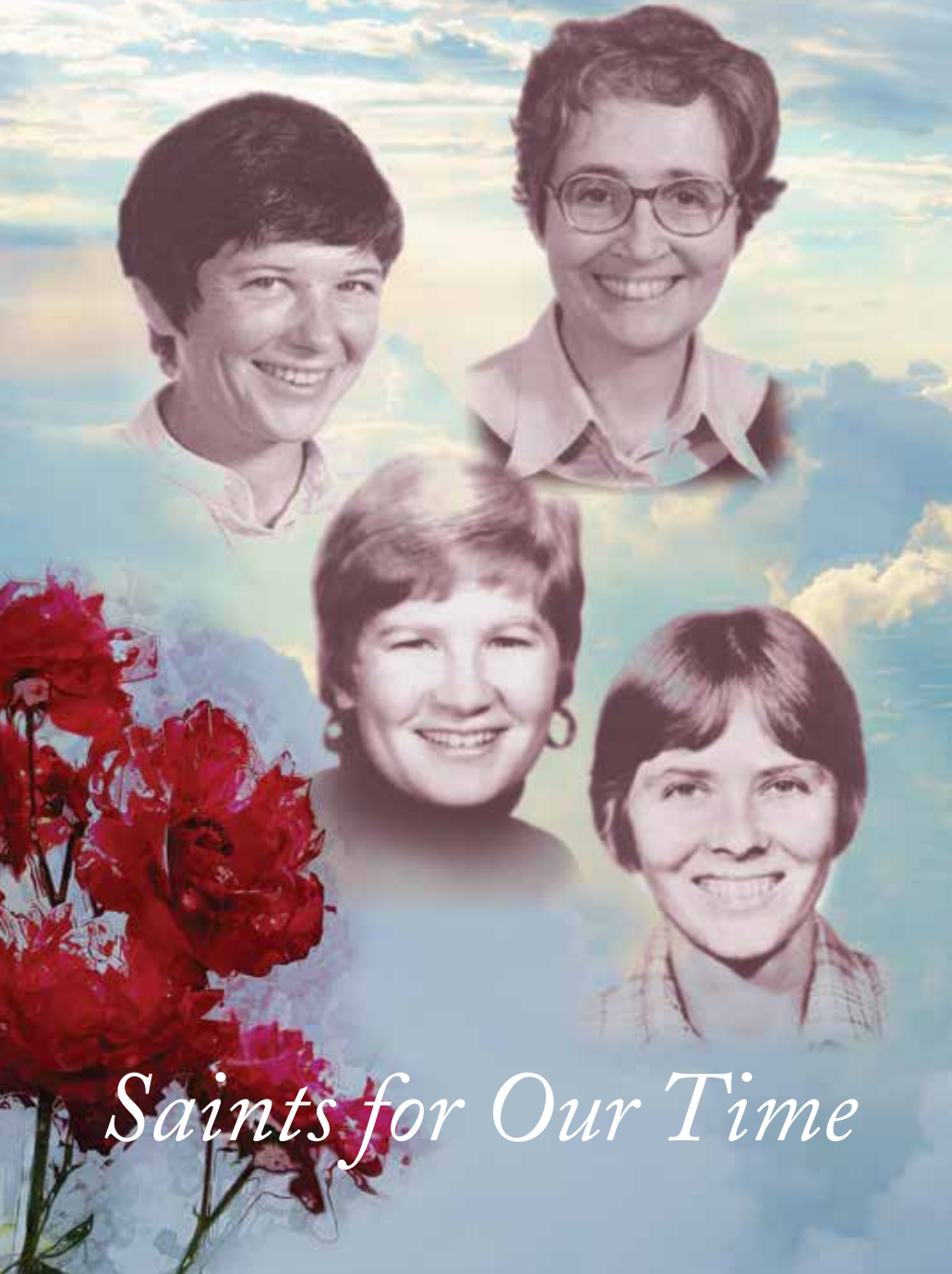


MARYKNOLL®

U.S. Catholic Church in mission overseas

Winter 2021

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Saints for Our Time

FROM THE EDITOR

In the centerspread of this issue of *Maryknoll* we quote Pope Francis' latest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*, which was released shortly before we wrapped up this edition and sent it to the printer. The encyclical is an important document that focuses on the central theme of this pontiff's papacy: We are all brothers and sisters of the human family living on our common home, our beleaguered planet Earth.

The joint leadership of the Maryknoll family, which includes priests, brothers, sisters and lay people, issued a statement of resounding support and agreement with the pope's message, calling it a historic document on peace and dialogue that offers a vision for global healing from deep social and economic divisions in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. "We embrace the pope's call," the statement says, "for all people of good will to commit to the sense of belonging to a single human family and the dream of working together for justice and peace—a call that includes embracing diversity, encounter, and dialogue, and rejecting war, nuclear weapons, and the death penalty."

This magazine issue is already filled with articles that clearly reflect the very interconnected commonality that Pope Francis preaches, but please allow me to direct you to our maryknollmagazine.org website for articles on the encyclical, with links to the Maryknoll statement. If you want to read the full encyclical, I recommend you go to www.orbisbooks.com to look for the planned Orbis edition in book form of *Fratelli Tutti*.

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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Four women martyrs are, from top left, Ita Ford and Maura Clarke, and Jean Donovan and Dorothy Kazel.

COVER CREDITS:

Front: Designed by D. Mastrogiulio
Back: Octavio Duran/U.S.



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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.

