social services to those Americans who need them most.

While those who know Sister Simone might assume that *Hunger for Hope* is about social action and speaking out on issues that affect the fabric of our society, they would merely be scratching the surface of the treasure being offered here to readers.

This treasure is the fuel that sustains Sister Simone in her tireless efforts as a Sister of Social Service in bringing justice to those who most need it. Jim Wallis, the founder and president of Sojourners, sums it up aptly, "Sister Simone offers deep wisdom borne from such rich experience in both Christian contemplation and action for social justice—that sometimes puts nuns on the bus."

Just as her first book, *A Nun on the Bus*, inspired people into action, this book shares the deeper lessons of contemplation that drive Sister Simone's social action and are fundamental to being a contemplative in action.

Much has been written on the concept of a "contemplative in action." In

fact, the idea forms the basis of Ignatian spirituality. Jesuits spend a lifetime finding the right balance between contemplation and action, whereby one's active ministry feeds the contemplative life and one's contemplative practice informs the active life.

Sister Simone has achieved this balance. She begins by sharing her contemplative foundation, reflecting on the varied ways she listens to and senses the divine movements within. For many spiritual seekers, experiencing these sacred moments is the ultimate goal of a healthy spiritual life. For Sister Simone, however, this is simply the starting point and the catalyst to go out into the world, where she finds inspiration for and fodder for those movements, but also where her contemplative practice informs and enables her "to stay open and avoid a defensive, knee-jerk response," especially when her own ways of thinking are challenged. Her meditation reduc-

es her fear of exploring the unknown. It also teaches her to listen more attentively to the "underlying messages and feelings" that bring her a deeper understanding of those challenging human and, at the same time, insightfully divine encounters. In short, her meditation "provides an anchor of hope in a turbulent world."

Hunger for Hope shares the spiritual lessons of more than 50 years of religious life and contemplative practice that have guided Sister Simone through politically chaotic times and experiences. As Sister Helen Prejean, author and advocate for abolishing capital punishment in the United States, rightly testifies about Sister Simone Campbell: "Her soul is wide... and the real-life engagements to which those encounters lead her couldn't be shared with us at a better time." ✚

Paul McMahon is acquisitions editor for Maryknoll's Orbis Books.



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Young members of the Yanomami tribe in the Brazilian state of Roraima try on protective masks during examinations by a medical team with the Brazilian army during the COVID-19 pandemic. (CNS/Adriano Machado, Reuters)

Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Amazon, I pray for the poorest and the most defenseless in that precious region, but also for others throughout the world.

— POPE FRANCIS
Regina Caeli, May 2020





A voice

for nuclear victims

By David R. Aquije, Photos by Sean Sprague

Maryknoll sister advocates for victims of Japan's triple disaster caused by an earthquake, a tsunami and a nuclear accident

After Japan lifted its state of emergency, due to the coronavirus, on May 31, Maryknoll Sister Kathleen Reiley expressed relief that COVID-19 was settling down in the country. But, she said, "The problem with the nuclear accident and what to do with nuclear waste will be around for hundreds of years."

Maryknoll Sister Kathleen Reiley looks at cattle that have been contaminated by the nuclear accident at Fukushima.



Hundreds of vinyl bags with contaminated dirt seen around Fukushima are tragic reminders of the nuclear accident that occurred there on March 11, 2011.

Sister Reiley, who has served as a missionary in Japan since 1968, was referring to the accident at Fukushima-Daichi Nuclear plant, which occurred on March 11, 2011. The accident was triggered by a devastating tsunami that followed a powerful 9.0 earthquake that hit a large part of Japan's northern coast.

The quake and tsunami left more than 18,000 people dead or missing and hundreds of thousands of houses and businesses destroyed, according to Japan's National Police Agency. More than 160,000 people fled the region near the nuclear plant because of the meltdown and more than 40,000 are still unable to return home due to radiation contamination.

Last June, Sister Reiley took the

3.5-hour train ride from Tokyo, where she lives, to Fukushima to give this Maryknoll reporter a tour around Haramachi, a town near where the Fukushima-Daichi nuclear accident happened.

The area had the feeling of a sci-fi apocalyptic movie: A ghost town with abandoned farmlands that could not be used; streets blocked with fences and no-trespassing signs; decaying houses damaged by the earthquake that cannot be repaired because they are contaminated; Geiger counter boxes under the street signs to measure the level of radioactivity; thousands of huge black vinyl bags filled with radioactive dirt; security guards wearing masks and radioactive protective gear at checkpoints, only allow-



Sister Chiaki, a Religious of the Sacred Heart who lives near Fukushima, stands in front of a house that can't be rebuilt because of radiation from the 2011 nuclear meltdown.

ing entrance to radioactive waste cleaning crews—many of them immigrants who are temporarily hired to do a job that could harm their health.

We also visited the Nuclear Disaster Information Center, a high-tech museum built by Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO), owner and operator of the Fukushima-Daichi nuclear plant. The admission-free, two-story, 1,900 square-meter exhibition space, was opened in November 2018 to inform visitors of how the nuclear disaster began and the progress made on the safety of nuclear energy. But the museum offered a stark contrast to the ghost town that surrounds it.

