

U.S. Catholic Church in mission overseas

# MARYKNOLL<sup>®</sup>

Winter 2023

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*All God's Children*

## FROM THE EDITOR

In our opening feature this issue, we visit with Maryknoll Father James Eble, who founded a retreat center in his mission ministry in Tanzania that emphasizes the human need for peace and quiet. The Lake House of Prayer on Lake Victoria focuses on silence, he says, and that seems like a fitting place to open our Winter 2023 issue.

We hear much about peace this time of year. It echoes in Christmas carols, like the “heavenly peace” in the first stanza of “Silent Night” and in the Scripture readings of our Christmas liturgy. We adore the Prince of Peace and wish “peace to people of good will.” Christmas and peace are inextricably intertwined.

During times like these, however, peace may seem mostly aspirational, a greeting that carries more hope than reality. Wars rage, famines loom, poverty deepens and millions of people the world over are displaced — seeking in one form or another that elusive ideal: peace, with its familiar connotations of safety and comfort.

Yet, hope is exactly what is foremost about the Nativity of the Baby Jesus. Hope is the gift that the Christ Child brought into the world. The Christmas season is a time of togetherness, of remembering that we are one humanity. It’s about showing God’s love to our friends and relations, but also to strangers — especially those for whom there is no room at the inn.

Let’s pray for peace on earth and good will toward all God’s children.

*Lynn F. Monahan  
Editor-in-Chief*



U.S. Catholic Church in mission overseas

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

*Romans 8:28*



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Twaiba Haluna joins the outreach ministry for people with albinism started by Maryknoll Father John Waldrep in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

### COVER CREDITS:

Front: Gregg Brekke/Tanzania  
Back: Sean Sprague/Tanzania

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 the Incarnation*

# *Word Made Flesh*

By Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

*One unending breath long  
Before the beginning of time  
Silent eternity broke the eternal silence as  
Perpetual emptiness filled the void and the  
Big Bang of an end and beginning  
Sometime between never and forever  
God erupted in universal longing  
Whispering a cosmic truth: I AM*

*Light, creation, chaos, dark,  
galaxies galore and black holes  
Swirl in a spastic intergalactic cataclysm  
Birthing the only appropriate response:  
You are.*

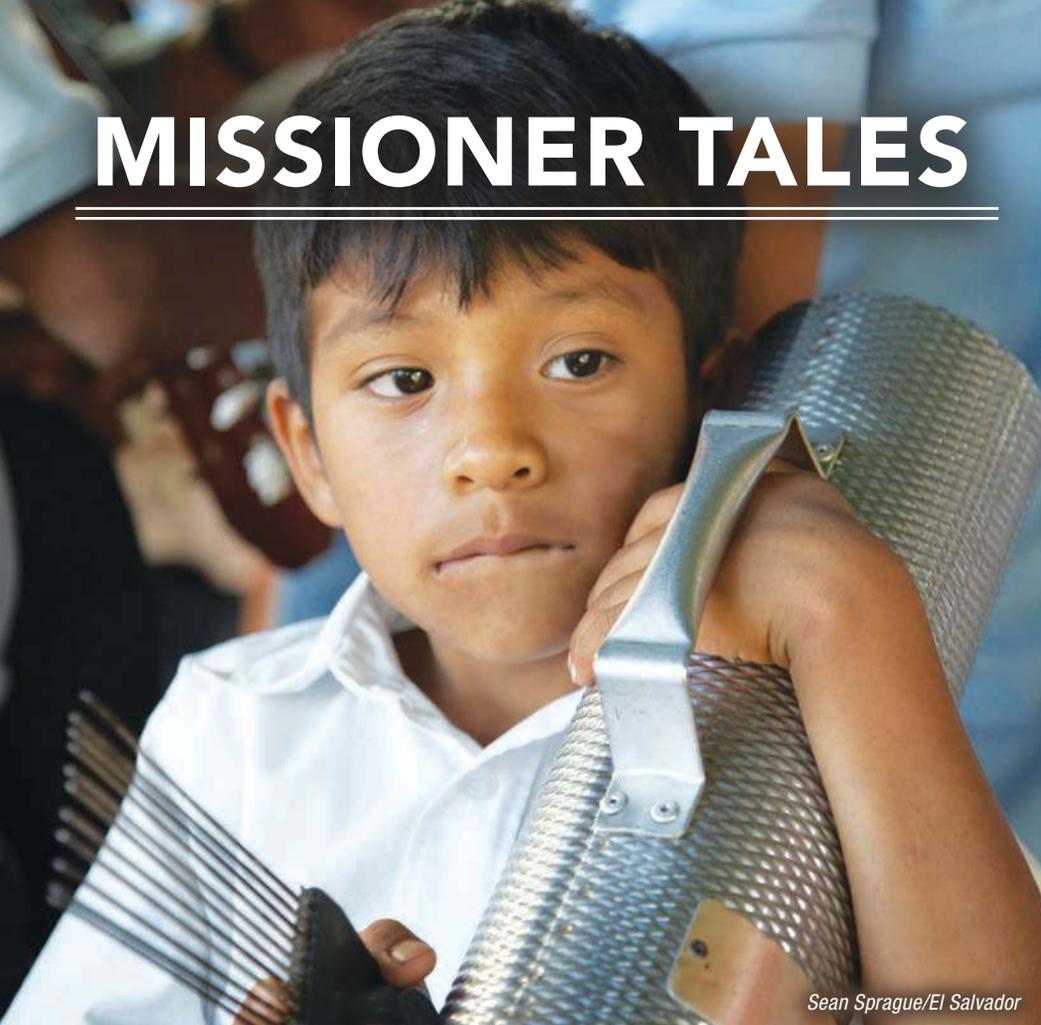
*When night had run half its course  
From the divine throne of the Most High  
Leapt the one Word which alone embodies  
Self emptying, Self sacrificing yet  
Generating new life by the very act of dying  
And the virgin's name was Mary.*



*From of old created in the divine image  
Only worthy receiver of God's grace  
In the fullness of time enfleshed  
God-With-Us not in the mighty monsters  
nor in legendary giant warriors but  
In lowly human form as a newborn babe  
Whose babbling shocked angels into silence  
before breaking into song.*

*And the word, and the flesh, and the song  
Was one and the word was love  
and we have received that word  
In our flesh and now cannot help  
but become notes in God's eternal melody:  
Venite, adoremus. Ite, amemus.  
Come, let us adore. Go, let us love.*

# MISSIONER TALES



Sean Sprague/El Salvador

Every Christmas in multi-ethnic Hong Kong, a number of Hindus come to Mass to pay homage to Baby Jesus. They listen to the songs, readings and homily. At Communion, they come up in line with their arms folded over their chests to receive a blessing.

Last Christmas Eve, a man surprised me after Mass. He had to repeat his question, since I did not understand it the first time. “May I touch your feet?” he asked. “Ah ... OK,” I responded, taken aback.

He got down on his knees, follow-

ing Hindu custom, and with his head almost touching the floor put his fingers on the tips of both my shoes. I felt embarrassed, because I am nobody special, not a yogi or a guru.

Now I know why Peter felt embarrassed at the Last Supper, when Jesus came to wash his feet.