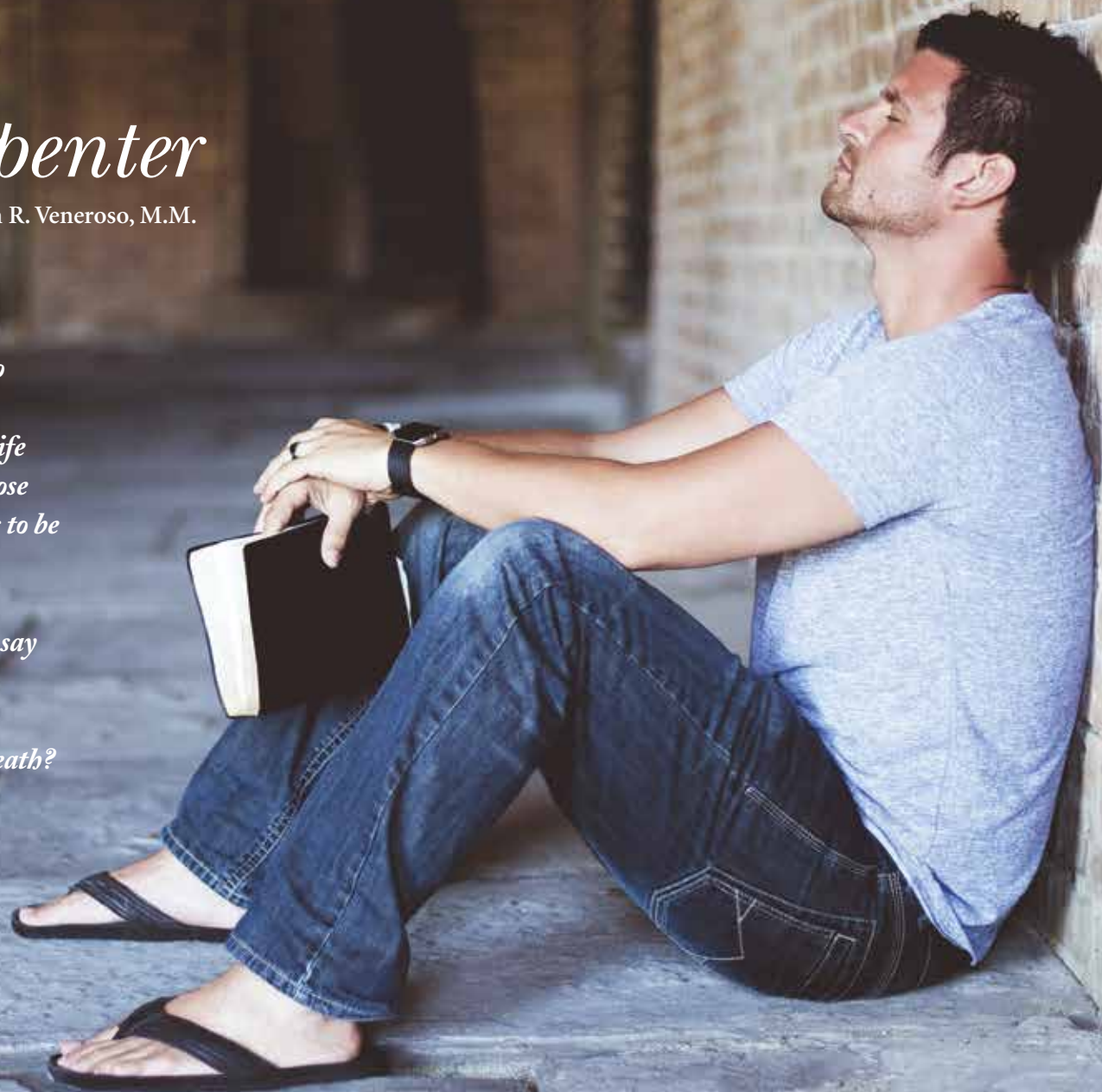
Photo meditation on St. Joseph

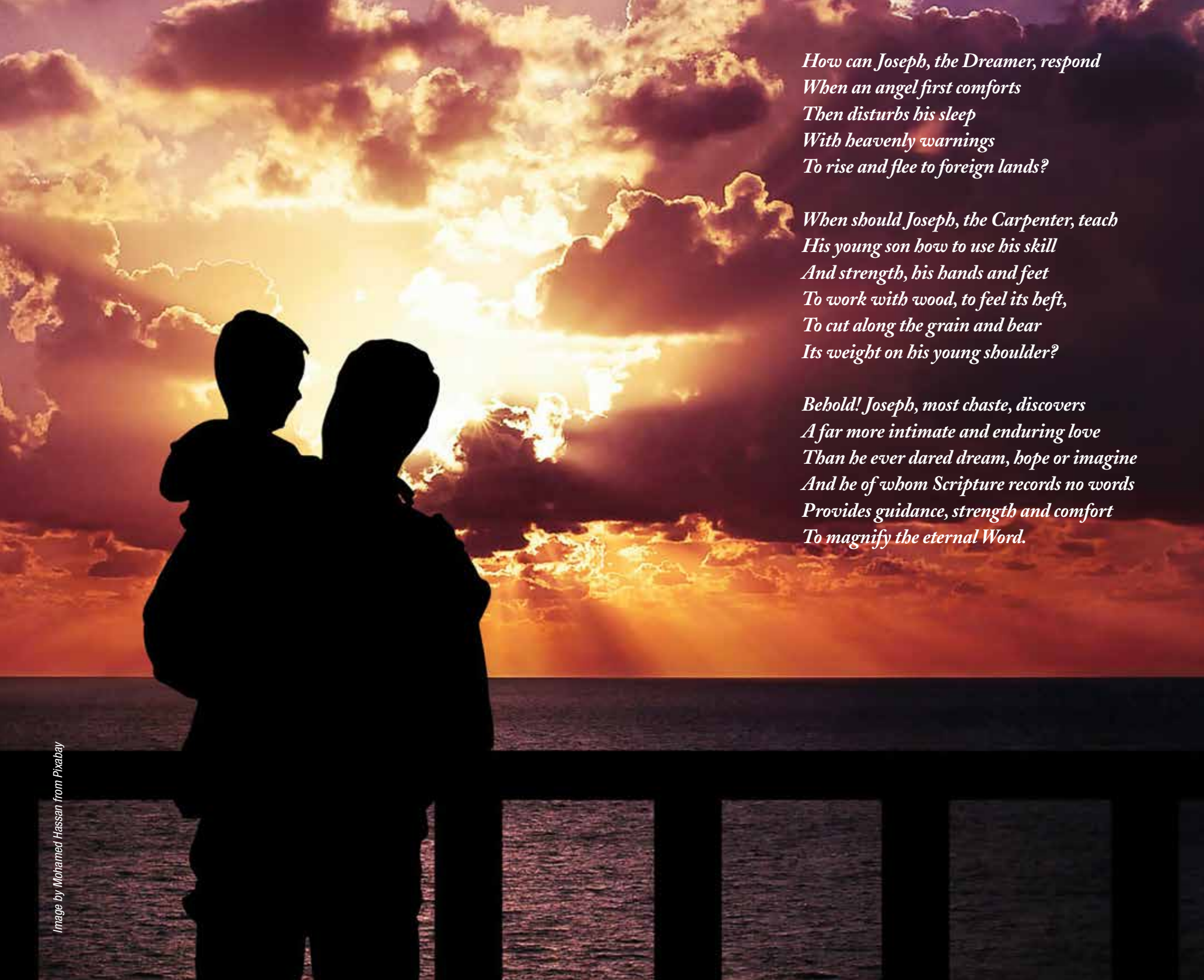
Joseph, the Carpenter

By Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

*What can Joseph, the Just, do
When the very same Law
To which he'd dedicated his life
Demands he betray and expose
The young woman who was to be
His beloved wife?*

*What can Joseph, the Silent, say
When his critics complain
Her shame and infidelity
Deserve nothing less than death?*





*How can Joseph, the Dreamer, respond
When an angel first comforts
Then disturbs his sleep
With heavenly warnings
To rise and flee to foreign lands?*

*When should Joseph, the Carpenter, teach
His young son how to use his skill
And strength, his hands and feet
To work with wood, to feel its heft,
To cut along the grain and bear
Its weight on his young shoulder?*

*Behold! Joseph, most chaste, discovers
A far more intimate and enduring love
Than he ever dared dream, hope or imagine
And he of whom Scripture records no words
Provides guidance, strength and comfort
To magnify the eternal Word.*

Missioner Tales

I first met Jose when he participated in my first “Theater of the Oppressed” group in a parish on the periphery of João Pessoa, Brazil. Jose (not his real name) was probably 20 years old and very active in the parish. He had to stop coming to our group when the young woman he was dating became pregnant. Now his priority was to maintain his new family. I lost contact with Jose after my family and I transferred to São Paulo in 2010.

Last year, we were assigned back to João Pessoa and I decided to visit Jose. I found out that after I saw him last, he had separated from his wife, left the Church and moved in with some friends. One day he was so drunk that he suffered an accident. At the hospital, he reflected on the direction of his life. He moved to his parents’ home, stopped drinking and got a job.

Jose is now married to another woman and has two kids, but he did not lose contact with his child from the first marriage. Jose is studying to be an accountant and is back into theater. He organizes the Holy Week Passion Drama at the parish. His journey reminded me of the prodigal son. I am happy he found his way back.

Flavio Rocha, MKLM

From 1997 to 2003, I worked on the polio eradication campaign in Toposaland in what is now South Sudan. We trained local health care workers to take polio vaccines up to the Kauto plateau, above our mission at Good Shepherd parish in Nanyangacor.

One day, I sent off two strapping young men—a Maryknoll lay missionary and a priest from the St. Patrick’s Missionary Society—with 1,000 polio vaccine doses boxed in coolers.

They were to place three drops of the vaccine in every child’s mouth and make a check on a tally sheet. Of course, there is always wastage when the dropper misses its mark or the kid spits it out, and the drops have to be repeated. We aimed for 80 percent distribution, expecting 20 percent wastage according to World Health Organization (WHO) protocols. The young men came back a couple of days later with their tally sheets carefully marked to record the distribution of 1,100 doses!

I was never sure exactly what happened in the far reaches of Toposaland, but somehow, those two young men did what needed to be done. On Aug. 26, 2020, the WHO declared polio eradicated from the continent of Africa.

Susan Nagele, MKLM

What is soil? About two years ago, I began asking this question to people from all walks of life, but almost nobody could answer. Some would compare soil to dirt, but this had a negative connotation that farmers were somehow dirty and ignorant. Finally, I asked the Karen indigenous people I work with at the Research and Training Center for Religio-Cultural Community in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

They said things like “It is our mother” or “The soil gives us life.” In fact, every description they gave about soil was relational. They understood our connection with the earth.

Lawrence Radice, M.M.

During the rainy season from May to October in Malakal, South Sudan, the roads are wet with sticky mud (or “cotton mud,” as the local people call it).

One day as I was visiting people in the U.N. camp for the Protection of Civilians, my feet got stuck in the mud. As I tried to move forward with my boots on, one leg became stuck and the boot came off. I tried to balance myself on one leg while attempting to get the other leg back into the boot.

Finally, three young people came to my rescue. Two held my arms as the other put the boot back on my leg. At that moment, I realized how much we need one another in journeying through the difficult, muddy roads of life.

Michael Bassano, M.M.



CNS/Mohamed Nureidin, Reuters/Sudan

Despite restrictions of COVID-19,
A NEW PRIEST IS ORDAINED
at Maryknoll

*Gregory McPhee, a newly ordained Maryknoll priest,
is assigned to serve in mission in Bolivia*

By David R. Aquije, Photos by Octavio Duran, OFM

The coronavirus pandemic could postpone but not stop the vocational call to the priesthood for the newest member of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Father Gregory McPhee, who was ordained Saturday, August 22.

Father McPhee's ordination, originally scheduled for June 6, was postponed because of restrictions due to COVID-19. It was celebrated in August with social distancing precautions, with New York Auxiliary Bishop Edmund J. Whalen administering the sacrament of holy orders at Maryknoll's Our Lady Queen of Apostles Chapel in Ossining, N.Y.

It was a different ordination, the first ordination at Maryknoll that had to take social distance precautions because of the pandemic. Family, friends and other guests were not able to be physically present; there was no choir; only Maryknoll priests and brothers, wearing masks, were seated in the pews, respecting social distance requirements. There were no hugs or handshakes during the sign of peace, only bows; and the Maryknoll staple of an ordination concelebrated by some 50 priests was reduced to the minimum.

Yet, as Maryknoll Superior General Father Raymond Finch explained, the ordination of Greg McPhee was different in many ways except for the joy and grati-





McPhee is prostrate during his ordination Mass, as other Maryknoll Society members respond to the Litany of the Saints, while maintaining social distancing.



Bishop Edmund J. Whalen anoints Gregory McPhee's hands with oil, preparing the young man for his ministry to bless and consecrate as a Maryknoll missionary priest.

tude of having Greg “as a gift to Maryknoll and mission.”

“It has definitely been a difficult year for all of us, but one bright spot is Greg’s ordination,” said Father Finch. “Though we maintained the protocols of social distancing, the joy of this celebration for Greg and the Maryknoll Society was palpable. God bless Greg and help him to continue to live his vocation to mission priesthood in Maryknoll despite all the challenges and difficulties. The pandemic has impacted everything that we do. But God is still at the heart of our reality, calling us all to the fullness of life. That is what mission and the Church are about.”

Fathers Finch and Russell Feldmeier, seminary rector, concelebrated the ordination liturgy and Father Michael Walsh served as master of ceremonies.

“It’s a different world ... we don’t know what’s coming tomorrow,” said Bishop Whalen, who, on behalf of Archbishop of New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan, thanked Maryknoll for the gift the Society is for the archdiocese.

“All of you (Maryknoll missionaries) have gone into situations where you didn’t know what was ahead of you, but you made it work,” Bishop Whalen said. “And right now, we have no idea what’s ahead of us in

the Church here in New York, in the Church around the world ...

“And as I was driving here today, I said, ‘You know, these guys have lived like that every day since (Fathers Walsh and Price) came up with this idea,’ so thank you. Because you got it right, we’ll get it right, as long as we remember it’s God who’s the one who’s got it right.”

Congratulating Greg McPhee as a newly ordained Maryknoll priest, Bishop Whalen said to him: “All that it is in your life brought you to this moment ... there was something early on in your life that made you think: I want to make a difference.”