Mrs. Tanaka (not her real name to protect her identity) is one of the 10

percent of residents who have come back to live in the area and is still trying to rebuild her life. March 11, 2011, is seared in her memory. She recalls putting her children into her car and fleeing toward the mountains, watching in horror in her rear-view mirror the approaching wave of destruction as the tsunami swept over her town. Although she is not a Catholic, she regularly meets with other survivors at a Catholic kindergarten and community center built to help families that have returned to the area.

Auxiliary Bishop James Kazuo Koda was sent from Tokyo to live with the people. In this town with very few Catholics, the Church and the Catholic relief agency Caritas have built a base for volunteers.

“There are many deep encounters among the people and the volunteers, whether they are Catholic or not,” says Bishop Koda through Sister Reiley, who served as an interpreter. “It’s a place to witness God’s love to all people.”

Sister Reiley has striven to show God’s love for the people by speaking out against nuclear energy in a country whose 52 nuclear plants, she believes, pose an enormous threat to human life.

After the triple disaster in 2011, Sister Reiley responded to the Japanese Catholic Church’s call for volunteers. “Initially I went several times a year to several different Japan Caritas bases wherever the need was at the time,” says Sister Reiley. “But gradually towns far away from

the reactor returned to normal, (except) Haramachi where the need is still great for the elderly, differently abled and those people in a low economic bracket. They don’t have the means to move away from the reactor area.”

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Sister Reiley has not been able to return to Haramachi, or to the children’s ward at the cancer hospital where she volunteers as a counselor, because volunteers are considered non-essential workers. But her commitment to speaking out against nuclear energy continues.

Her concern about nuclear energy began in 1979 in her native Schuylkill County, Pa. She was visiting home from her mission in Japan when there was a reactor meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear plant in nearby Dauphin County. It is considered the most serious nuclear accident in U.S. history, according to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

“We’re poisoning our earth,” Sister Reiley remembers her father saying shortly after the nuclear accident.

“In 1999, there was a nuclear accident at the Tokaimura [nuclear facility] in Ibaraki Prefecture,” Sister Reiley says. “About two years after that accident happened, I asked the families [at the cancer hospital], ‘Where are you from?’ ‘Ibaraki.’ ‘Where are you from?’ ‘Ibaraki.’”

Out of the 24 beds for children with cancer at the hospital, at the time, seven children were from Ibaraki, explains the missionary. “But nobody can document that and say absolutely, ‘that’s why [the nuclear accident] they got cancer’.”



A road near Fukushima still bears the signs of the 2011 earthquake that led to a tsunami, which triggered a meltdown at the nearby nuclear power plant, devastating thousands,

Still the missionary works tirelessly to raise awareness about the dangers in nuclear energy. Nearly 25 years after the 1986 nuclear accident in Chernobyl, in the former Soviet Union, Sister Reiley read an article, in a Japanese newspaper, about the high incidences of cancer linked to the nuclear accident. The report cited a study conducted by an international team of researchers led by the National Cancer Institute. That gave the Maryknoll sister an opportunity to question what happened at the nuclear facility in Japan. She visited the newspaper headquarters to speak to the editors.

“Won’t you please do some research about Tokaimura? About the accident that happened in Ibaraki?” she asked. The paper did not respond to her request. She was undaunted.

That somber day in June in Haramachi, as we drove back to the train station, we saw a farm with cattle and stopped for a lesson from Sister

Reiley. She explained that the government had asked the owner to kill the cattle. The cows’ milk could not be sold nor could the cows be slaughtered to sell their meat because they were contaminated. The cows, she continued, were innocent victims of problems caused by human beings.

“But this wonderful man asked the government to let the cows live a natural life and die a natural death,” says Sister Reiley.

Then she translated a sign at the cattle ranch. “We lived here with no fear of nuclear energy and now we realize that we lost something that can never be returned to us and we want people to understand that we have to say *sayonara*, goodbye, to nuclear energy.” ✠



Two security officers at one of several checkpoints in the area near Fukushima.



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At GOD's service

Text by Maria-Pia Negro Chin, Photos by Nile Sprague

A Maryknoll brother teaches that love and dignity come from God

During his years of teaching English in northern China, Maryknoll Brother Joseph Bruener has found a unique way to share God's love with his university students.

He gives them a class exercise to write an affirmation about each of their classmates. "By the end, they have 24 positive statements (about themselves)," he says, adding, "Most students are grateful to have the opportunity to say something constructive about their classmates."

Brother Bruener tries to highlight that everyone is deserving of love, "but not everyone has parents who love them, so they are going through life without that," he says.

The 62-year-old missionary from Port Edwards, Wis., says the love and support his parents gave him and his four siblings nurtured his spiritual development. "Part of why I am a brother is to share the love they gave me," he says.

Brother Bruener credits reading *Maryknoll* magazine at home and his education with the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity with igniting his love for mission. He was vice president of his high school mission club and helped

raise awareness about the sisters' mission in Taiwan.

That interest led him to a discernment retreat with Maryknoll in Guatemala in 1977 when he was a student at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, majoring in English and drama for secondary school teaching.