*Michael Sloboda, M.M.*

Here in Tanzania, where I serve as a Maryknoll lay missionary, Jesca was unaware of her HIV status when she gave birth to her first child eight years ago. After she began

showing symptoms, test results confirmed that she was HIV-positive. The clinic advised her to get her daughter, Elizabeti, tested, as well. It was then she learned that her daughter had been infected.

Jesca and Elizabeti both began antiretroviral therapy and were referred to Uzima Centre, where I work. Clinics can provide testing and medication, but what they can't provide is accompaniment.

Through our program, women learn how to improve their overall health. They also learn the importance of giving birth at a designated hospital.

The accompaniment and education Jesca received at Uzima Centre made it possible for her second daughter, Justina, to be born without HIV. Elizabeti, now in first grade, is part of our Upendo Group for HIV-positive children. Jesca continues to attend support group meetings for adults living with HIV, and little Justina is doing great.

*Joanne Miya, MKLM*

A little boy was hanging on to his mother's hand and carrying a stuffed toy while we grown-ups rushed into the airport to check in. Maryknoll Sister Joy Es-menda and I were accompanying the migrant mother and child as part of our volunteer service on the U.S./ Mexico border in Tucson, Arizona. They were on their way to a sponsor.

To our dismay, we were told at the counter that the flight was canceled and they had to rebook for a 6 a.m. flight the following day. They had

only \$20 in their possession — not enough for a taxi (\$40 fare), let alone food during travel. Disappointed, we returned to the Casa Alitas welcome center where they had been staying.

Sister Joy prepared sandwiches for the family's journey and we left Casa Alitas at 4 a.m. As they were getting out of the car, the mother handed us the \$20 bill. We simultaneously said, “Thank you, but no — that is for your journey.”

Sister Joy stayed in the car while I accompanied mother and child to the gate. They were both so grateful. All smiles, the boy showed me his stuffed toy and said he sleeps with it at night in bed.

Boarding time was finally announced, and mother and child got in line. As we hugged and said our goodbyes, the boy suddenly raised his hand with his stuffed toy. He wanted to give it to me as a token of their appreciation.

With tears welling in my eyes, I remembered the Little Drummer Boy who came to the stable where Jesus was born. Without a gift to bring, he played his drum and sang: “I am a poor boy, too — pa rum pum pum-pum / I have no gift to bring ... that's fit to give our king. ... Shall I play for you — pa rum pum pum pum / on my drum? / ... Then he smiled at me — pa rum pum pum pum / Me and my drum.”

I nodded approvingly at the boy's generosity and said, “That's for you to keep, so you can sleep well at night.” He smiled and waved goodbye.

*Genie C. Natividad, M.M.*

# *A Silent Night* at the

# LAKE HOUSE of PRAYER

By Lynn F. Monahan

*A Maryknoll priest reconnects East Africans to a tradition of silence*

The words *silent night* bring to mind thoughts of quiet, peace and reflection on the eve of Jesus' birth, as evoked by the Christmas hymn of that name. But for Maryknoll Father James Eble, the quest for such tranquility is a year-round mission he shares with the people he serves in Tanzania.

The idea of finding peace and quiet — getting away from the din of overcrowded urban life — is a recurrent theme in the missionary's nearly 30 years in the developing East African nation. That search led Father Eble in 2014 to found the Lake House of Prayer, a retreat center on the shore of Lake Victoria in Mwanza, Tanzania's second-largest city. There, he and Maryknoll Lay Missioner Judy Walter, who are both trained in Ignatian tradition, serve as spiritual directors.

Maryknoll Father James Eble, who founded the Lake House of Prayer jointly with the Archdiocese of Mwanza, practices contemplative prayer. (Sean Sprague/Tanzania)



“The basic vision of the House of Prayer is to share the contemplative life of the Church with everyone, but with our special preference for the poor,” Father Eble says. In the chaotic times in which we live, he adds, the need for quiet and prayer are in some ways as important as a person’s physical needs. “If we’re really going to be sharing the Good News of the Gospel, along with the corporal needs such as hospitals and schools, there’s an interior journey that every religion talks about, to be free within yourself.”

The idea for the retreat house was born in the 12 years the priest from Fairfield, California, served as pastor of Transfiguration parish in Mabatini, a poor urban section in the southeast of the sprawling city of Mwanza. There, he says, the

noise was nonstop.

“You can go days at a time and it’s 24 hours noisy,” he says. “That affects you; it affects your health and your wellbeing.”

To that end, the Lake House of Prayer has no television and guests are asked to refrain from playing radios and to turn off their cell phones.

“We really focus on silence,” Father Eble says. “We use different contemplative kinds of prayer, meditation in particular, centering prayer, Christian meditation, to help people go into their inner life.”

That emphasis on silence sets the House of Prayer apart from many other retreat centers, which often can be as busy as everyday life, he says. Activities at the House are contemplative and purposely limit

noise, even liturgical celebrations with loud music. “There are plenty of places you can do that but here we don’t,” he says.

Most of the guests who come are Catholic, and the prayer structure follows Catholic tradition, including daily Mass and the Church’s liturgical calendar. Yet, the House of Prayer is open to anyone, particularly from the local community, who is seeking “meditation and contemplation and rest,” Father Eble says. Guests have included Protestants and even a Muslim.

“Judy and I call it a praying community because the Lake House of Prayer is making the contemplative

tradition of the Church available to the poor,” Father Eble, 70, says.

“One of the groups who come daily here are our neighbors,” says Walter. “They are in the business of trading or fishing because we’re so close to Lake Victoria. ... Very hard-working people, very poor, but they make time for God.”

Father Eble adds, “They’re invited, they come in, and we teach them this contemplative way of silence. And we get a lot of people who have benefited from that.”

The House of Prayer also receives priests and religious brothers and sisters seeking a quiet retreat. Local congregations of mainly East African

*Maryknoll Father James Eble directs a retreat for the local praying community on devotion to Our Lady, Untier of Knots, teaching forgiveness and letting go of “knots” of resentment. The Lake House of Prayer, on the shores of beautiful and peaceful Lake Victoria, offers directed retreats for groups and individuals. (Courtesy of James Eble/Tanzania)*



Neighbors come to the House of Prayer to take part in a praying community that makes silence, peace and contemplation available to local residents. (Sean Sprague/Tanzania)

religious sisters, especially, come for spiritual direction.

The House can provide guests with a directed spiritual retreat for up to eight days, and can offer group retreats for up to 25 people. "We don't want anything bigger than 25," Father Eble says. "Small is beautiful." He explains, "I give them different kinds of teaching. The big teaching we give is on forgiveness, on how to contemplatively, in a faith-filled way, let go of the need for revenge, let go of the resentment and anger, and that's been very powerful."

The House of Prayer is a joint project between the Archdiocese of Mwanza and Maryknoll. Initially the land was offered to Father Eble by Cardinal Jude Thaddeus Ruwa'ichi, a Franciscan Capuchin, when he was still archbishop of Mwanza. "They

agreed what was needed was a place of silence, stillness, simplicity, a place where people could really come home to themselves and deepen their relationship with God," says Walter. "It had to be in a peaceful location, and the land that was offered was a perfect location because it overlooks beautiful Lake Victoria and is peaceful and just was the right place to offer a space for people to come to be at peace, to pray, to find themselves."