Bishop Whalen challenged Father

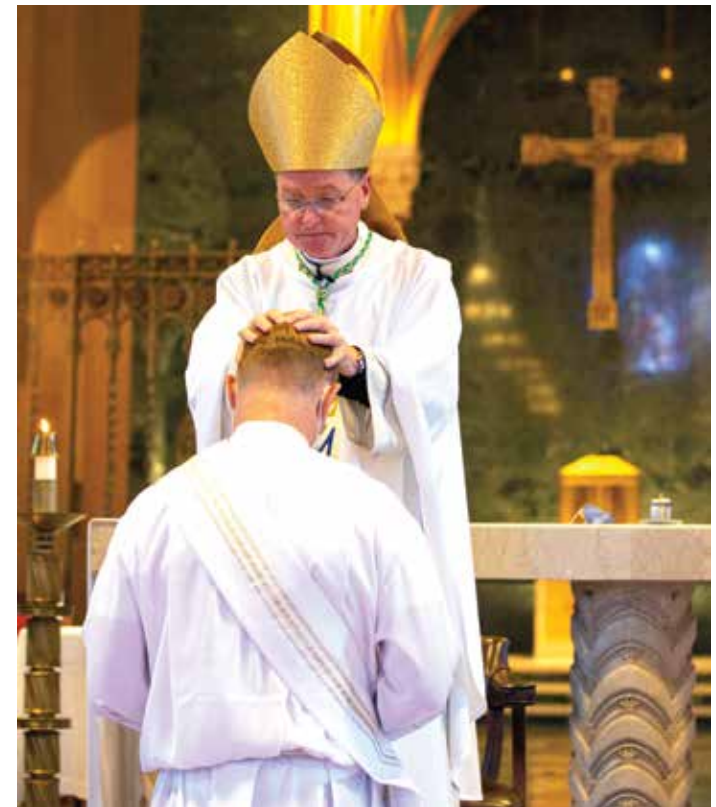
McPhee “to be the salt and light, one who goes out there and gives the flavor of God’s presence in the world.”

Understanding the significance of an ordination that, in a way, was closed to the public, Bishop Whalen looked into the camera that was live-streaming the event through social media and said:

“Those of you who are at home, family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, those of you who make it possible for Maryknoll to continue, those who are supporters by your prayers and your assistance, thank you for being with us, thank you for the opportunity to share, in a different way,



From left to right: Maryknoll Superior General Raymond Finch, newly ordained Maryknoll Father Gregory McPhee, Bishop Edmund J. Whalen and Maryknoll Father Russell Feldmeier, after McPhee's ordination, Aug. 22, 2020, at Maryknoll, N.Y.



New York Auxiliary Bishop Edmund J. Whalen lays hands on Gregory McPhee, conferring the gift of the Holy Spirit on the deacon who is about to be ordained a Maryknoll missionary priest, assigned to serve in Bolivia.

what Maryknoll is about: Go out and teach all nations.

"Everybody out there, all over the world, that is seen in this chapel representing the flags of all the nations where Maryknoll serves, we are together, together not because of the Internet, but together because of the Gospel, together because of the faith, together because of the sacraments that Greg as a priest will bring to people all over the world."

The ordination's live stream drew more than 2,200 views around the world.

Greg's mother, Carol McPhee, who watched her son's ordination

from home in North Carolina, said that the family was deeply disappointed that they could not attend his ordination in person, but glad they could see it online.

"The family is very happy and so proud of Greg. He has found his calling," she said. "When I was a child, I remember my mother (Greg's grandmother) donating to Maryknoll, even though she had very little extra money. She would be so thrilled and amazed that Greg has joined Maryknoll."

Greg's brother, Brian McPhee, watched the ordination at his home in California. "It is a privilege and a

blessing to have a priest in the family," he said.

"This ordination is a reminder that the pandemic cannot control the vocation seed in a person," said Maryknoll's vocation director, Father Rodrigo Ulloa. "Greg McPhee represents a lot to us, especially in these times. Although his family is not here today, each person present in the chapel is a relative of Greg."

After the ordination, Greg McPhee, who was previously a criminal defense lawyer in Syracuse, N.Y., said: "I feel good, reborn, a little bit nervous, but uplifted. I ask for your prayers, as I pray for your health,

families and faith to deepen in Christ. Blessings on your communities to persevere through these challenging times to a hope-filled future."

Later in the day, Father McPhee received his missionary crucifix at the Maryknoll Sending Ceremony that presents candidates to the world as Maryknoll missionaries. He celebrated his first Mass at Maryknoll's Our Lady Queen of Apostles Chapel on Sunday, August 23.

Father McPhee has been assigned to serve in Bolivia. However, it is not clear when he will travel to Latin America, due to travel restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. ✠

Spirit of Mission

Christ, the fullness of time

By Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

One of the first things missionaries experience when we go overseas is that people have a different understanding of time than we do. Back in the day before modernization, “Korean time” meant anything from 15 minutes to an hour after an appointment. In Latin America *mañana* can mean tomorrow or never. On the other hand, Germans are frustrated when Americans arrive even five minutes late.

Once, in 1986, I was traveling in Egypt with a Maryknoll photographer. We hopped a cab in Cairo for an appointment in suburban Heliop-

But, as we inched along, I began to worry. What does “a little while” mean to a people who literally invented the concept of eternity?

The mystery and miracle of Christmas is God didn’t just take on our human nature but entered fully into time, transforming our *chronos* (routine, chronological time) into God’s *kairos* (the fullness of time). The eternal became finite, the almighty became small and vulnerable. The Creator of the universe deigned to be born in a small galaxy, in a minuscule solar system, on an insignificant planet, in a remote corner of the empire, to an oppressed people, in a little village.

Centuries before, the prophet Micah foretold Bethlehem was by no means the least among the tribes of Judah, for from it would come one to shepherd Israel—the promised

and long-awaited Messiah!

St. Paul writes to both Galatians and Ephesians that Christ came “in the fullness of time.” The prophecies, the expectations, the people were all



This 17th century painting by Dutch artist Gerard van Honthorst depicts the adoration of the Christ Child, who came “in the fullness of time.” (CNS photo/Uffizi Gallery/Florence/Italy)

The Messiah finally came, not when the world was ready, not when it was holy or perfect, but rather when the time was right.

olis. Stuck in a perpetual traffic jam where camels and donkeys vie with cars, buses and trucks, we asked the driver, “How long will this take?”

“Just a little while,” he replied.

in place, whether they realized it or not. In other words, the Messiah finally came, not when the world was ready, not when it was holy or perfect, but rather when the time was right. Jesus announced the *chronos* of the kingdom had come: at the right time, in the right place, through the right events, in the right person.

So wonderful and amazing were the birth, life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus that Western civilization divides history between B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini — Year of the Lord), consecrating humanity, history and time in the process.

When early Christians wanted to

celebrate the birth of Christ, since the exact date is not mentioned in the Gospels, the Church chose what was then the darkest day of the year (the winter solstice in the Northern Hemisphere) to emphasize that Christ, our true Light, came when humankind needed him most.

Catholicism encourages us to ask what God is calling us to do with this precious, irreplaceable gift of time. St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:2, “Behold, now is an acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Christ continues to transform our *chronos* into *kairos*. Christ calls us each year to begin anew. Our faith responds: “It’s about time.” ✠

DISPLACED BY WAR IN SOUTH SUDAN

By Michael Bassano, M.M.



Before COVID-19, Father Bassano visits U.N. camp outside Malakal. (Courtesy of Michael Bassano/South Sudan)

Maryknoll priest describes life for internally displaced persons in a U.N. camp in Africa

People ask me, “What is it like to be an internally displaced person?”

I answer from my experience as the chaplain in a U.N. camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in South Sudan. Our camp, about six kilometers (3.7 miles) outside the northeast town of Malakal, is one of the most congested camps in the country. Approximately 30,000 people are cramped next to each other in plastic tarps or tin-sheet houses. Each family receives a two-month supply of sorghum, cooking oil, soap and cereal mix for the children, which is provided by the World Food Programme and is just enough for them to live on.

These people have been here since they were forced to flee their homes during the country’s civil war that began in 2013, when President Salva Kiir, of the Dinka ethnic group, accused Vice President Riek Machar, of the Nuer ethnic group, of attempting a coup d’état.

The conflict ignited old feuds between the country’s multiple ethnic groups. It escalated into a war that claimed some 400,000 lives and displaced millions of others, within and beyond South Sudan’s borders.

When I first arrived in this camp in November 2014, we had no place to worship and had to ask the United Nations for help. We were given the use of a small tent for Sunday

worship. We then moved to a structure of plastic sheeting and wooden poles and eventually to a bigger church made of zinc tin sheeting.

Our Catholic community was composed of three ethnic groups: Dinka and Nuer as well as the Shilluk. Our goal as the people of God with all three groups represented was to show to all in the camp that we could live peacefully together as one family of God.

Achieving that goal has been a struggle. People still remember the fateful days in February 2016 when government soldiers broke through the fence in our camp and armed the Dinka people living here. Together the military and the Dinka began shooting at the Shilluk and Nuer people. They burned all of the Nuer homes and one-third of Shilluk homes. The Dinka were then escorted to Malakal to occupy the homes of the Shilluk. Such painful memories will take a long time to heal.

With God's help, we in the camp have become a vibrant community of faith. My primary role has been not only presiding at the Eucharist on Sundays but animating and encouraging all the activities of a typical parish, such as: Legion of Mary, youth group, adult and children's choirs, religious education classes for those preparing for the sacraments, and Bible study.

Many U.N. organizations and community leaders in the camp have asked to use our church for workshops on human rights and peacebuilding. Our church has come to be recognized as a place of welcome for all.

When COVID-19 closed all houses



Outside their houses, mothers and children in U.N. camp for displaced persons greet their chaplain, Maryknoll Father Michael Bassano. (Courtesy of Michael Bassano/South Sudan)

of worship in March, we decided at the suggestion of our Bishop Stephen Nyodho to record and broadcast our liturgical service over our public radio station, Nile Radio. We became a church of the radio waves!

Living in an IDP camp for so long has certainly taken its toll on the people. They want to return to their homes. The United Nations is encouraging them to do so, but they are afraid to leave because of sporadic fighting throughout the country that persists although a peace agreement was signed in September 2018. Around our area of Upper Nile State, one of 10 states in South Sudan, there is political instability because we have no appoint-

ed governor. Interethnic fighting continues, resulting in the rape of women, abduction of children and cattle raiding.

A young woman of our church named Rebecca Lochano lost her uncle recently. He was the attorney general of Malakal. A member of the Shilluk ethnic group, he was killed by a gunman of the Dinka group. Rebecca, who is Shilluk, cannot understand why such killing continues against her ethnic group, now the camp's largest group.