Maryknoll Brother Wayne Fitzpatrick, who helped organize the retreat, recalls young Bruener as having a strong prayer life, an ability to form friendships and a healthy sense of humor. "I found Joe to be someone who was not afraid to engage, ask questions, step out of his comfort zone, and meet the people," Brother Fitzpatrick recalls. "I think that might have been the teacher in him."

While staying with Father Carroll Quinn in the Guatemalan village of Huehuetenango during the retreat, Bruener attended a First Communion. He recalls the three First Communicants dressed in their white dresses looking like angels amid the chapel's dirt floors. "The Catholic Church gives people human dignity, no matter how poor their circumstances are," he realized.

Though he felt called to religious



Brother Bruener prays alongside students in Hong Kong during a Marian celebration in May 2018.



For two years, Brother Bruener supported the English departments at two Maryknoll secondary schools in Hong Kong, helping students practice this language.

life, Bruener put off his answer until after he graduated from college in 1981. He worked different jobs, including acting in Los Angeles, working at his father's lumberyard in Wisconsin and teaching at Milwaukee public schools.

In 1989, he joined the Christian Brothers of St. Jean Baptiste de La Salle. "I never felt called to be a priest, to celebrate the sacraments, but I did want to be of service to the Church in other ways," he says.

Two years later, when he discerned he was not called to be a teaching brother in a U.S. classroom, he remembered his initial love for overseas mission. He transferred to the Maryknoll Society and took his first oath as a Maryknoll brother in 1993.

He went to language school in Cochabamba, Bolivia, trained in Curico, Chile, and in Moho, Peru, and took his perpetual oath in 1998.

Then his focus switched to Asia. He studied Mandarin Chinese at the

Maryknoll Language School in Taichung, Taiwan.

Brother Bruener arrived in Jilin in northern China in 1999, and spent years teaching English at Beihua—then a teacher's college in Jilin—and at the city's electrical college. He returned to the United States to work in vocation ministry and, later, on the initial formation team, to mentor new missionaries in Chicago. After a year caring for his aging mother, he was reassigned to China in 2014, where he continued teaching English at Beihua University and at the local seminary in Jilin.

"Joe is extremely passionate about his ministry. He works very hard and takes whatever is asked of him very seriously," says Brother Fitzpatrick. "He has been so consistent with living out his life with Gospel characteristics, human values. Whether in China or Chicago, wherever he is stationed, he lives that out in a very faithful manner."

Brother Bruener recognizes that the trust people have in missionaries is a great responsibility, one that the humble brother sometimes feels inadequate for. "You want to share God's love with people and realize you have to trust the Holy Spirit," he says.

In 2018, Brother Bruener moved to Hong Kong, where he served as a youth minister and chaplain at the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers School and Maryknoll Secondary School. He also helped students practice English, one of the subjects they must excel at to get into college. "They have so much on their plate," he says of the hardworking teenagers he met. "(Faith) has to be an invitation, not just another assignment for them."

In February, while Hong Kong



Maryknoll Brother Joseph Bruener, from Port Edwards, Wis., has served the Church with Maryknoll for 27 years.

schools moved to online learning, Brother Bruener started teaching online for Beihua. The mainland university had invited him back to teach poetry and business English. He hopes to teach in person soon, but for now he and his students have learned to be patient. "China is a very mountainous country, so sometimes the (online) connections go in and out," he explains. "About 25-30 percent (of the students studying at home) are spread throughout the country. Many of them did not have a computer at home and were using their phone, so it was a challenge for them to participate in class."

But the ups and downs of his new assignment are not deterring this teacher, who wants the best for his students. He says constant prayer helps him to be "a force for good" and a positive person.

His 27 years as a Maryknoll brother have transformed him, he says. He is continuously inspired by the Maryknoll brothers, who strive to use their God-given gifts in areas like health-care, pastoral counseling, education, agriculture or spiritual direction.

Brother Bruener tells men who feel the invitation to Maryknoll brotherhood to call the vocations director. "It is a step by step process. It takes a lot of courage to make that initial contact," he says. "But they would not regret having made the call." ✠



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Walking with

Jesus TODAY

Middle school students learn how to respond as Jesus would to world needs today

By Annapatrice Johnson

Photos by Peter Saunders

After a year of participating in the Missionary Discipleship Institute with her class, a student from St. George Catholic School in Seattle said, "I have loved MDI because we don't always stay in the classroom to learn how Jesus acted and how he wants us to act, but we also go out and do work as Jesus' disciples."

The Missionary Discipleship Institute (MDI) is a seventh-grade religion curriculum born through the collaboration of the Archdiocese of Seattle Office for Catholic Schools and Missions Office and the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers. In addition to Seattle, MDI is now used in the Chicago Archdiocese. In both cities, archdiocesan leaders and Maryknoll mission educators form MDI teams that work with teachers to implement the curriculum.

Recent studies show that many young people are leaving the Church at the median age of 13, often because they believe the Church isn't responding to the problems of today's world. The Missionary Discipleship Institute counters this perception.