Father Eble now works with Archbishop Renuus Leonard Nkwande. He describes the House as a partnership with the local church, and says, "This is all diocesan land and I see myself as serving the diocese."

The House of Prayer is a way of reconnecting local people to a very African sense of tranquility while at the same time drawing on early



Maryknoll Lay Missioner Judy Walter (right) assists a religious sister on the grounds of the Lake House of Prayer on the shores of Lake Victoria. (Sean Sprague/Tanzania)

Christian history, Father Eble says.

When he first arrived in Tanzania after his ordination in 1988, Father Eble worked for eight years among traditional tribal people in the African bush, including two years with the Watatulu people and six years on the Serengeti Plain. He says the silence and simplicity of rural village life contrasts sharply with the invading and disruptive noise of the frenetic activity of the city.

He describes "the contemplative rhythm of an African village, the silence between sentences, the patience just to be able to sit." And he adds, "They can outwait a rock in the villages." People who come to the House of Prayer, he says, easily make a connection with their origins in the normally quiet countryside.

Furthermore, Father Eble, says, the House of Prayer reconnects

guests with another facet of African history and heritage, that of the Desert Fathers and Desert Mothers: the early ascetic, monastic tradition in North Africa from which Christian monasticism developed.

"We're coming from that position of the experience of the desert that actually starts in the Gospel with Jesus and his own going to the site in solitude," he says. "It started in Africa, this sort of stillness, silent meditation and prayer."

"We try to create that atmosphere that is conducive to our modern African city," he says. "We provide the simplicity and the silence for people to be able to let go of the noise outside, but also the noise inside."

This Christmas Eve, as all year round, the Lake House of Prayer will rest in a silent night. ✠

# Spirit of Mission

## Bringing Scripture to Life

By Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

Every day during my Peace Corps training in Seoul, South Korea, back in 1971, I would use a walkway over the frenetic streets to get downtown. And each time I'd pass a child about 8 or 9 years old sitting on the concrete. His face was down but his hands were extended for whatever coins a passerby might toss his way.

With the Gospel story of the Last Judgment on my mind (Matthew 25:31-46, where Christ separates the sheep from the goats), I always gave spare change to the beggar child. Seasoned volunteers pointed out that these kids are assigned their spot by an older beggar to whom the child turns over his daily take.

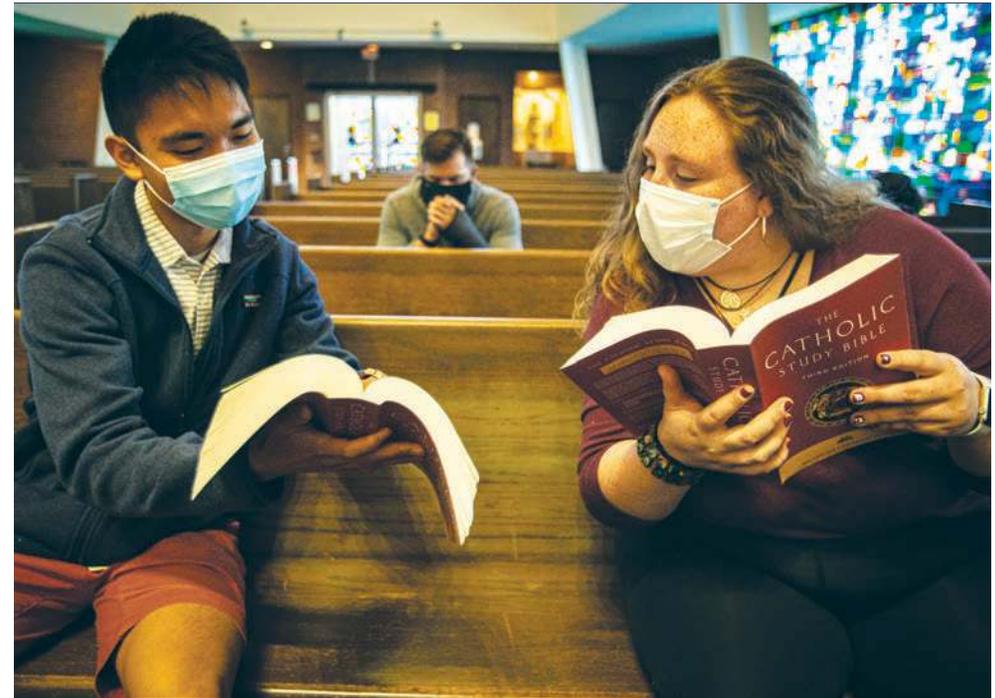
One day I bought a deep-fried corndog on a stick from a street vendor and placed it, stick first, into the boy's open palm. Without looking up, he drew the corndog to himself and feasted. I told my skeptical colleagues I was merely bribing witnesses on my behalf for the Last Judgment.

Bringing the Scriptures to life should be every Christian's daily goal. And going back to the last millennium, the Bible has been the all-

time best seller worldwide. Yet, even with an estimated 6 billion Bibles in the world today, one might wonder: Why are we in such a mess? Clearly, simply owning a Bible is not enough.

Reading the Bible and understanding it are different, as well. In terms of biblical literacy, we Roman Catholics have had to play catch-up with Eastern Orthodox and Protestant denominations. It was only in 1943 that Pope Pius XII issued his encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (*By the Inspiration of the Spirit*), opening the door to Roman Catholic scholars to study the Scriptures in the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts. They began to examine closely what the authors wrote, and they classified the types of writing — stories, letters, psalms, legends, etc. — to better understand their meaning.

The Bible is actually more a library than a single book. Written over millennia by various authors, the Bible is the record of the evolution of the human understanding of God: who God is and what God did for us. The ancient Israelite tribes had a very different understanding of God than we do today. God didn't change. Our understanding did.



Students at DeSales University in Center Valley, Pennsylvania, share observations as they read the Bible in Connelly Chapel on the college campus. (CNS photo/Chaz Muth)

For Christians, the four Gospels take pride of place. Jesus is the ultimate revelation of the Word of God in human form. He is the measure by which we weigh the other books of the Bible. The Good News of Jesus Christ is the lens through which we read the story of salvation history.

Through the life, miracles, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus, we understand not only the other books of Scripture, but also the meaning and goal of our own lives.

At solemn Catholic Masses, the Book of the Gospels is borne in dignified procession to the altar. Unlike the lectionary (which includes all the readings), often the Book of the Gospels is incensed and a candle or

candles are held while the passage is read. After the Gospel is proclaimed and its meaning expounded in the homily, the book isn't included in the final procession. It already fulfilled its role of transmitting God's word. Now it's up to us listeners to carry it out. The Gospel leaves in our hearts.

The hardest thing about the Scriptures is not only believing them, but putting them into practice. Yet, each day affords us countless opportunities to bring Scripture to life in today's world.