"This is why we cannot leave the camp," she told me. "No matter where we go, our homes are occupied by another group and we fear for our own safety, that if we leave

the camp, we will also be killed like my uncle."

Chanchuok John, the leader of our youth group, is tired of living in this camp and longs to go home and continue his career as a teacher. "But how can we leave this place when there is still no peace in the country and we fear for our lives if we leave here?" he asks. "I am of the Shilluk tribe and all our lands here in Upper Nile have been taken over by another ethnic group. Our land has been grabbed and taken away from us."

The journey to peace, reconciliation and justice is still a long road ahead. So, our internally displaced people remain in the camp with the



At a U.N. project on COVID-19 awareness, a youth shows her drawing of the need for handwashing to prevent the spread of the virus. (Courtesy of Michael Bassano/South Sudan)

hope of one day returning home. Meanwhile, COVID-19 is spreading in the camp. As of the middle of October, we had 46 confirmed cases in the camp, out of the total of 112 in Upper Nile State. With people living so close together here, the head of the U.N. camp said she is "concerned the camp will become the epicenter of the virus in Upper Nile State." Overall there were almost 2,800 cases throughout the country. I am restricted from going into the camp because of my age (71), but there are still things to do. I go around every day encouraging our U.N. staff and keep in touch with members of our church through phone calls.

Recently, one of the youths of our church, Hadia Duoth, called me and said: "Father, how is the coronavirus with you?" I told her thankfully it was staying away from me! I asked her if she and her family were OK and keeping the health guidelines. "We are fine and not sick," she said. We finished our conversation hoping that one day we will see each other again, celebrating in our church with our faith community. ✠
Maryknoll Father Michael Bassano is from Binghamton, N.Y. He served previously as a missionary in Chile, Thailand and Tanzania.

"For it is in giving that we receive."

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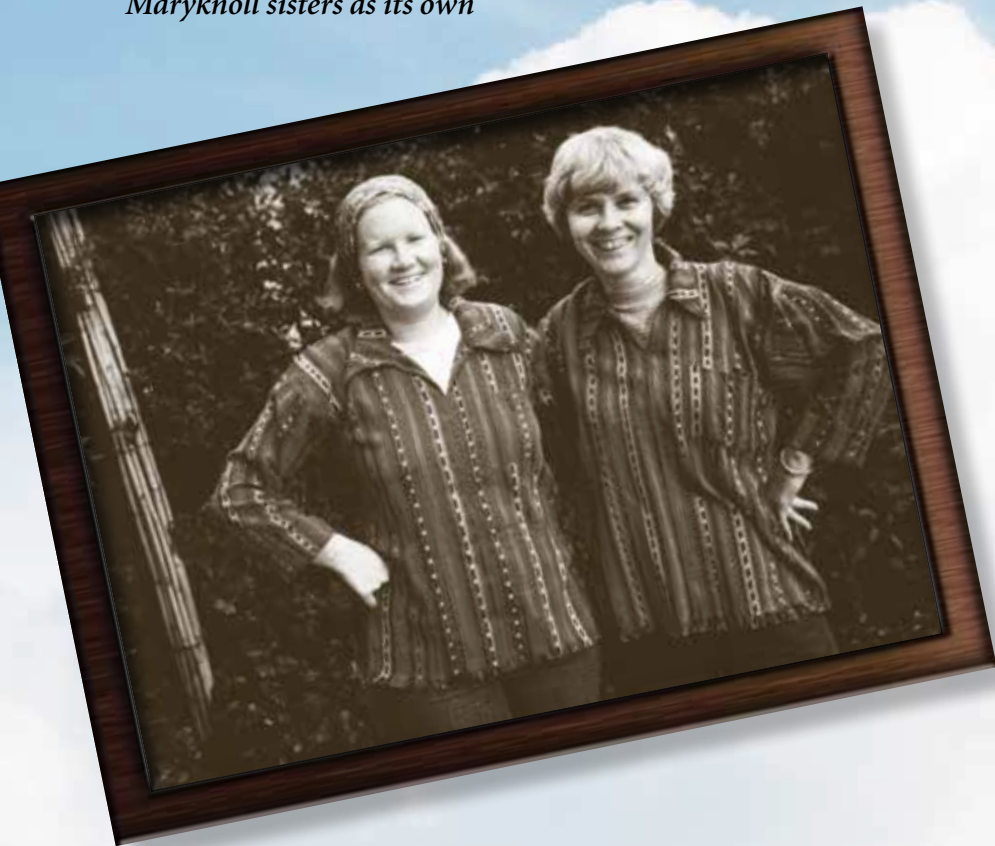


(Courtesy of Father Joseph Thaler, M.M./Nepal)

‘Our people have already canonized them’

By Rhina Guidos

Forty years after killings, Salvadoran city claims Maryknoll sisters as its own



Lay Missioner Jean Donovan (l.) and Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel were members of the Cleveland Diocese mission team in El Salvador. (Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland Archives)



Sisters Ita Ford (l.) and Maura Clarke, together before their murders. (Nancy Donovan/El Salvador)

On a bright and clear afternoon, Bishop Oswaldo Escobar Aguilar walks into a cemetery in Chalatenango, El Salvador, and gently dusts off a white nameplate on top of a sky-blue block of tombs. He tells his secretary standing nearby that they need to make sure the tombs are decorated with flowers for Dec. 2.

That’s the day in 1980 when two of the three U.S. Maryknoll sisters buried in the cemetery were killed near the country’s capital of San Salvador, along with two other U.S. Catholic women. While their killings shocked people throughout El Salvador and the United States, the loss of the Maryknollers was felt personally in this Diocese of Chalatenango, in northern El Salvador, where the women lived and served.

Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and Cleveland Lay Missionary

Jean Donovan were raped and murdered by Salvadoran military just as the country’s civil war and the bloodshed that engulfed poor Catholic communities like Chalatenango was igniting.

Today, four decades after their deaths, the women are remembered not because of how they died but as examples of Christian lives well lived, with the words “martyrs” and “saints” used by those keeping their memory alive.

Their images appear in murals of Salvadoran martyrs, such as the one in Zaragoza, in the department of La Libertad, where Sister Kazel and Donovan lived.

In the 1980s, remembers Father Manuel Acosta, the community of Chalatenango began a quiet remembrance, with a Mass and procession on the anniversary of the women’s deaths, with particular interest in the two Maryknoll sisters

who lived and worked there, tying their deaths to the collective sacrifice of local Catholic martyrs.

"That's how Bishop Eduardo Alas Alfaro wanted it," said Father Acosta, recalling the mandate from the first bishop of Chalatenango, who insisted on honoring the sisters. "He wanted it to be the day of the assassination of the Maryknollers and he said, 'This is the way we'll preserve their memory.' "

That was not an easy undertaking during El Salvador's civil war. Chalatenango—poor and rural and whose residents were often suspected of siding with leftist rebels—was often the target of bombings and massacres during the 1980-1992 war. More than 50 massacres are believed to have taken place there.

After receiving a letter from then-Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador requesting more missionaries, the Maryknoll Sisters congregation increased its presence in the country just as the conflict was beginning. Sisters Clarke and Ford were sent to lead Bible study groups among the hungry, exploited masses in Chalatenango. Although Donovan and Sister Kazel lived in another part of the country, they often traveled to Chalatenango to meet with Sisters Clarke and Ford and organize transportation of food and medicine and sometimes wounded children to safety.

Sister Carla Piette, the third Maryknoll sister buried in the Chalatenango cemetery, served the same community. She drowned earlier



Maryknoll Sister Maura Clarke, who was martyred in El Salvador, served the people of Nicaragua during Anastasio Somoza's dictatorship. (Maryknoll Sisters Communications Dept.)



Maryknoll Sisters Carla Piette, tallest, and Ita Ford, in light-colored sweater, worked in Chile before going to El Salvador, where both died. (Maryknoll Sisters Communications Dept.)

that year, on Aug. 23, 1980, after the car she was driving was swept away in a flash flood. While Sisters Ford and Clarke were buried with Sister Piette in El Salvador in keeping with Maryknoll practice, the bodies of Sister Kazel and Donovan were returned to the United States.

"They were loved. They were good sisters," recalled Father Marcos Tulio León, pastor of Immaculate Conception parish in Nueva Concepción, who attended Sister Piette's funeral. "They worked with the poor with complete surrender."

In diary entries and letters, read in the 1982 documentary *Roses in December*, Donovan, who trained as a lay missionary via a Maryknoll program, chronicled the violence of the region just months before her death, and spoke of bodies found along the road, and of the presence

of helicopters, trucks and soldiers. "Chalatenango is just absolutely civil war at the moment," she observed. A few weeks before she died, she spoke of wanting to leave El Salvador, but felt unable to do so because of the children, "the poor bruised victims of this insanity."

"They came to embody the Salvadoran reality; they came here to be poor, to be persecuted; they came to endure what all the poor endured at that time, which was persecution," Father Acosta said of the women. "They left their culture, they left their comfort, and they came here to live the daily life of the poor."

Even in death, the women were victims of the same repression committed against the country's poor, said Bishop Escobar. Officials from the U.S. government, which was supporting the Salvadoran govern-

ment at that time, even suggested that the women could have been at fault, calling them “activists” and later suggesting they had run a roadblock and that that led to their deaths—not taking into account their rapes. Their bodies were found shot execution style in the back of the head and stacked one on top of another in a shallow grave.

“They could have lived in better conditions in their native country than here, but, not only did they show solidarity with the poor, they suffered the same fate as the poor, the thousands of murdered catechists, delegates of the Word, at the hands of a bloody repression,” Bishop Escobar said in a CNS interview.

“In fact, we celebrate on Dec. 2 the thousands of martyrs of Chalatenango in honor of them,” he said, “and chose that date in honor of them and accept them as martyrs of Chalatenango, along with the thousands who died here.”

Bishop Escobar said that while he cannot officially canonize anyone, he believes the women are saints. “They are because they were martyrs, because they lived out the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the most extreme of consequences,” he said. However, opening a cause of canonization, he said, would be a complicated matter because the women belonged to different religious orders, were from different dioceses, and from a different country.