Students learn that Jesus reached out to people on the margins of society, where we often find missionaries authentically living Jesus' call. The MDI invites students to do the same.

Over the course of the year, the middle schoolers identify challenges that our modern world faces, learn about Catholic missionaries doing God's work locally and globally, and then plan an action to make a difference.

Learning about the work of Maryknoll missionaries around the world, students see that the Catholic



Students from Christ the King and St. John's Schools in Seattle met at 2019 Capstone Day to share what they learned about missionary discipleship.



Sandra Barton Smith, of the Seattle Archdiocese, shares what it means to be a missionary disciple beyond middle school, as teacher Mari Halley looks on.

Church is indeed responding to the greatest needs today through empowerment, justice and the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Seattle's Superintendent for Catholic Schools Kristin Dixon says, "The Missionary Discipleship Institute gets to the very heart of why our schools exist: to help our students fall in love with Jesus and all God's people, and secondly, to be faith-filled citizens to today's challenges!"

Father James Lee, a former Maryknoll priest and now pastor at St.

Michael's parish in Olympia, Wash., explains the benefit of MDI in his parish school: "As a (former) Maryknoll missionary priest in Tanzania, I know firsthand how being exposed to other cultures is transformative on so many levels. I'm grateful for the work of the Missionary Discipleship Institute in giving middle schoolers the opportunity to not only educationally expand their horizons but also become involved in hands-on ministry that can change people's lives and lay a foundation for their

future involvement in the Church."

This last year, the curriculum took an abrupt turn with the arrival of COVID-19. Drawing inspiration from the missionaries they introduce, the MDI team stepped up with flexibility and expediency. Lessons were transformed into electronic learning activities and assignments, classroom planning was done over the phone and Zoom calls, and students brought their parents into helping them complete the MDI process. Instead of the traditional "end-of-the-year project," where students integrate their year-long learning with a class-wide project, each student discerned his or her individual response within the larger classroom context:

how we can love as Jesus would love in the time of COVID-19.

"The core of this class is strikingly relevant right now," said Amy Hall, MDI teacher at Christ the King Catholic School in Seattle. "Perhaps it is more important than ever for our middle schoolers." Even as the middle schoolers trained to reach out with love to those on the margins of society, COVID-19 expanded this demographic and the students responded with flying colors.

They sewed facemasks, designed place cards for meal trays at assisted living centers, delivered groceries and flowers to the doorsteps of elderly neighbors, wrote letters to youth in detention centers and much more.

Those who had researched topics other than COVID-19 worked to make a positive impact in the areas they chose. They raised funds for international projects, made family compost bins, committed to taking shorter showers, made welcome kits for refugee families, wrote advocacy letters to elected officials and wrote prayers to pray with their families for those on the margins. Students in one class decided they still wanted to make a difference together, so they researched statistics on how many children in nearby schools were on free and reduced lunches. Then they raised funds to offer nutritional support to those schools.

Near the end of the year, MDI students traditionally gather to celebrate the work they have done and meet other local Catholic school students who are completing the program. This year that gathering had to be canceled for safety



Seventh-grade students at MDI Capstone Day 2019 exchange ideas on discerning your call from God.



Seattle middle schoolers learn about life for children around the world by participating in an interactive game at a 2019 MDI Capstone Day.

their own lives, and do activities both alone and with their families, ending with a blessing from parents or godparents and a commissioning into lifelong missionary discipleship for the rising eighth-graders.

At the end of this unique school year, one student reflected online, "I learned so much through MDI. First off, I learned more about how God's mission wasn't supposed to end when Jesus ascended. I learned about how we, as the disciples of Jesus, are to continue his mission on earth by helping all of God's people, especially those on the margins, and spreading the word of the Lord to anyone we can. Secondly, I learned about all the different ways we can serve God's people, such as the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Knowing these, I now have various ways I can help God's people. Lastly, especially in our time at home, I've learned about how God has a plan for all of us, a vocation. He wants us to use our gifts and passions to solve a need of the world."

Another student typed back, "The MDI taught me that everyone is important. Even though we are separated by race, gender, sexuality, age and country boundaries, we are all part of God's family. MDI is one of the most important things I have ever done. I wish everyone could have this same experience."✠

Annapatrice Johnson is the Western region director of Maryknoll's Church Engagement Division and young adult outreach team leader.



Annapatrice Johnson, Western region director of Maryknoll's Church Engagement Division and member of the MDI team, welcomes students to 2019 Capstone Day.

precautions. Again, the MDI team sprang into action. Rather than having a four-hour sharing in the gym at Seattle University, the MDI team recorded videos of local church leaders and recently graduated college

students who are working to make a difference in the world. The "Capstone Day" turned into a week of lessons for the students to listen to the pre-recorded talks, learn about the Christian vocation, reflect on

Riding out the pandemic



By Abby Belt

A Maryknoll lay missionary from Kansas serves with love in Haiti

Despite rapidly growing numbers of cases of COVID-19 and deaths in Haiti, where I serve as a Maryknoll lay missionary, many people still refuse to believe the virus is here. Yet those of us who know it is here, and has been for months, strive to be examples of love and caution even as we fear that the extent of the pandemic is being drastically underreported.