Somewhere at this very moment, Jesus in disguise begs at the side of the road, waiting for us, his followers, to act. ✠

# THESE ARE GOD'S CHILDREN

Text and photos by Gregg Brekke

*Maryknoll priest establishes a program in Tanzania to stop discrimination against people with albinism*

As the bright winter sun bakes the dusty red clay on the grounds of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus parish compound in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, small groups of people wander in to find refuge under a large shade tree. Soon, some 20 people have gathered to share their experience with the ministry initiated by Maryknoll Father John Waldrep for people affected by albinism.

People with albinism — which is characterized by light or pink skin — have a genetic trait that causes them to produce little or no melanin. Health issues are common, including cataracts and other vision problems and a high incidence of



Maryknoll Father John Waldrep (grey hair) and Seminarian Kabaka Leonard (on right, in back) meet with people living with albinism at St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Church in the Buza neighborhood of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, as part of Father Waldrep's ministry.

skin cancers, since their skin gives little protection from the sun's rays. It is estimated that more than 90 percent of people with albinism in Africa will die before they reach the age of 40, most of them from skin cancer.

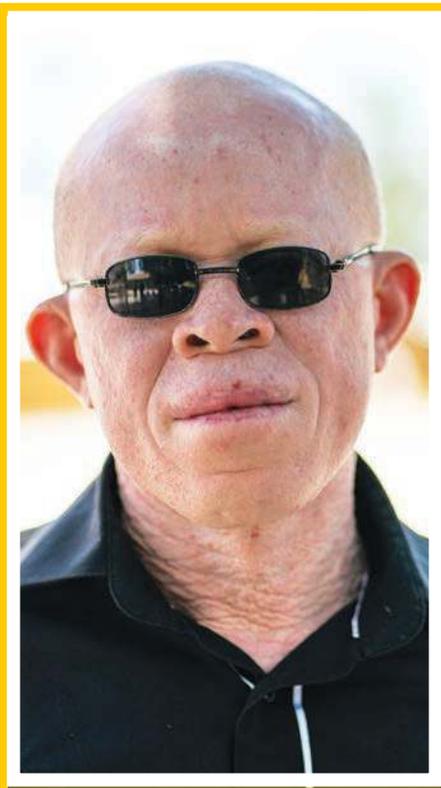
Father Waldrep, who was assigned to Tanzania in 1990, says that people with albinism experience many forms of social and economic discrimination. Historically, infanticide against children with albinism was practiced in rural areas. Where tribal practices prevail, there are still accounts of people with albinism being hunted down and skinned or dismembered — their skin or body parts worn (and even sold) as magic talismans.

Between 2000 and 2019, 76 people with albinism were killed in Tanzania and 182 people survived other physical attacks, according to the non-profit organization Under the Same Sun, which works to end discrimination and violence against persons with albinism. (Rather than using the term "albino," the organization prefers "people with albinism" to "put the person ahead of their condition.")

"If you ask, many people kind of see albinism as a curse, and a lot of people with the condition see themselves as cursed," says Father Waldrep. "I hoped there was a way we could help them understand they're really not cursed."

Seven years ago, the missionary saw an opportunity to act.

"In the beginning there were a couple of people who sought me

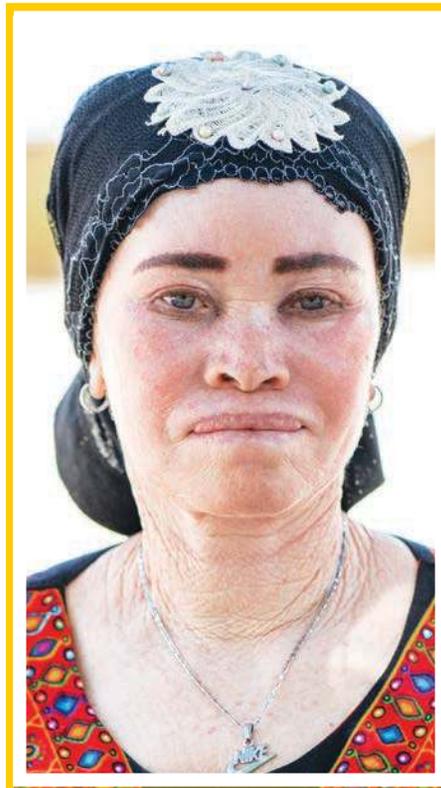


*Fadhili Eliakunda Mbonea serves as the Temeke District secretary of the Tanzanian Albinism Society.*

out," says Father Waldrep. The missionary explains he provided help for their struggling families.

Word spread about the priest who was accepting of people with albinism, and more people with the condition stepped forward. In the hopes of increasing understanding of albinism, Father Waldrep proposed a seminar, and the community responded positively.

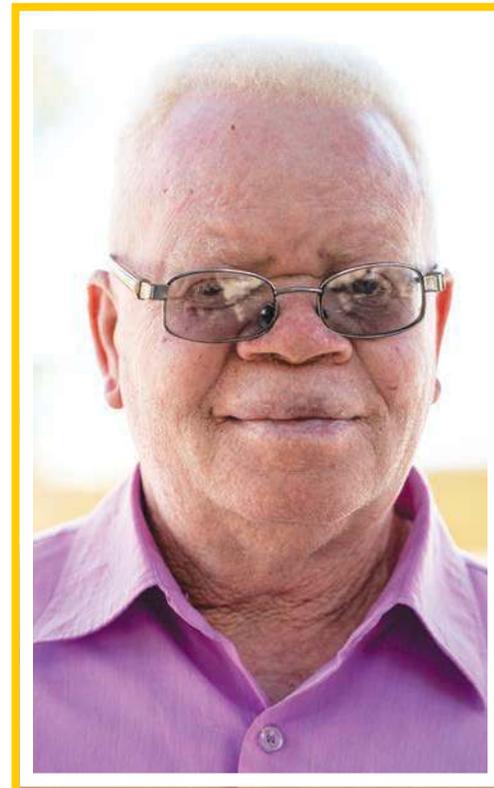
Since that first seminar, the parish has hosted three well-attended events with a program of speakers and a meal. He says the parish would have hosted more were it not for COVID-19 restrictions.



*Salama Kassim and Samuel Herman Muluge are members of the program founded by Maryknoll Father John Waldrep in Dar es Salaam for people living with albinism. Tanzania has one of the highest rates of albinism in the world.*

Held in conjunction with a district-wide association for people with albinism, the parish-hosted meetings are places of connection for people with albinism. Some couples have even met as a result of the gatherings. With financial assistance from the parish and other groups, the association distributes sunscreen, helps purchase sun-protective clothing and assists with covered transportation.

Fadhili Eliakunda Mbonea — who himself has albinism — serves as the Temeke District secretary of the Tanzanian Albinism Society, which also provides referrals for health care, counseling, microloans and various



other social services.

"We want to provide a place of acceptance and understanding," says Mbonea. "These gatherings, the meals and conversations with church members, have helped to overcome so much misunderstanding." He continues, "Stigma and old ideas about why people have albinism are the single largest obstacle to our ability to flourish as individuals, as people."

The group works towards capacity building, to assist members with access to financial resources, health care and mental health services. "The economic impact of having albinism can be quite high and even today some

employers don't want to hire us," Mbonea says. "Though we are business owners, doctors, lawyers, teachers and other professionals, many in our group have financial struggles."