“Our people have already canonized them,” said Father Acosta. “I don’t doubt that they’re saints, that they’re martyrs. To me they are the martyred women of 1980,” sharing the same year of martyrdom as

Archbishop Romero, who is now officially a saint.

“Maura, Ita, Dorothy and Jean need no ‘official’ recognition of sainthood for they are already recognized as saints by the people of El Salvador and by all of us who hold their memory sacred,” echoed Sister Antoinette Gutzler, president of the Maryknoll Sisters.

“On Dec. 2, we Maryknoll Sisters once again recall and embrace the memory of our sister martyrs who were deeply imbued with the Gospel of Jesus and love for the poor,” Sister Gutzler said. “From the communion of saints, they challenge us with words from the prophet Micah, that we ‘act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with God.’ ”

While the COVID-19 pandemic brought the 40th anniversary commemoration of St. Romero’s martyrdom to a halt in March, Church officials in Chalatenango said they will continue with plans to mark the 40th anniversary of the women’s martyrdom, including the annual Martyrs of Chalatenango Mass, a blessing of the Maryknoll sisters’ tombs and, perhaps, a bilingual program via live stream on Facebook as part of a digital pilgrimage for those who can’t make it in person.

“For us, it’s important that those in the U.S. understand that they were martyred for the Gospel,” Bishop Escobar said, calling the women “true saints” and comparing them to the first saints, the early Christian martyrs. ✠

Rhina Guidos, a native of Chalatenango Diocese, El Salvador, is a reporter for Catholic News Service.

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A Listener *and* Healer

By Rick Dixon, MKLM

In El Salvador, a handyman repairs human spirits

One of the beautiful privileges of mission is learning from the people of our host country and seeing life from their perspective. Agustin de la Rosa Reyes is one who has brought richness to my life here in El Salvador, where I serve as a Maryknoll lay missionary. He is a husband, father of three, and earns his living as a handyman. He knows how to adjust the chain on his son's bicycle and change the throttle tube on my cheap Chinese motorcycle. But by vocation he's a listener and healer. He has taught me a lot about mentoring and listening.

He learned these skills in hard times. As a teenager during El Salvador's civil war, he hid from anything that wore green and moved with boots: the Army, the National Guard, the Marines.

They all needed manpower for their war machine, which Agustin wanted nothing to do with. As soldiers swept through the community forcibly recruiting kids, Agustin, thin, light and clever, had found a favorite place to hide: on roofs of corrugated metal.

He managed to escape until he decided to visit his sister in the capital, where the National Guard swept him up in a raid at the central market while he was buying fruit, unthinkable to arrive at his sister's house empty-handed. Three months later

he was fighting in the bloodiest battle of the war, the rebel offensive on San Salvador in November 1989. He knows the demons of anxiety, fear and loneliness. "It's where so much sickness takes root," he says.

One Saturday morning during our base community meeting, which he coordinates, he shared his story of war trauma, not as an isolated piece of personal history but as a narrative belonging to something much bigger. He shared it as motivation for us to join him at the lo-

cal soccer game that afternoon, to speak with players and other youth after the game. "Fear, anxiety, loneliness are what so many of our youth continue to live today," he said and added this advice, "It doesn't take much: A simple comment like nice goal, good pass, or how's your knee after that shot you took last week? Kids light up with such comments."

In our community of La Esperanza so many children end up half abandoned and orphaned when one or both parents emigrate. Young people cannot cross from one side of town to the other in peace for fear of gangs. And throughout El Salvador, especially in poor communities, you'd think it's a crime to be young. Police and soldiers stop you

constantly, put you against a wall, search and harass you, strip you of your shirt (checking for tattoos), and detain you in public, half naked.

Under these circumstances, it's no coincidence kids make a beeline for Agustin's house when they see trouble. And on any Saturday, you see Agustin on the soccer field or patio of his home sharing with kids, listening to their stories, feeling every word, letting the strength of shared experience work its healing. ✦

Maryknoll Lay Missioner Rick Dixon, from Orange, Calif., facilitates base communities, adult literacy, youth development and job skills in the La Esperanza community of Cojutepeque, El Salvador.

Agustin de la Rosa Reyes mentors kids in La Esperanza. (Rick Dixon/El Salvador)



“We need to develop the awareness that nowadays we are either all saved together or no one is saved. Poverty, decadence and suffering in one part of the earth are a silent breeding ground for problems that will end up affecting the entire planet.”

— POPE FRANCIS
Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship



FINDING

Christmas

Poems and photos by Martin Shea, M.M.

*M*arty Shea has been a Maryknoll brother for 70 years. He is 90 years old and, although officially retired as a missionary, he is looking forward to going back to Guatemala, the beloved country where he served for almost 50 years. He just wants to be there with the people.

He arrived in Guatemala in 1966, six years into the 36-year civil war that killed more than 200,000 people. He witnessed massacres in the jungles of El Petén, walked with thousands of people who fled their villages into exile in Campeche, Mexico, lived with the people at the refugee camps, and helped many of them return to their homeland after the war ended. He accompanied those who were relocated to the town of Santa Rita in El Petén.

Being in Guatemala through the horrors of the civil war and seeing the people crossing the Usumacinta River into Mexico to save their families was a turning point in his life, he says. He discovered a deeper, personal meaning of mission: "I found that my vocation is to save the kids," Brother Marty says.

With a simple camera, he documented their faces and wrote reflections and poetry to describe their life in the midst of suffering at a refugee camp. In the process he found Christmas.

The following poems and pictures are a prayer for refugees, immigrants and the poor in Guatemala and around the world.

Christmas lost and found

It's Christmas again
Even the words have lost the mystery
Christmas again,
but where shall we look?
where is the stable?
the young mother with the child?
where shall we look
in a world where He is out of place?

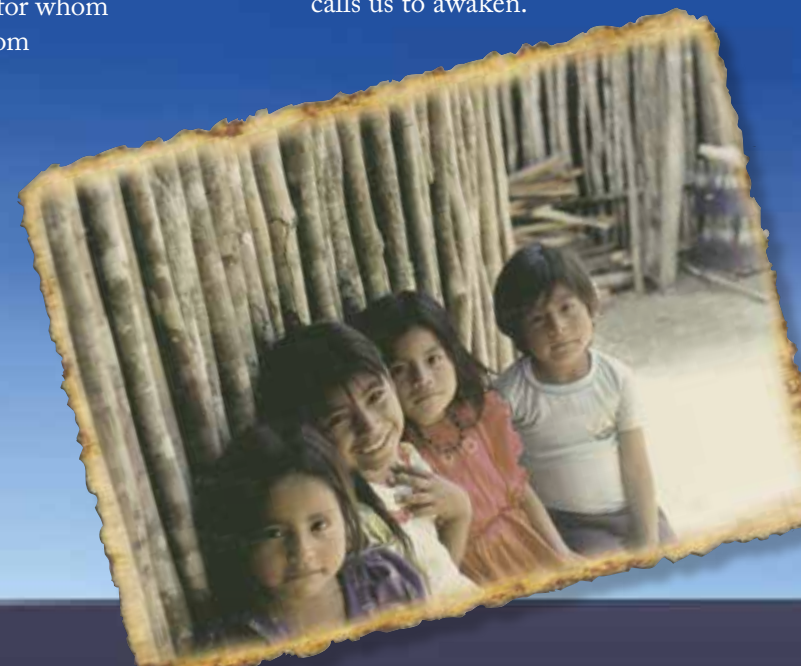
Shall we look in the same old places?
Shall we look at all?
Or ... shall we look
among those who do not belong
those born on the margin of our
world
in the stables of stick and tarpaper
in cardboard shelter of our cities
among the refuse and refugees?

There
He again finds a place
among those for whom
there is no room

We live too close to mystery
of Christmas again
ever old and yet
newer than ever
already among us
the child of violence and war
the woman searching for a place
beyond poverty and desperation
a place to give life
in the Bethlehems of our world

Christmas
time of mystery
time of gift giving
and the gift is already given
the promises fulfilled
amid the stars and stables
of our world

It's Christmas
and the God of newness
calls us to awaken.



Preferential Option for the Poor



Bethlehem wasn't a mistake
It was divine design
in time
in place
in silence
in darkness
in poverty

The birth for which the world awaits
Takes place in a stable
God makes the preferential option for us
in our poverty
darkness
not knowing
God is born to us
our poverty is transformed
Creator mingles with the created
It is certainly a wonder
... mystery
but no mistake.

Just a little smile

I was remembering a Christmas
in a refugee camp
no gifts
but then in came Irma
with her smile
... just her smile
So, I still remember that Christmas
and the gifts of Irma's smile.





The Secret of Christmas

Have we missed the message of Christmas?
These kids aren't refugees
They are mystery
They are the living love of God
God-with-us
God-in-us
God playing outside our stables.

They are the secret of Christmas
That brought down God from heaven
On a cold night like last night
They are a noisy parable
Calling us to look at the stable once again
If we can touch God in them
Then God can touch us again
in the wonder
and mystery
and magic
of our very own Christmas.