When the initial outbreak was confirmed in mid-March, some Haitian citizens tried to attack those who tested positive. One radio announcer declared the government was lying to the people and the virus was made up. In response, several of the sanitization stations for hand-washing that had been set up by health organizations were burned in giant piles.

Even as the number of cases rose—about 5,500 and nearly 100 deaths reported as of late June—the number of people seen wearing masks here seemed to decrease. The general attitude seemed to be “I’m over it” and a majority of people

were not taking the pandemic seriously, if they believed it at all.

Yet for the three of us serving here with the Maryknoll Lay Missioners, and the colleagues we work with, our decision to stay is about accompanying the people and doing what we can, even if that is just setting an example. When we go out on the street, we wear our masks.

In deciding to stay in Haiti as the pandemic approached and then arrived, we figured we could either ride out the coronavirus crisis here and be able to respond first when we do get to the other side of this, or we could scramble and try to get home and ride it out there, with no known guarantee of when we’d get to return to our beloved Haiti. For me, even carefully considered, the choice was not too hard.

In the community of Gros Morne, where we live, we are working to educate the public and have taken steps to enable people to protect themselves. Jillian Foster, our newest Maryknoll lay missionary in Haiti, and I have been making masks for

Lay Missioner Abby Belt sews masks for her neighbors during COVID-19 pandemic. (Courtesy of Abby Belt/Haiti)





Jillian Foster, newest Maryknoll lay missionary in Haiti, painstakingly joins in mask making shortly after her arrival coincided with the arrival of COVID-19. (Courtesy of Abby Belt/Haiti)

various community groups, thanks to the generous backing of Mercy Beyond Borders, one of my regular ministry sites when schools are in operation.

Normally, my main ministry is providing continuing education to teachers at Jesus-Mary School in Gros Morne and assisting with a scholarship and empowerment program for young women at Mercy Beyond Borders, a non-profit that works with marginalized women and girls.

With schools having been shut

down since March 20, my focus has shifted to helping in the morning at an agronomy center known as Grepen, a joint project of the Montfort missionary priests and the sisters of the Religious of Jesus and Mary, and making masks in the afternoon.

Jill came out of two months of language school and was here for a week when everything shut down. She has shown tremendous spirit and patience as we navigate life in this time, especially considering she has not gotten to explore her ministry options.

Suzanne “Sami” Scott, a 24-year veteran of the Maryknoll Lay Missioners, continues to work at the henhouse project near Grepen, which provides income for local women, a market for local corn producers, and fresh eggs for the women to resell in town or use in their shops.

Nowadays, we try to avoid the market, which is usually overcrowded. We wear masks to work every day and keep our distance from others as much as possible. Our days are rather repetitive, but I believe we’re blessed to be able to continue working outdoors during this time.

As of this writing, the current state of emergency was scheduled to end July 20 and schools were set to reopen in August. The reality is that Haitians are essentially on their own because of the lack of resources to deal with the pandemic. Many Haitian families are facing extreme hardship because of the significant decrease in remittances, that is, money sent home from Haitians living and working abroad. The decrease is due to the global economic decline combined with job losses in the United States, which has the largest number of Haitians outside of the country.

Like so many of the world’s poor and marginalized, many Haitian families rely on the informal economy and live day to day. Under the stay-at-home order, they are being asked to choose between going out and working to make money for food and risk exposure or staying inside and dying from starvation with their children.

Meanwhile, we are in place do-


ing what we can. Despite all of the uncertainty, fear and overwhelming moments of powerlessness to truly effect change, hope anchors us. It is in the voice of the local people who are rallying to educate their peers about this virus. It is in the doctors and nurses prepping to do their jobs even knowing they will likely be overwhelmed with patients. It is in people donating to help purchase the equipment for hand-washing stations, neighbors continuing to look out for one another, and little moments of kindness shared with people we pass on the street.

Haitian friends continue checking on us every day to ask if our families are still OK and if we ourselves are well. Generosity here is as endless as the dust and humidity.

So, when I make masks, I find joy and sew with love. Every stitch is a smile, just as a friendly call, a kind word, or a simple yet profound little prayer helps us all weave together our story. I hope our tapestry in this time continues to show our strength, resilience, humor, and, above all, our great capacity for love.

Alongside our Haitian neighbors, we continue to try choosing love in simple ways and weave this beautiful, complex story of us. ✨

Maryknoll Lay Missioner Abby Belt, from Wichita, Kansas, joined the Maryknoll Lay Missioners in 2018 and has served in Haiti since the beginning of 2019.



**FOR INFORMATION ON BECOMING
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Call or text Karen Bortvedt Estrada at
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www.mklm.org

It's all about relationships

By Santa Orlando

Members of Maryknoll Affiliates chapters work globally and locally to make the world a better place

Pope Francis reminds us we are all called to mission. Being a Maryknoll affiliate has given me a way to answer my call.

Maryknoll affiliates are lay people whose lives are centered around four pillars: spirituality, global vision, community and action. Simply put, members work individually and communally to effect positive change. Each chapter decides how the members will arrange their meetings and each individual decides how involved he or she will be. Chapters have been evolving for the past 25 years. I have been a member of the Albany, N.Y., chapter since its beginning in 2007.