Albinism is a rare condition, both on the African continent and elsewhere. But in Tanzania, an estimated one in 1,400 people are affected. Scientists believe that close tribal alliances in East Africa result in a high rate of genetic transmission.

Amplifying its perceived mysterious nature, the genetic trait can skip one or more generations before manifesting again; non-albino parents can have offspring with albinism and vice versa.

One participant at the gathering, Salama Kassim, shared that none of her three children have albinism. Salama also said that she felt very accepted growing up in a nearby village, where the only difficulty she experienced was poor eyesight.

"I didn't feel a lot of discrimination as a child," she said. "In fact, the teachers and students looked out for me. If we were outside and it was very sunny, they would move our activities inside so I could be protected."

But being an adult living with the condition, Salama says, has not been as easy. She hasn't been able to find work in recent years, especially since the pandemic began. She was able to help her youngest child attend school only until second grade.

"There are many challenges," says Salama. "If I open a roadside stand, people won't buy from me when they see me."

Another participant, Siwema Abdalla, says she began to experience discrimination when she entered secondary school at the age of 13. At first, Siwema was put into a special education classroom by a caring teacher who had taken a personal interest in assisting students with albinism.

"This teacher died of cancer and things got much worse," Siwema says. "We were subjected to electroshock and other abuses." Things improved, she says, when she was moved to a regular classroom. To support her family, Siwema now runs a small business lending items like dresses and formal wear.

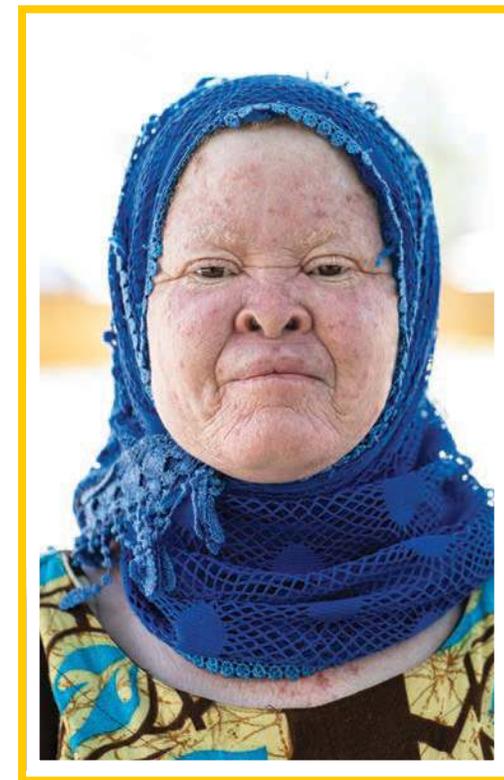
"While I think we've made a pretty profound impact, there is still a lot more to do in the ministry with people with albinism," says Father Waldrep. The priest, who in 2021 relocated to Nairobi, Kenya, to oversee vocations, returns regularly to Tanzania to continue the ministry.

The missionary says he feels compelled to respond: "It's education and healthcare and just basic needs," he says. "They can't pay their rent and they need food."

Providing for their material needs is not the only way Father Waldrep accompanies people living with albinism. He offers attentive pastoral care and a compassionate presence.

"Most of all, these are God's children," he says, "They just need someone to sit with them." ✠

*Gregg Brekke is an award-winning photojournalist and writer dedicated to telling stories of justice and faith.*



(Clockwise, from top) Zainabu Mangara, Amina Lameck and Adelina Muluge join a program for people living with albinism at St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Church in Dar es Salaam.



Maryknoll Sisters (left to right) Rolande Kahindo, Genie Natividad and Janet Hockman buy backpacks and clothing for migrants at a Goodwill store in Tucson, Arizona, where the sisters served as volunteers at the border. (Genie Natividad/U.S.)

## Strangers Become Guests

By Genie C. Natividad, M.M.

*A Maryknoll sister volunteers at the U.S./Mexico border serving migrants and refugees*

At the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees in 2018, Pope Francis said, “Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ.”

Last year, the Maryknoll Sisters received an invitation to serve at the southern border. An appeal came from Catholic Charities to respond to the humanitarian crisis there. Maryknoll Sisters Rosemarie Milazzo, Mary Mullady, Judith (Joy) Esmenda, Janet Hockman, Rolande Kahindo and I answered this call. Our destination — where I volunteered for five months — was Casa Alitas Welcome Center in Tucson, Arizona.

Every day, Casa Alitas (House of Little Wings) welcomes hundreds of migrant men, women and children. They come from different countries: Peru, Colombia, Guatemala, Ecuador, Cuba, Venezuela, Haiti, India and others. After processing, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol agents bring migrants to the center to be assisted.

On one occasion, a bus arrived at Casa Alitas carrying about 50 men in shackles and handcuffs. Electronic monitoring devices had been placed on their ankles. An officer had to unlock the handcuffs hooked to chains around each one’s waist.

I wished I could numb the shock of cruelty I was seeing, as if on stage, from my front row seat. Those men were being treated like criminals. I could not help but see in each one of them the face of Jesus in agony while he was whipped, mocked, and humiliated, robbed of his dignity and self-respect.

First and foremost, asylum seekers come for safety. They come pursuing a dream of a better tomorrow, not only for themselves but for their families. They come, as is often the case, uninvited. They come exhausted. I would have liked to shout out Jesus' words: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

My heart melted at the sight of the weary travelers. We served them food and drink, fresh-cut fruit and warm soup, perhaps their first hearty meal in quite some time. We provided clothing, a shower and shelter, a place where — at least for the time being — they could have the rest that had eluded them amid the strain and stress of their journey.

Some guests would leave the next day, while others had to wait until their sponsors (usually relatives or friends) arranged their tickets for travel. Those needing medical clearance following hospitalization stayed longer. Most heartbreaking, often guests waited to be reunited with family members whose whereabouts were uncertain.

"Give us the grace to endure," I found myself praying. I bowed in acceptance and deep gratitude for the opportunity to be there. There was something sacred about that gathering place — a crossroads, really. God is in control and all that we could do, as volunteers and staff, was to treat anyone and everyone who came our way with compassion, kindness and respect. We needed look no further than right in front of us. Mission is



Maryknoll Sisters Rosemarie Milazzo (left), Mary Mullady (right) and Genie Natividad, with a volunteer, prepare breakfast at Casa Alitas. (Courtesy of Genie Natividad/U.S.)

in the here and now.

I was amazed at the many good-hearted individuals and groups from all walks of life and faith traditions (including Jewish, Muslim and Christian) coming to serve as volunteers — for a day, a week, months or even years. Our task was simply to offer hospitality, responding as best we could to basic human rights and needs.

Casa Alitas partners with Tucson Samaritans and Casa de la Esperanza, sister organizations working for the same purpose. I joined Gail Kocourek, a member of the Tucson Samaritans, to go deep into the Arizona desert to leave food, water and first aid supplies along the migrant trails.

Walking the vast desert with its thornbushes and rough ground, and feeling the heat of three-digit weather, I wondered how many feet and bodies had been pierced by these same sharp rocks. How many more feet would inch their way to this side of the border, amid all the dangers of the journey.