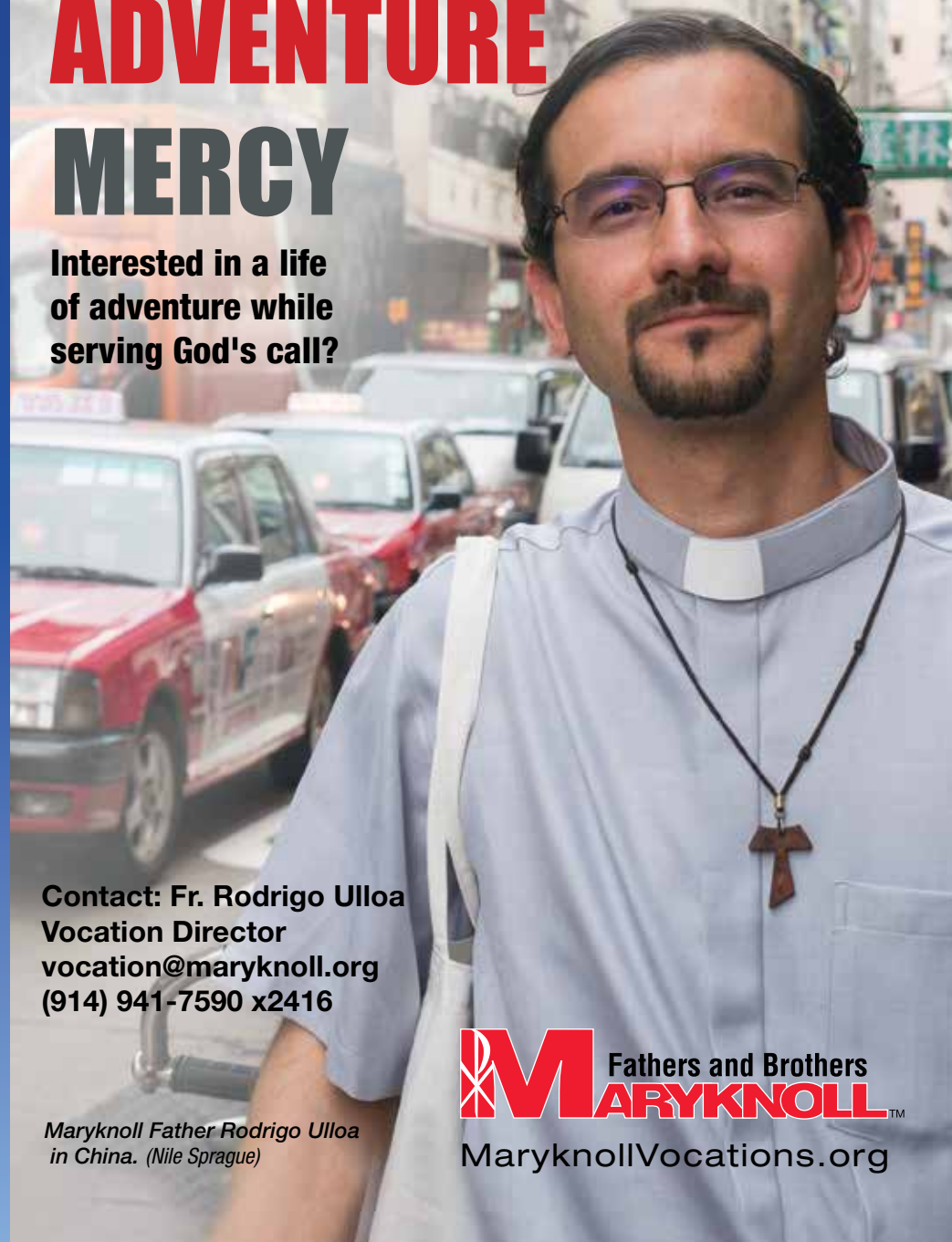
Jesus said, "Follow me..." — Matthew 4:19

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In Memoriam

Please pray for our Maryknoll missionaries who died during the past year.

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Father Robert F. Astorino
Brother Luke R. Baldwin
Sister Lorraine Beinkafner
Sister Joan Berninger
Sister Camille Marie Black
Father J. Ernest Brunelle
Sister Frances Calcaterra
Sister Anne Callahan
Father John J. Casey
Sister Joan Crevcoure
Father Donald J. Doherty
Father Thomas F. Donnelly
Sister Bernadette Cordis Duggan
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BEATING THE ODDS WITH AN IMMIGRATION CASE

By Heidi Cerneka, MKLM

A lay missionary's legal advocacy—with the prayers and support of many—changes a life

“You have met your burden of proof and I'm going to grant your application for cancellation of removal.” With those words from an immigration judge recently, Elizabeth's life changed forever.

“I can get a job! I can get a paycheck,” Elizabeth exclaimed. “I can have an ID and not look over my shoulder all the time.”

Elizabeth was brought to the United States at the age of 3 by her mother and

stepfather and has never returned to her native Mexico. She spent her life living under the radar, never able to get a “legitimate” job be-

Heidi Cerneka (l.) offers legal aid to migrants on the U.S. border. (Meinrad Scherer-Emunds/U.S.)





Back home, Elizabeth (third from right) rejoices with her family and Cerneka (print dress). (Coralis Salvador/U.S.)



Elizabeth is flanked by her attorney Heidi Cerneka (left) and paralegal Connie Lara. (Courtesy of Heidi Cerneka/U.S.)

mestic violence—but he did. This caused her to pop up on the immigration radar, and she got placed in removal (deportation) proceedings. This started our 16-month journey together. I am a pro bono attorney for migrants and took her case.

So many factors got in the way of Elizabeth's chances of winning this case—misdemeanors in her record as well as some unhealthy survivor skills she had developed during the trauma and abuse she suffered as a child and adult. But Elizabeth was her own best advocate—speaking up for herself in court, and writing out in detail her story, to be included in her application to the judge. (I edited it down to 16 pages, single-spaced, because I thought the judge might stop reading!)

Someone asked me why Elizabeth never got legal status in the 29 years she has been in the United States. Of course, she wanted to, but adjusting status is expensive; it's complicated and requires a lot of documents and proof. For instance, you need clear proof that you have lived here, which is hard to get when you can't sign a lease. She didn't have the money, and she was busy supporting a husband and children by herself.

In order to win her case, to have the judge cancel her removal from the United States, we had to prove that: She has maintained presence in the United States; she suffered battery and extreme cruelty at the hands of her U.S.-citizen husband; she has good moral character; she is not inadmissible (that is, not subject to certain factors that would not allow her to be admitted to the United States, such as drug trafficking)

cause she had no proof of identification and no Social Security number.

Her story is not so different from those of many people who came to the United States as young children and never benefited from legal status. Elizabeth is now 32. She was in a committed relationship for seven years with the man she married and thought would be her partner forever. But in the end, he was abusive, violent and contributed nothing to support the family. She finally broke free of that relationship to live safely with her children.

In May 2019 Elizabeth was detained after an argument with a former boyfriend led to a physical fight. The fight triggered her own trauma. When the police were called, she did not press charges—not uncommon for survivors of do-



Victorious Elizabeth proudly displays her Green Card, which signifies she is legally authorized to live and work in the United States permanently. (Coralis Salvador/U.S.)

and that moving to Mexico would cause extreme hardship to her and her children if they were deported.

It was a tall order.

I believed in Elizabeth and her right to cancel her removal and stay here with her whole family (she was the oldest child and her younger siblings are all U.S. citizens, as are her own children).

Our odds were really bad. But I never gave up believing that she had the right to put her case out there and the right to stay. I just knew it was not very likely that the judge would see it that way.

Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, where I work in El Paso, Texas, is an amazing community-based, nonprofit organization. By the time Elizabeth and I went to her final hearing, we had counted probably 20 partners who had helped with her case—psychologists, attorneys, social workers, paralegals and interns, volunteers, her doctors who sent letters of support, a recovery partner and more.

I also called on a group of people

to hold Elizabeth, the judge and me in prayer the day of the hearing.

That day, we walked into court armed with her truth and carried by so many people.

Elizabeth was candid and genuine each time she stood before the judge. He found her credible and, despite criminal charges that could have sunk her, he found her to be a person of good moral character.

While the odds were against us, Elizabeth kept saying to me, “I have a good feeling. If it is true that faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains, well, my faith is much bigger than that.”

Three days after winning, Elizabeth went home for good. I got a text when she arrived that said, “Thank you for everything. Finally, home with the family. God bless you and see you soon.” Our joy was complete when her Green Card came a few months later. ✧

This reflection was originally published by the Maryknoll Lay Missioners on August 21.

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ValLimar Jansen



Greg Walton



Br. Mickey McGrath, OSFS

**The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:5).**

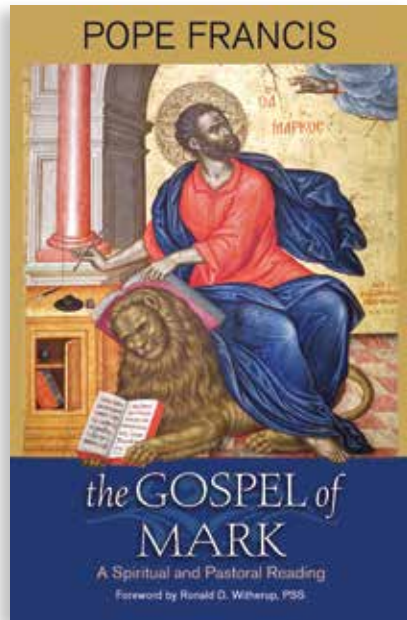


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Orbis Books Spotlight

Preview by Paul McMahon



This second volume in the series of reflections on the Gospels from Pope Francis is a perfect guide through the liturgical year of the Gospel of Mark. Taken from the pope’s homilies, speeches and addresses, each reflection draws upon the miracles, parables and teachings of Jesus that are presented in this Gospel.

As he did in the earlier spiritual and pastoral reading of the Gospel of Matthew, Pope Francis brings the stories of Jesus alive and provides insights that call us to a richer discipleship of contemplation and action. For example, the pope says that “to know Jesus, one must first be able to recognize him. And to know Jesus, there

is prayer, there is the Holy Spirit, yes, but it is also a good practice to pick up the Gospel every day. ... It is the only way to know Jesus—to know what he did, what he said.”

As a Jesuit, the pope is grounded in the practice of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the order, and knows the strength that comes from contemplating the life of Christ daily. Pope Francis is aware that no matter how many times we return to the same Gospel story, new inspiration and insights for our own life and vocation emerge.

Take the stories of the miracles, for example, which the pope sees as “signs” that “encourage our faith, signs that are always accompanied by

words that enlighten,” and lead us to conversion.

As Father Ronald Witherup, the superior general of the Sulpician order and Scripture scholar, notes in his foreword, Pope Francis “makes no claims to be a biblical scholar, but it is evident that his reflections are always rooted in the biblical text.”

While all four Gospels tell the same basic story, Scripture scholars usually regard the Gospel of Mark, the shortest and earliest one, as presenting the most human Jesus.

However, it is probably because we can identify so naturally with this very human Jesus and the other characters in this Gospel that I find it the most challenging as a disciple, especially when Jesus asks of Peter in the middle (or heart) of the Gospel, “But who do you say that I am?”