I became a Maryknoll affiliate because it has given me the opportunity to join those who see the spark of the divine in all people. In my affiliate chapter I am accepted for who I am, my voice is heard and my opinion matters. I have attended other chapter meetings and it seems this sentiment is what keeps Maryknoll affiliates together. Members make a conscious commitment to each other, feed each other spiritually and challenge each other to continue to cross borders of all kinds.

My parish has had a longtime connection with Guatemala. A parish trip to that country in 2009 introduced me to Maryknoll Sisters Con-

nie Pospisil and Helen Werner in Le-moa. How wonderful it was to join them for prayer at 5:30 each morning. The sisters inspired me not only with their prayer life but also their constant availability to the people. They taught me what it means to be a contemplative in action. My life was changed. An unknown place in my heart was now awakened. I had found my passion. This was the start of a beautiful relationship that flourished and allowed our Albany chapter to directly support Maryknollers active in mission. My communication with the Maryknoll sisters increased. We were overjoyed when they came to visit us in Albany. How sad we were when Sister Connie died recently. We will continue to follow her example.

I have traveled to Guatemala five times and visited the Maryknoll sisters in Panama and Maryknoll lay missionaries in El Salvador. I went to Bolivia on a Maryknoll Lay Missioners Friends Across Borders immersion trip. Each trip allowed me to meet the local people and enjoy their hospitality. They were people like Isabel in El Salvador, who invited me to dinner. Her family was eating fish but she had made chicken for me. "I didn't know if you would want the fish," she said. She was delighted that I would eat whatever they were eating.



Guatemala Maryknoll Affiliates Rosa Maria de Leon (left) and Rosa Beatriz Castañeda de Larios (front) welcome visiting Albany Maryknoll Affiliates (left to right) Denise Lessard, Santa Orlando and Richard Lessard. (Courtesy of Santa Orlando/Guatemala)

Like many affiliates, I do my part in the local community. For me, teaching ESL allows me to have one-on-one interactions; others work in soup kitchens, promote eco-justice, assist refugees and work for immigration reform. The list varies from chapter to chapter.

I believe people are changed when they experience other cultures, which is why I am active in the Maryknoll Affiliate Quo Vadis program, a forum for groups returning from cross-cultural trips to reflect on

how they have been affected.

I embrace the Maryknoll charism, which is centered around relationships and calls us to treat all people with dignity, equality and respect. ✚

Santa Orlando is northeast regional coordinator of the Maryknoll Affiliates. She has three grown children and is a high school biology teacher.



**FOR INFORMATION ON BECOMING
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maryknollaffiliates.org

Upholding Human Rights During the Pandemic

By Kathleen Kollman Birch

We are seeing a growing threat to human rights norms around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. Increasingly, governments are exploiting the emergency measures imposed to slow the spread of the coronavirus as a means to control their citizens, such as imposing curfews through arbitrary detention and excessive military force.

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has named the Philippines, China, South Africa, Sri Lanka and El Salvador as having alleged human rights violations in the guise of coronavirus restrictions. “Shooting, detaining, or abusing someone for breaking a curfew because they are desperately searching for food is clearly an unacceptable and unlawful response,” Bachelet said.

Hunger is driving many people to defy health safety measures to find food. The United Nations estimates that 265 million people could face starvation by the end of the year. Workers such as food vendors and day laborers lose their means of support under lockdown. In many countries, government aid is not available.

In the Philippines, in response to protests over the lack of food and

government aid, President Rodrigo Duterte ordered military officials to shoot “troublemakers.” In El Salvador, those accused of violating the stay-at-home order are arbitrarily detained in quarantine centers that are reportedly unsanitary and crowded.

Under international human rights law, governments can restrict some rights to protect public health in an emergency, but the U.N. explains that restrictions need to be “necessary, proportionate and non-discriminatory.”

“We have seen many states adopt justifiable, reasonable and time-limited measures,” said Bachelet “But there have also been deeply worrying cases where governments appear to be using COVID-19 as a cover for human rights violations, further restricting fundamental freedoms and civic space, and undermining the rule of law.”

The United States has come under the spotlight as well due to the growing social movement against systemic racism that has focused on police brutality. At the U.N. Human Rights Council meeting in June, a coalition of African nations raised the alarm about police brutality against people of African descent in the United States. Shortly after, a coalition of experts at the Council released a



Gang members are secured by police at Izalco prison in El Salvador, where the nation's president authorized “lethal force” to stop violence during COVID-19. (CNS photo)

statement that countries should “take this opportunity to address structural forms of racial and ethnic injustice in their own nations, and within the international system itself.”

Although the dynamics that give rise to instances of police brutality vary across countries, people are making connections. Boniface Mwangi, an activist in Kenya, told ABC news that “struggles against police brutality are [essentially] the same ev-

erywhere.” In Kenya, as of early June, police violence had killed 15 people during curfew enforcement.