How many more dehydrated people and dead bodies will be found on these paths, migrants who simply could no longer bear the heavy weight? Tired, weary, laden with a heavy yoke on their shoulders, maybe they just want to stop and rest for a bit; some must know that they might never get up again. How many more walls will be erected before we build bridges?

Near the Sasabe, Arizona, point of entry, on the Mexican side of the border, is a welcome center called Casa de la Esperanza (House of Hope). Gail Kocourek helped to found this place — alongside a tremendously dedicated woman named Dora Luz Rodriguez, originally from El Salvador.

One Saturday morning, I went with Gail and Dora to bring supplies to Casa de la Esperanza. During the course of our conversation, Dora recalled that in her youth, religious sisters worked in her village. She remembered one she had been especially fond of, whom the community called "Madre Magdalena." Madre Magdalena helped so many people, Dora said. I showed her a photo of Sister Madeline Dorsey on our website. Dora was moved to



Members of the Tucson Samaritans, a humanitarian aid organization, replenish water jugs along migrant trails in the Sonora/Arizona desert. (CNS photo/Peter Tran, Global Sisters Report)



(Left to right) Gail Kocourek, Maryknoll Sister Joy Esmenda, three volunteers, Dora Luz Rodriguez and Maryknoll Sister Genie Natividad gather at Casa de la Esperanza welcome center on the Mexican side of the border in Sasabe, Sonora. (Courtesy of Genie Natividad/U.S.)

tears, recognizing the kind, familiar face from long ago. “She is Madre Magdalena!” Dora exclaimed.

Dora herself had gone through the desert and crossed the border as a teenager. Living all this time in the States, she never forgot Madre Magdalena or the legacy of the Maryknoll Sisters. Now Dora continues the same mission of love.

Indeed, every encounter has the potential of becoming a face-to-face meeting with God. No matter how brief, an encounter is the single most important thing in the present moment.

I witnessed one such encounter when I accompanied a Mexican migrant mother and her 3-year-old son to the airport. While they were waiting to board their flight, another plane arrived. A little American boy about the same age as the Mexican boy walked with his mother off the plane and into the waiting area. On seeing the migrant boy, the newly

arrived boy ran — without rhyme or reason — to the young Mexican and threw his arms around him. This hug was reciprocated.

Everyone was stunned. Something totally unexpected was happening before our eyes: a gesture of acceptance with no questions asked, no conditions given; hospitality innocently extended and sincerely received. No words needed to be exchanged. No paper documents had to be produced and stamped. The embrace said it all.

Serving as a volunteer at the U.S./ Mexico border, I encountered not strangers, but guests. I got to meet migrants, refugees and asylum seekers during their darkest and most vulnerable moments. I saw the face of Jesus in each encounter, and since then, I have not been the same. ✦

*Maryknoll Sister Genie Natividad is vice president of the Maryknoll Sisters.*

“Let the children come to me and do not prevent them...” — Matthew 19:14



Courtesy of Genie Natividad/U.S.

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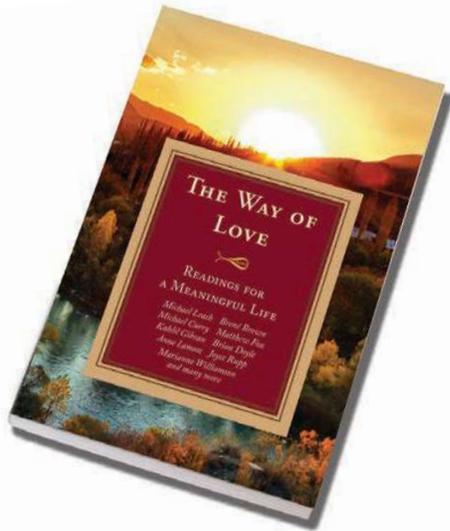
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Spotlight



Preview by Michael Leach

*“Love one another as I have loved you.”*

—John 13:34

Everyone has a philosophy of life. For Terry Malloy (Marlon Brando) in the 1954 movie *On the Waterfront*, it was “Do it to him before he does it to you.” Terry falls in love with a convent girl, Edie (Eva Marie Saint) who asks him, “Shouldn’t everybody care about everybody else?”

“I mean,” says Edie, “isn’t everybody a *part* of everybody else?” This is her philosophy of life. He calls her a fruitcake.

Later Terry crosses paths with Father Barry (Karl Malden), whose parish is the rough waterfront of New Jersey. He, too, has a philosophy of life. When the mob murders a longshoreman, Father Barry stands over the corpse and preaches to the other

longshoremen. One of them says he should go back to his church and Father Barry replies:

*“Boys, this is my church! And if you don’t think Christ is down here on the waterfront, you’ve got another thing coming! Every morning when the hiring boss blows his whistle, Jesus stands alongside you in the shape-up. He sees why some of you get picked and some of you get passed over. He sees the family men worrying about getting the rent and getting food in the house for the wife and the kids. ... Every fellow down here is your brother in Christ! ... He’s kneeling right here beside Dugan. And he’s saying with all of you, if you do it to the least of mine, you do it to me!”*

The words pierce Terry Malloy’s

heart like the spear that ran through Jesus’ side. He starts to see what Edie sees: *we are part of one another*. His conscience stirs. “Conscience,” he complains to Father Barry later, “that stuff can drive you nuts!” It drives him instead into Edie’s arms and to a new philosophy of life.

At the end of the movie Terry carries his hook over his shoulder like a cross and stands up for love, for God, for Edie, and his neighbors.

Yes, everyone has a philosophy of life. And, just like love, as the Andrew Lloyd Weber song goes, “It changes everything, how we live and how we die.”

The philosophy beneath *The Way of Love* is Edie’s and Father Barry’s and later Terry’s, expressed in a multitude of ways by more than a hundred great writers including Anne Lamott, Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day, Richard Rohr, Brian Doyle and Thomas Merton. Some of the entries run three pages, while others are a single powerful sentence: “Love makes

your soul crawl out from its hiding place.” (Zora Neale Hurston)

You can read this book from beginning to end or in chunks if you wish, and find something new or something you forgot that will give you inspiration or encouragement. Just as good, you can pick it up every now and then and turn to any old page and find something assuring that will help make your day.

*The Way of Love* is the sixth book in a series that includes *The Way of Kindness*, *The Way of Gratitude*, *The Way of Forgiveness*, *The Way of Suffering*, and *The Way of Peace*. If “love is all you need,” as the Beatles sang, then this book is the only one in the series you need to read. But I hope you’ll want to read them all. Just as each of us is a part of everyone, so each of the values in each book blends one into another. Everything on the waterfront matters. ✦

*Michael Leach is publisher emeritus of Orbis Books.*



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*“Come, Lord, Prince of Peace!  
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reflections of your peace!”*

— Pope Francis

A girl in Buenos Aires attends Mass at the Ukrainian  
Catholic Eparchy of Santa Maria del Patrocinio  
Feb. 27, 2022, after the Russian invasion.  
(CNS photo/Mariana Nedelcu, Reuters)



Several members of the Committee of 12, (from left) Maryknoll Lay Missioner Marj Humphrey, Maryknoll Sister Ellen McDonald, Maryknoll Father John Sivalon, Maryknoll Sister Leonor Montiel, Maryknoll Father Kenneth Thesing and Maryknoll Sister Claudette LaVerdiere, walk together at the Maryknoll Sisters Center in Ossining, New York. (Maria-Pia Negro Chin/U.S.)