The issue of Jesus’ identity—a central theme in the overall structure of Mark—is also clear in the

pope’s treatment of the text. Like all the characters in the Gospel, we are challenged to distinguish between the false understandings and the true identity of Jesus that is only revealed at the foot of the cross.

Like the Roman centurion, are we able to declare, “Truly, this man was the Son of God”?

Readers have the option of reflecting on the entire Gospel from beginning to end or selecting fragments of a passage for prayer.

As we meditate on these reflections of Pope Francis on the Gospel of Mark, may we come to know Jesus more intimately and not only be challenged by the question, “Who do you say that I am?” that Jesus asks of each of us, but also be open to the conversion that living our discipleship demands in today’s world. ✠

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



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People had two days to prepare
to take one suitcase into camps.
(Photos courtesy of Helen Parra)



TWO DAYS AND ONE SUITCASE

By Margaret Gaughan

California woman tells how her family shared life with Japanese-Americans in internment camps

At 87 years old, Helen Hannan Parra is on a mission: to tell everyone she can about the unjust imprisonment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, “so something like this will never happen again.”

Parra was 12 years old in 1945 when her father, a lawyer, took his family with him and went to work in two of the 10 relocation centers the U.S. government had set up to segregate Japanese-Americans shortly after Japan’s bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

“I realized this was horrible and actually started writing a book about it under my bed,” says Parra, referring to the mass incarceration of people she came to know. Though she lost her notes years ago, the octogenarian from Sacramento, Calif., never lost her memories. She shares them from her childhood perspective in *Two Days and One Suitcase*, the book she recently wrote with author Anne Neuberger (see sidebar, page 55).

Explaining the title, she says, “I was aiming the book toward young teenagers, who might be curious

enough to say, ‘Two days and one suitcase? What on earth are they talking about?’ And they might pick up the book.”

Such readers will meet young Helen Hannan as she, her sister Mari, 16, and brother Larry, 14, are learning why they will be leaving their “cushy” life in a Chicago suburb to live among people who had only two days to prepare to leave their life behind. The evacuees were permitted to take only whatever belongings they could squeeze into one tiny suitcase before being herded into so-called relocation camps.

“My dad told us about Executive Order 9066, which President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed on Feb. 19, 1942. FDR was under pressure from those afraid that people of Japanese ancestry could turn against us. That order resulted in our country imprisoning 120,000 people, two-thirds of them U.S. citizens,” says Parra.

When the war in Europe was over, she explains, her father, who had been in the Army training troops for Europe, felt that instead of going back to his law firm, he had to go and help the Japa-



Mari Hannan is flanked by two of her friends, Aki (left) and Toshi, whom she met when her friends and their families were interned in Tule Lake Segregation Center in California.



Tule Lake Segregation Center, the last of the relocation centers to close, in 1946, was surrounded by barbed wire fencing and guarded from towers by soldiers with guns.

nese-Americans prepare for resettlement as the camps were being closed. "My mother agreed," says Parra. "So off we went, first to Grenada War Relocation Center in Colorado, better known as Camp Amache, and then to Tule Lake Segregation Center in California."

Readers of *Two Days and One Suitcase* follow the Hannans into the camps. As they enter Camp Amache, young Helen's first impression is of the barbed wire fence surrounding the area. "It made me think of a fierce animal with bared teeth," she says. At the guard house, where her dad has to show his identification, Helen is scared by a guard with "a very long gun."

She soon discovers that while her family is housed in a three-bedroom apartment with a living room, kitchen

and bathroom, the Japanese internees live in barracks where crowded quarters contain no kitchen or bathroom. Internees must eat in a mess hall and use common bathrooms that afford no privacy.

Precocious Helen says: "The whole world was at war, but why should one group of Americans be put in jail?" As an adult she expresses the same disbelief: "These people had done nothing wrong, but suddenly they were the enemy because they looked like the enemy."

She and her siblings, following the example of their parents, were determined to do all they could to make life a little more bearable for the internees: inviting their new Japanese friends to their quarters to make French fries and taking the younger children to the pool in town.

The Hannans were not alone in their compassion. In both camps they met Maryknoll priests who had come into these prisons to be with the people.

Parra's face lights up when she talks about Father John Swift, who served in Amache, and Father Joseph Hunt in Tule Lake.

Father Swift had served in a parish in Los Angeles with predominantly Japanese-American parishioners. "He simply picked up the parish and moved it into the camp," Parra says. Besides offering Mass and the sacraments, she says, he offered the spiritual works of mercy. "These people were so scarred because they thought they were bad since the government had locked them up," she says. "He fed them spiritually, helping them

understand they were good people and good people have been persecuted throughout history."

Father Hunt, she says, was more about the corporal works of mercy. "He would go into town and shop for the people, who were not allowed to leave the camp. Imagine the poor man having to buy so many things for so many people! But that is what he did until my sister Mari took over the shopping."

Father Hunt, says Parra, had served as a missionary in Korea and Japan and had come to Tule Lake shortly after returning to the United States in 1942. She recalls him bundling as many interned children as possible into his car and taking them on outings. She was with them once when the car broke down. "It was a cold winter night," she recalls. "While



The Hannans: (r. to l.) Mari, Larry, their mom and Helen pose with a friend before the family left Tule Lake Segregation Center when their dad finished his work there in 1946.

we were waiting for help, Father Hunt got out of the car and sat on the bumper reading his breviary. I remember thinking: 'He's doing all these practical things, but first and foremost he is God's priest.' "

"The people adored both priests," she says, "because they chose to be here. They loved the people."

Helen and her family grew to love the people too. "We were from the Midwest and never knew any Japanese-Americans. They lived mostly on the West Coast," she says. "We were impressed by their dignity and patience. They were in a horrible situation but they felt, 'This is the only life we've got right now. And we'd better live it as well as we can.' "

In 1988 the U.S. government admitted the wrong it had done to Japanese-Americans and paid each

living internee \$20,000 in reparation. But Parra finds that inadequate. "You can never repair an injustice," she says. "Most of the Japanese-Americans had nothing to go back to. You can't give a doctor back his practice or a lawyer back his clients or farmers back their lands."

She repeats what her father said: "The higher the position you are in, the greater obligation you have to do the right thing."

She is hopeful that as long as this story is told to a new generation of Americans, they are less likely to repeat it when they are the leaders.

As for herself, Parra says, "Seeing this wrong as a 12-year-old has made me go around with my antenna up, searching out injustices. I will keep yelling my head off as long as I can." ✦

A BOOK IS BORN

By Anne Neuberger

A writer's research can lead down interesting paths. I never expected to meet the delightful, insightful Helen Hannan Parra! Nor did I anticipate learning the depth of the suffering and courage of Japanese-Americans during their imprisonment by their own country during World War II.

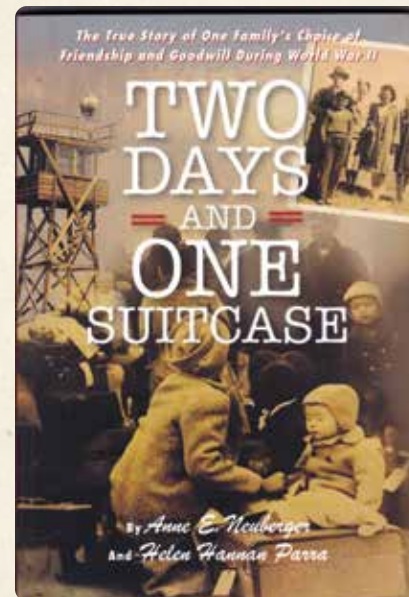
Through my work with Maryknoll, I learned of Maryknoll missionaries working in those incarceration camps and read about the Hannan family, who worked with the missionaries.

Soon I was looking forward to emails from Helen, now in her 80s. Her letters showed me the tremendous personal anguish of the Japanese-Americans.

I also "met" the perceptive child, Helen. And I encountered the charming, humorous adult Helen! As I researched facts, Helen searched her memories. Her historical knowledge was impressive, but it was her own accounts that would make the story. She shared anecdotes of people, experiences and emotions, which I incorporated into the book.

She spoke, for instance, of her friend Tomiko, also age 12. Helen could go to Tomi's quarters. But if they went to Helen's, they first had to go to a guard tower, where an armed soldier supervised Helen signing permission for Tomi to visit her.

Helen chafed at this inequity and



Cover hints at the content of this book about a family's experience in Japanese internment camps during World War II.

ached for Tomi's quiet humiliation.

Later, Tomi came to Helen, sobbing. Her brother in the U.S. Army was severely injured. For weeks, his family waited for news. Helen could only listen to Tomi's pain, and railed against the prejudice that kept this family from going to their son, who was fighting for the United States.

Helen's outrage is still there after 70 years, as is her wisdom, making her descriptions more poignant.

I hope readers of this book, both children and adults, will see that young Helen observed how we humans deeply influence each other. That has touched her life ever since. ✦

Anne Neuberger is a children's book author who has contributed to Maryknoll's mission education materials.

Pope Launches Vatican COVID-19 Commission

By Kathleen Kollman Birch

When COVID-19 was declared a pandemic in March, Pope Francis quickly responded by launching a task force in the Vatican to examine the emerging pastoral and social challenges. The Vatican COVID-19 Commission is tasked with analyzing and reflecting on our new socioeconomic and cultural situation and proposing approaches to bring about a just and sustainable recovery from the pandemic.

Our goal must be “finding a cure for this small but terrible virus,” Pope Francis says, and also curing “a larger virus, that of social injustice, inequality of opportunity, marginalization and lack of protection for the weakest.”

The Vatican COVID-19 Commission focuses on four social issue areas: security, economics, ecology and health. The working groups within the commission gather information from global experts on these issues and interpret it in light of Catholic social teaching, putting their findings into helpful two-page briefs.

Based on the work of the commission, Pope Francis has urged global cooperation on several key issues, including a global ceasefire, easing of sanctions and debt relief for impoverished countries during the pandemic, the need for sustainable economic

investment, and equitable distribution of any future COVID-19 vaccines.

According to Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and president of the COVID-19 Commission, there needs to be a globalization of solidarity. “There can be no healing without peace,” said Cardinal Turkson, announcing the commission’s call for countries to spend more on health care and less on weapons.