“The voices calling for an end to the killings of unarmed African Americans need to be heard,” said Bachelet. “The voices calling for an end to police violence need to be heard.” ✂

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

FAITH IN ACTION:

- Ask Congress to support the bipartisan Protecting Human Rights During Pandemic Act: <https://bit.ly/HRpandemicAA>
- Read a roundup of U.N. work on COVID-19 and its Human Rights dimensions <https://bit.ly/COVIDOHCHR>
- Ask Congress to provide life-saving foreign assistance for COVID-19: <https://bit.ly/CongressFACovid>

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, 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

Sharing God's love in India

By Thomas Chitta

My wife Geetha and I met while working in Catholic parish ministries in villages in south India. She is a medical doctor and I have degrees in theology and counseling. We come from rural areas, where many are neglected. This need led us to start the Foundation for Children in Need in the United States.

We came here in 2000. We both had green cards and knew we could work and have comfortable lives, but we felt called to something different. We had this dream to start a foundation to help the needy in India. With our incomes, we could help 20–30 children, but a foundation could impact even more people.

With the encouragement and support of our friends in the United States, we established the Foundation for Children in Need at our parish, St. James in Arlington Heights, Ill., in 2002. Since then, FCN has been providing hope and assistance to people in rural villages of India.

With the help of a network of donors and sponsors in our parish, the Archdiocese of Chicago and across the United States, our nonprofit organization brings village children food, education and medical care. We also assist the elderly and bring medical care to those who lack access to

hospitals. One of our efforts involves helping more than 1,000 children born with cleft lip and cleft palate with free surgeries, with the help of a medical team from the United States and local surgeons. FCN also provides travel and food expenses for the families.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we've distributed food to 4,000 families of migrant workers without jobs in the country's lockdown, 20,000 masks and 4,000 sanitizer bottles.

Over the years, my wife has assisted thousands through our free medical services and health education. "When I help a needy person with medical care or health education, my heart is filled with tremendous joy and satisfaction," says Dr. Geetha.

FCN believes that education is the key to transforming the lives of children. Currently, we are helping 2,000 children and college students at 26 locations in India. With the help of our sponsors in the United States, these students receive clothing and tuition fees and the opportunity to have a better life. We have about 1,600 sponsors, including 80 from our home parish. Many U.S. sponsors have visited India to meet the children they sponsor.

I have seen children struggling to continue their education. It is a priv-



Dr. Geetha teaching health and hygiene to teens before COVID-19. (Courtesy Thomas Chitta)

ilege to assist them. Many have been able to pursue a college education.

We have gone to parishes around the United States, where we share about FCN and invite those interested in sponsoring a child to sign up. The people are most generous and, of course, our parish has been supporting our work from the inception.

We also have nearly 30 volunteers from our parish who help us. Besides Geetha and myself, there is only one part-time employee at FCN. We work 90 hours and seven days a week, so volunteers mean the world to us.

Our work is pure service, which goes beyond religion, caste, creed and politics. We are looking to help the poorest of the poor. We see Jesus in the poor.

Our mission work does not involve direct evangelization, but people see our faith, and our love for them in-

spires them. As we told the Chicago mission office's Megan Mio during her radio program, "Mission Matters": "We bear witness to the love of Christ when we care for them."

We also have established schools, boarding homes for boys and girls, an elderly home, a community center and, recently, FCN Home, where we are caring for 15 elderly and physically challenged people. Ten young girls are taking tailoring training there. More needy people are arriving every week. "This home helps seniors, physically challenged and orphaned children. The idea is to have all three generations helping each other," says Geetha. "We want to train the next generation."

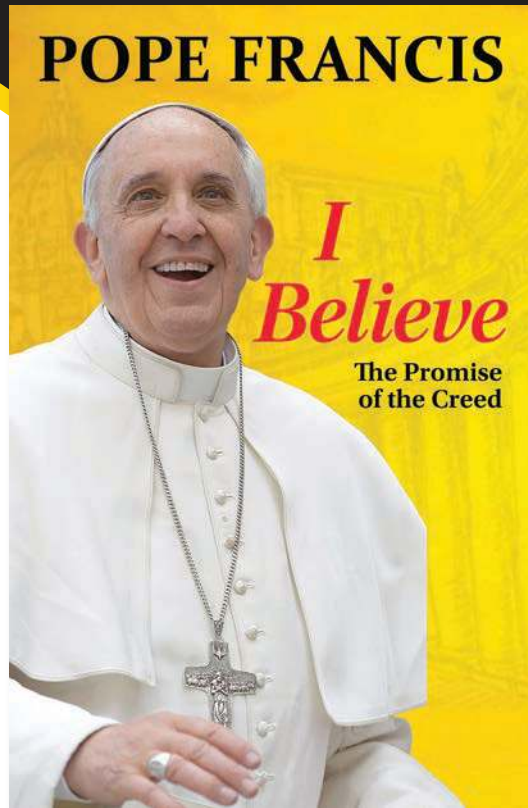
We tell everybody that this is not our work; this is God's work and we are just the instruments. And we have done far more than we imagined. ✠

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Once you sign up to receive *Maryknoll* magazine online, you'll receive a confirmation email with instructions on how to download your copy of *I Believe* and a special offer from Orbis Books!