# *Embracing Synodality*

By Maria-Pia Negro Chin

*Missioners listen, dialogue and discern together in the worldwide synodal process*

**A**n African proverb says, “If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together.”

This proverb, sometimes cited by Pope Francis, reflects his call to “journey together” through the Synod 2021-2024. The three-year process is centered around synodality, the style of being a Church that listens to the Holy Spirit — and each other.

Unlike previous synods, this process invited all Catholics to participate in a worldwide consultation, emphasizing that there is a place for everyone in the Church. With regional listening sessions already held, discernment is now taking place on the continental level. The process will culminate at synod meetings of Church leaders and delegates in October 2023 and October 2024 in Rome.



Maryknoll Sister Montiel visits people in Cambodia as part of Seedling of Hope, a program to provide support to people living with HIV and their families. (Sean Sprague/Cambodia)

Pope Francis teaches that the mission of the Church requires the entire People of God to walk together, with each member playing a crucial role. “In the Church, all of us are called to be missionary disciples and to make our own contribution,” he says.

Maryknoll has participated in the synod process in many ways.

One way was through zoom meetings that congregated 125 members of the Maryknoll Society, Sisters, Lay Missioners and Affiliates. The meetings energized participants, who live out their baptismal vocation to mission in different ways, encouraging them to walk together more intentionally as one Maryknoll movement.

The meetings were led by the Committee of 12, a self-organized group of missionaries from each Maryknoll expression: three Maryknoll priests, three sisters, three lay missionaries and three affiliates. Many of them had been or are currently in leadership positions in

Maryknoll. The 12 began meeting by zoom every other week in 2020 “to learn from one another and to see where we can cooperate with one another, and to really listen to everyone,” explains Maryknoll Sister Ellen McDonald.

By getting to know each other more deeply, listening to each other’s challenges and hopes, and praying together, the group of laypeople, priests and sisters was inspired to share this synodal impetus with others.

Maryknoll missionaries, who have been walking alongside people in need in Africa, Asia and Latin America for over 100 years, are well-versed in the joys and struggles of synodality in mission. The synodal discussions affirmed the various gifts that come from living among, listening to and collaborating with people at the margins. “I often say I was in mission with local people (in East Africa) who were missionaries themselves,” says Maryknoll Father Kenneth Thesing, who approached Maryknoll Sister

Claudette LaVerdiere to create the Committee of 12.

This approach to mission impacts — and empowers — the people the missionaries accompany. Sister McDonald still remembers an indigenous woman in the altiplano of Peru saying, “Before Maryknoll came, we walked bent over, but now we know how to stand tall, because we know that we are the Church.”

For missionaries, relationship building “starts with vulnerability,” says Robert Short, executive coordinator of the Maryknoll Affiliates, who was a lay missionary in Bolivia and Ecuador. “You’re in a new country with a new language and a new culture, new food and everything is new. You feel vulnerable. But to embrace that is a good thing. It helped me connect with the people.”

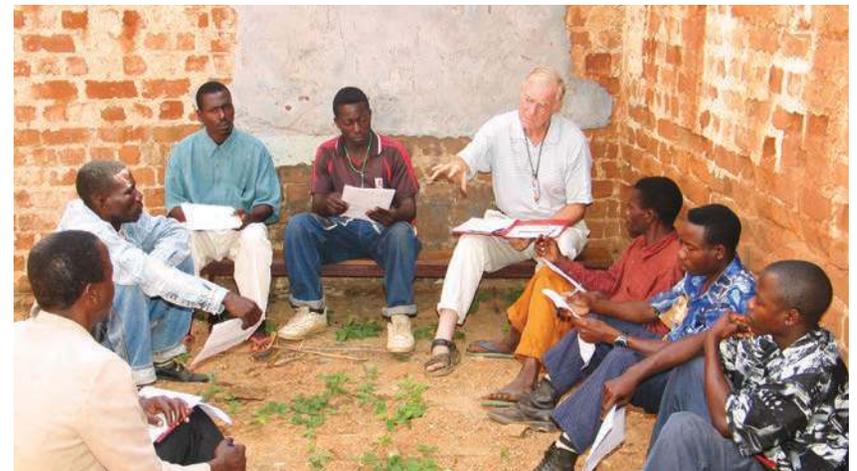
“If we want to be in solidarity with people on the margins, we have to get to know who we are in solidarity with,” says Kylene Fremling, a Maryknoll lay missionary who works at a school for

children with physical disabilities in Cambodia. “The more we hear from the people and their experiences, (the more) we are transformed.”

Helping with listening sessions in their parishes, dioceses and vicariates worldwide is another way Maryknollers have been part of the synodal process. Short says this includes many of the 45 Maryknoll affiliate chapters in the United States, Latin America, East Africa and Asia.

Nairobi-based Maryknoll Father Joseph Healey, who belongs to international groups engaging with the synodal process, says that flourishing Small Christian Communities in East Africa already express synodality in action. A Catholic sister from Tanzania once told him, “This is our way of life,” and she added, “We’re community people.”

Father Healey and other Maryknollers also help to conduct listening sessions with groups of young adults in the States as well as in East Africa. In Kenya, he works with



In Mozambique in 2004, Maryknoll Father Thesing converses with leaders of small worship communities. Missioners value listening and dialogue. (Mark Gruenke, Maryknoll Mission Archives)

Alloys Nyakundi, who facilitates Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Communities discussions online.

Like other entities participating in the synod process, the meeting of the 125 Maryknoll participants yielded a synthesis document. After consulting participants on the document's contents, the synthesis was shared with the leadership of each Maryknoll expression and then sent to the Synod's office in Rome.

The document emphasized common concerns for the world, such as "urgency of the joint needs of the earth and the poor, especially migrants and other displaced persons, racism and critical modes of violence."

It also reaffirmed the preferential option for those in the margins that Jesus showed in the Gospels. This option calls for the full participation of all and "it raises up what the Holy Spirit is saying in the lives of people throughout the world."

Father Healey foresees the impact of the Synod 2021-2024 on two levels: diocesan and national. He believes the findings will lead to ways in which dioceses can reinvigorate or re-energize parishes. And, after the meetings in Rome, delegates will go back to their countries to further discuss steps. Deep listening to people's concerns, pains and hopes, as well as their experiences with the Church — especially those who don't usually have a voice — is the beginning of synodality.

Maryknoll Sister Maria Leonor Montiel spent 20 years in Cambodia, where Maryknoll has a rich history of collaboration among society members, sisters and laypeople. She hopes that the worldwide synodal process

"renews the Church in such a way that it would also draw in the people who have questions and have been disillusioned and have left the institutional Church" as well as "those who feel discriminated against."

"Synodality is ... largely focused on community and relationship building," says Fremling, who has served in Cambodia since 2018. "We have to listen to each other and see what other voices we need to include in conversations and how we deepen all of those relationships."