The pope’s call for a global ceasefire in April contributed to the U.N. Security Council’s passing a resolution for a ceasefire in July, after months of negotiations. The pope’s call for debt relief reached the ears of leaders of the G20 nations, including French President Emmanuel Macron, with whom he spoke about the issue in April. The global campaign for debt relief has gained momentum, resulting so far in the world’s major economies allowing a debt moratorium for some countries and the International Monetary Fund providing debt cancellation for 25 of the world’s poorest countries.

In August, Pope Francis spoke about the need for a forthcoming COVID-19 vaccine to be equitably distributed, with the most vulnerable around the world prioritized first. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,



Overlooking St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis leads the Angelus and prays for all those who are suffering, including victims of violence and COVID-19. (CNS/Vatican Media)

director-general of the World Health Organization, said he “couldn’t agree more” with Pope Francis’ remarks.

In a series of talks delivered at his regular Wednesday general audience, Pope Francis has given what he called a “catechesis” on “healing the world” after the pandemic. He says we can begin this mission by “starting from

the love of God, placing the peripheries at the center and those who are least in first place ... Starting from this love anchored in hope and founded in faith, a healthier world will be possible.” ✚

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

FAITH IN ACTION:

- Visit the Vatican COVID-19 Commission website to learn about the social challenges facing the world in recovering from the pandemic in light of Catholic social teaching. <http://bit.ly/VatCommCOVID>
- Pope Francis expands on the themes of his “healing the world” catechesis in his new encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, which was released on October 4. Explore and share our six-page study guide of the encyclical: <http://bit.ly/FTstudyguide-MOGC>
- Ask Congress to provide emergency international aid for countries struggling to recover from the pandemic: <http://bit.ly/MOGCaidCOVID>

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

Growing up with Maryknoll

By Joseph Geringer

If what you learn as a child shapes your maturity, the Balio family from Pantukan, South Philippines, is one of the wisest families. Diosita, the oldest Balio sibling, explains why.

“Growing up, I don’t recall a day I didn’t tell myself, ‘I’m a lucky girl!’ ” exclaims Diosita. Her eyes glow as she continues, “My parents worked for the Maryknollers, performing a myriad of jobs at San Jose Mission, right here ...” She points to a map in the atlas on her lap. Her fingernail glides over topography marked, “Province of Davao.” She pauses over the town labeled Kingking.

“The priests at the *convento* served some 20,000 people so they were always very busy, but ...” she emphasizes, “never too busy to meet the catechistic demands of everybody in the parish. It was a big job, yet they always found time for every woman, man and child. If you needed religious guidance, if something troubled you, if you just needed someone to talk to, they opened their ears to your entreaties, offering solid advice.”

Diosita, now my wife and living in Chicago, treasures her memories. “I not only had two wonderful parents,” she says, “but also the best several friends anyone could wish for, the

Maryknoll Fathers whom I saw almost daily.”

Diosita particularly remembers Maryknoll Fathers William Morrissey and John Coholan, who, she says, pretty much laid the parish foundation. “It was amazing to watch them work with the local population, grass-roots at its best,” she says. “Results manifested. Magic stirred the air.”

Diosita’s lips relax into a smile. “My sisters, Lucila and Marlyn, and my brothers, Diosdado and Joel, we all cherished the missionaries,” she continues. “We were awed at their commitment. Bubbling with human joy, they sprang into the needs of the community, into our daily lives and into our souls.”

She recalls the clergy appeared in the area around 1960 and got right to work renovating the old San Jose Church. “My mom Rosita (the priests called her Zita) cooked for them; my dad Dioscordo, well, he was a jack of all trades: administrator, electrician, driver. I guess we were a full-time Maryknoll household!” Diosita says.

When Diosita’s mother died quite young, of heart trouble, the Maryknoll priests “carried my dad and us kids over some tough months,” Diosita recalls. “The priests’ prayers and con-



Diosita Balio Geringer visits Maryknoll friends Fathers Thomas O’Brien (left) and the late James Noonan at Maryknoll, N.Y. (Courtesy of Diosita Geringer/U.S.)

solation brought divine mercy.”

Working alongside Fathers Morrissey and Coholan, says Diosita, was a get-it-done, spiritual team of missionaries and lay people who managed the parish and its various activities. Among the cadre of Maryknoll priests who served her parish, Diosita mentions Fathers Herman Cisek, Herbert Elliott, John Grady, William LaRousse, James Noonan, Thomas O’Brien, John Scott and John D. Walsh. Their duties included piloting a religious education program, creating and sustaining parish organizations such as the Legion of Mary, tutoring lay ministers and building a strong Christian community. That, says Diosita, encompassed everything from counseling families,

guiding the parish youth and simply getting involved in the lives of parish members, including their home life, where the Catholic spirit is planted and nurtured.

“So why do I feel so lucky?” Diosita asks rhetorically. “Because my family worked one-on-one, every day, with these fine gentlemen, we Balios had something the rest of the parish didn’t have: a rare front-row seat watching the inspiration that animated them. It was miraculous, such energy, such resolve!

“They are the reason I chose to study theology, a subject I taught at St. Paul University in Surigao for 32 years.” ✦

Joseph Geringer is a retired publications manager.

WELCOME TO OUR FIRST QUARTERLY ISSUE OF *MARYKNOLL*

We remain committed to bringing you stories of God's mission through Maryknoll, even though less frequently in print.

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Readers' Responses

KEENLY DISAPPOINTED

I am contacting you regarding the article by Gregory Darr in the September/October 2020 *Maryknoll* magazine. A line on the first page states, "On the site of the murder of George Floyd, a Minneapolis man renews his resolve to combat racism." To my knowledge, there has been no trial of the officer and conviction of "murder." I found the officer's actions reprehensible and a murder conviction is possible, but it is irresponsible of Maryknoll to be judge and jury and declare a murder was committed. It is ironic that an article about racism and social justice eclipses the justice system by declaring "On the site of the murder ..." I'm keenly disappointed.

Jim Harris

Maylene, Alabama

perience in 1992 Philadelphia was very moving and illustrates how humanity wins out at the most unexpected times. I lived in Minneapolis 20 years ago and loved it. I was saddened at how the actions of some police and rioters and looters this summer showed the worst of a very fine city. I lived six blocks from where George Floyd was killed and had wonderful neighbors on whom I could depend in any emergency. After this horrible incident, I would have been on the street, too. But destruction and stealing did not honor Mr. Floyd. I'm afraid outside opportunists took advantage of a social disturbance to enrich themselves.

Sister Patricia Tekippe, FSPA
La Crosse, Wisconsin

MISCONCEPTION

Editor's Note: Thank you for your letter. Your point is well taken. The word "murder" does carry a legal meaning. In fairness to Mr. Darr, he did not use the word murder in his text. We editors are at fault. We were not intending to presume any possible trial or verdict in the matter. We have received emails and letters criticizing the article and in support of it. It was never intended to be a news article or to condemn police or condone violence in any form. Rather it was a reflection by Mr. Darr on his experience of racism, the persistence of it and the urgent need to change it.

VERY MOVING

The recollection in the latest *Maryknoll* magazine of Greg Darr's ex-

I read with sadness the article "Honoring George Floyd" in your September/October 2020 issue. While his death was tragic, I marveled at the photos of signs that called the spot where he died "sacred space." Has there been an article in your publication honoring the many men and women of law enforcement who are killed each year or who have been ambushed and murdered because of the violence that has ensued after George Floyd's death? My husband spent almost 30 years protecting people as a law enforcement officer in a large city, so we know firsthand that the vast majority of those who put on a uniform every day are good, decent, hardworking people. Every human life is precious and should be safeguarded whether that life is innocent in the

womb of its mother or that of a career criminal. Your article perpetuates the misconception that the police are the enemy and furthers division in our communities. The black population is not targeted by police in this country, and a few police men and women who commit wrongful acts do not represent even a small fraction of the whole.

*Stephanie Francois
El Dorado Hills, California*

INCLUSIVENESS FOR ALL

I really enjoyed the September/October 2020 issue of *Maryknoll* magazine and the fine articles, especially “Honoring George Floyd,” “Walking With Jesus Today” and “Sharing God’s Love in India.” Those mentioned in the articles defend the weak and confront injustice. I am impressed by the message of tolerance and inclusiveness for all people. This is in sharp contrast to the judgmental and narrow-minded spirit that seems so prevalent in today’s world. What distinguishes the persons in these articles is a deep internal spiritual life based on the teachings of Jesus Christ combined with service to others. They realize Christ came to give comfort to the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable with the truth.

*Paul Davalli
Cumberland, Maryland*

BLATANT FALSEHOOD

Your September/October 2020 edition claims that creation is the first sacrament. This is a blatant falsehood as Jesus instituted exactly seven sac-

raments and the creation of the world is not a sacrament. Check the Catechism and you will see what the seven sacraments are. Naming creation as a sacrament plays into the idea that the earth has primacy over people. Catholic teaching is that man is the pinnacle of God’s creation. The world is here for his careful stewardship and use.

*Mrs. John P. Burke
Manheim, Pennsylvania*

INTERCONNECTION

The photo reflection on creation titled “The First Sacrament,” written beautifully by Father Joseph R. Veneroso in the September/October issue, captured my spiritual hunger and led me to relate to the recent words of Pope Francis: “Today we hear the voice of creation admonishing us to return to our rightful place in the natural created order—to remember that we are part of this interconnected web of life, not its masters.”

I humbly look at myself in this interconnection as a steward with a responsibility to take care of God’s creation. This COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call for me and our society to live a simple lifestyle and get rid of our wants and greed. Nowadays, there is so much materialism and consumerism. We must allow earth, our only home, to rest, breathe and restore her natural beauty. Father Veneroso’s lovely lines resonate with Psalm 24: “To the Lord belongs the earth and all that fills it.”

*Lourdes Reynes
Brooklyn, 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



A New Year and a New Priest!

Octavio Duran/U.S.

Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers welcome the New Year with newly ordained Maryknoll Father Gregory McPhee, who will serve in Latin America. Please join us with your prayers and support so that all may know Christ through the ministries of our missionaries throughout the world.

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While following COVID-19 protocols, newly ordained Maryknoll Father Gregory McPhee gives his first priestly blessing to Maryknoll Father Michael Duggan. (See ordination story, page 10.)

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