Readers' Responses

FURTHER PROOF

In the May/June 2020 issue, Father Joseph Veneroso's acknowledgement of women's contributions to Catholic history was greatly welcomed. What further proof do we need that women should be ordained priests?

*Cecile D. Crosmun
Leominster, Massachusetts*

CUTE CONFIDENCE

The young girl on the cover of the May/June 2020 issue is so cute and also has such a smile of confidence about her. I keep this issue on my reading table and I smile back at her every time I look at her. My husband, John, and I have appreciated and supported the *Maryknoll* fathers, sisters and lay missionaries for many years. Blessings to y'all (as we say in Texas).

*Carol Aceti
Kerrville, Texas*

MORE ON FORD

Thanks for your magazine. I would kindly ask for more articles on Bishop Francis X. Ford, a martyr of the faith in China as the communists continued their systematic extermination of the Catholic faith in China. I understand that this was not a topic spoken about very much so as not to infuriate the Chinese Communist Party. I believe his martyr's death is a story that the Western World needs to hear about, the facts of the communists' war with Catholicism. I hope to hear

more from the Bishop Francis Xavier Ford Guild on Bishop Ford's cause for canonization.

*Sidney Howard
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*

GRANDPARENTS' LEGACY

Growing up raised by my grandparents, who were from Ireland, I looked forward to *Maryknoll* magazine every month, starting when I was 5 years old and throughout high school. The pages enlightened me to such different cultures, different locales and the faraway lands. They really existed out there. What a wide world with such diversity it showed, and what sacrifices of the missionary priests and nuns. The poverty of the world came to my knowledge, along with the smiles of those who were financially poor but so very rich and steadfast in spirit. I'm 68 now. When I thought of my grandfather the other day, I recalled him reading *Maryknoll* each month and sharing those lovely pictures with me. I'm so very happy the magazine and the special, selfless work and love of the *Maryknoll* missionaries still lives on.

*Margaret Falconer
From the website*

FAITH AND PASSION

Brenda Noriega is a standing example out of many and I really appreciate *Maryknoll* magazine (May/June 2020 web-only article) for featuring this touching and mind-chang-

ing young person so that the world could see God at work. There are so many possibilities for us to reach out to people at local levels and overseas and I sincerely pray that Noriega's passion for others and her faith will inspire more people to go forth and share the Gospel to the world's forgotten poor.

Despite her earlier life anxieties, she has already been chosen by the Lord in order to be a living faithful example to many generations today. God works in mysterious and radiant ways and the Church should step up to encourage more initiatives from the younger generation. Noriega had the chance to pose with Pope Francis, which is a lifetime blessing that moved her into action. There are thousands of Christians out there who only have the chance to pose with the Holy Spirit and now they need prayer support from the Church in order to move into action. The Gospel has to be shared.

*Patrice Assiongbon Sowanou
Garden Valley, Texas*

FOND MEMORIES

The pandemic has kept us all inside, but has also afforded us extra time to be together. With the nice weather, I have been enjoying the backyard that my daughter has been busily taking care of for me. My other daughter brought the recent copy of *Maryknoll* magazine out to the garden

and asked if she could read it to me, as my eyes aren't too good.

Imagine our happy surprise as we read about Father Joseph Cappel, the "Saint on a Bicycle" in the May/June 2020 issue. We thoroughly enjoyed the article and spent quite some time reminiscing about Maryknoll. My brother, Maryknoll Father John Gallahue (1933-2004), was ordained on June 9, 1962, and in August of that year, sailed on the SS Catalina bound for Chile. Curepto was his very first assignment, at Our Lady of the Rosary. Over the years we heard wonderful stories about Father Cappel and Father Ernest Lukaschek. Father John went on to other parishes in Chile, in Chol Chol, Antofagasta and Santiago during his 42 years of service.

I then sent my daughter to the bookcase in the basement where I have an album with all of the pictures I saved over years. We spent some time talking about how much Father John loved the people of Chile, the special day we spent at Maryknoll celebrating his 25 anniversary of ordination, how proud our mom and all the family were of him, and his 40th anniversary celebrated in Chile.

Thanks to Father Hanlon for such a special article about such a special man, which led to a wonderful afternoon in the sunshine remembering my very special brother.

*Patricia E. Cozzi
Oceanside, New York*

The editors invite *Maryknoll* readers to send us their views. Write to:
Readers' Responses
P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545-0302
Our e-mail address is: mklmag@maryknoll.org



Sean Sprague/Kenya

New Way to Share
GOOD NEWS

When the COVID-19 pandemic prevented Small Christian Communities in Kenya from meeting physically, Maryknoll Father Joseph Healey found a new way to help them connect: the Internet! The groups now meet online to pray and support one another while social distancing.

Your gift and prayers will help Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers continue to share God's love with vulnerable people throughout the world.

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

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Charito Darr (l.), wife of Maryknoll vocation minister Gregory Darr, and daughters Rita and Louisa hold banner diverting traffic from the site where George Floyd was killed and protesters called for an end to racism and police brutality. Read Gregory Darr's reflection, page 24.

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