Maryknoll Father John Sivalon adds that no matter what happens at the upcoming Synod gatherings in Rome, the spirit of synodality (the process of being Church by listening to all voices as we walk together) has been ignited.

While the continental phase of the worldwide synodal process carries on, Maryknollers continue to discern how to go forth on a more collaborative path. One concrete way is forming small intentional mission communities, whether in person or virtual. The groups strengthen their bonds through deep listening, contemplative prayer and collective action.

Sister Montiel, currently on the sisters' leadership team, says these small groups will bring about life-giving relationships within the Maryknoll family. Walking more closely together as Maryknoll would serve to strengthen the missionaries' work.

"Mission is relationships," says Sister Montiel. "How are we making, in our way of being, the love of God flow unobstructed between us and in the whole world?"

The missionaries hope the Holy Spirit will continue to show them how. ✠

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serves in Peru. (Rodrigo Ulloa-Chavarry/U.S.)



# IN SEARCH OF LAKOTA SPIRIT

By Scott Giblin

*A Maryknoll immersion trip takes participants to Native American lands*

*Created four years ago for St. Joseph's Indian School in Chamberlain, South Dakota, this mural by Oblate Brother Mickey McGrath was shared by the artist with other participants in a Maryknoll immersion trip in August 2022. (Courtesy of Mickey McGrath/U.S.)*

"All over the sky a sacred voice is calling your name." — Black Elk, a Lakota leader and Catholic catechist

Within the hot summer winds last August, I could hear God Our Father calling to me and my Maryknoll companions: "Look, please. Don't be fooled by the blue sky, the warm winds and the quiet. Feel. See. The people of this land are gifts to the world. Listen to their stories. Gaze upon their mountains. And, in the end, tell me what you saw."

For one week, eight other Maryknoll immersion program participants and I, guided by a Lakota chief, took curious steps into the lands of the Great Sioux Nation. Sponsored by the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, the trip was designed to contextualize the experience of our Native American brothers and sisters. Deacon Dennis Holley — who notes that Maryknoll accompanies and serves Indigenous people around the world — promised we would "hear stories of suffering and resilience" and "gain firsthand insight" into an unfolding history.

Traveling in a van over dangerously narrow two-lane roads, we sought out the far corners of South Dakota and Wyoming.

Like time travelers, we skirted over and around the past. We paused at the memorials of Wounded Knee and the infamous Canton Asylum and at the remains of residential schools.

On Dec. 29, 1890, the Lakota had camped on the silvery edge of a

crooked creek called Wounded Knee. That morning, shadowy outlines of the 7th Cavalry blurred in the mist on the hills. One shot rang out, then another. Cannon blasts tore the frozen ground. By the time the cannons finished echoing and the last rifle ceased smoldering, more than 300 Lakota men, women and children lay massacred on the snowy plain.

From 1902 to 1933, just for practicing their rituals, singing in their own languages, or dancing and pounding their drums, Native Americans could be placed in the Canton Indian Insane Asylum. Brutality and beatings — sometimes to death — followed. By the time the doors to Canton closed, 121 people were laid to their final rest in unmarked graves. Shadows of the "insane" have all but disappeared. The site is gone, the land turned into a golf course. Only a plaque commends the spirits there. A golf cart whizzed by as my companions and I, treading lightly over the sacred ground, whispered prayers for the lost men and women beneath our feet.

Then there was the specter of the boarding houses or residential schools that forced the assimilation of Indigenous children. With the physical structures almost gone, memories of what happened inside them are scarred into the yellow grass. The tragedy of the treatment of the children and their families is lodged in books. But the wounds are etched on the faces of the first people of this land.

On this journey, the Lakota people

were represented by Doctor Gary Cheeseman, associate professor of education at the University of South Dakota. Chief, sun dancer, storyteller — he opened his life to us Maryknoll visitors. He invited us into his teepee on Lakota ceremonial grounds and, inside, enveloped us with their creation story.

With the sun peeking through the top of the teepee, I stood in silence as the sweet smoke of burning sage was swept over me with an eagle feather. Swirling his medicine pipe to the four directions of the earth, the chief then shared the pipe, explaining, “There are no lies between us; we’ll always have this relationship by sharing and smoking this pipe.”

What contrast. On one hand, the Lakota chief generously proffered the “real” story of his people in all its spiritual wealth. On the other hand, we witnessed the starkness of the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations. Pine Ridge includes one of the poorest counties in the country. Housing is subpar at best. Native unemployment fluctuates between 80 and 90 percent. “On the reservations things change, but they don’t always change for the good,” Cheeseman said.

Cheeseman spoke of great Lakota leaders such as his mentor, Hunka. He made many references to the 19th century warrior chief, Crazy Horse. As I walked the ceremonial grounds where the sun dance is performed, I imagined the mighty spirit of Crazy Horse watching the dance, sitting on his noble horse.



*Participants in the Maryknoll immersion trip visit the teepee of their Lakota guide, an associate professor at the University of South Dakota. (Courtesy of Scott Giblin/U.S.)*

a beacon of empowerment. The Jesuits, or “Black Robes” as they were called, were invited to these lands by Chief Red Cloud, Chief Spotted Tail and Chief Two Strike; St. Katharine Drexel financed the first school. Today, in addition to its four churches on the reservation, the mission runs a recovery center, a dental clinic and eight community-based programs. Its Sapa Un Academy educates about 50 children, integrating Catholic faith with Lakota language and culture.

The other beacon of hope we

We visited the unfinished monument to Crazy Horse in the Black Hills. After 70 years, the rock sculpture is still being carved into stone. The Crazy Horse Memorial is like the story of the modern Lakota: a story waiting to be completed. The memorial reminds visitors of what is yet to be accomplished — not only at this sacred site, but also in Native communities, through housing, job placement, better treatment for depression and substance abuse. As Cheeseman said, “When legends die, dreams end.” His whole life has been spent keeping the Lakota dream alive.

Dotted along the golden plains and the banks of the Missouri River there were also signs of hope.

In the heart of the Rosebud Reservation, St. Francis Mission stands as



*Inside the teepee, Deacon Dennis Holley (left), who helped organize the trip, listens with other participants as Chief Gary Cheeseman tells the Lakota creation story. (Scott Giblin/U.S.)*

visited, St. Joseph's Indian School, sits between a stretch of cottonwood trees and the Missouri River. There, near Chamberlain, South Dakota, more than 200 Lakota children are educated and housed at no cost to their families. Run by the Priests of the Sacred Heart, the school's approach is holistic. St. Joseph's provides counseling services and medical care at a health center on the school campus, which also has a thrift store and a Lakota museum and cultural center. Horses are essential to the Plains peoples, and St. Joseph's keeps horses as companions for students. Its mission is to be a home for healing and for dreams.

As we ended the week, with the warm August winds on the Dakota plains filling my lungs, there welled up in me a sense of desolate beauty. Looking back on our immersion experience, I see a painful history and a loneliness in the Lakota land. Yet, there is a great gift these people have to share with the world.

This is what I saw, and this is my prayer: to share this journey with you, so you can share it, too.

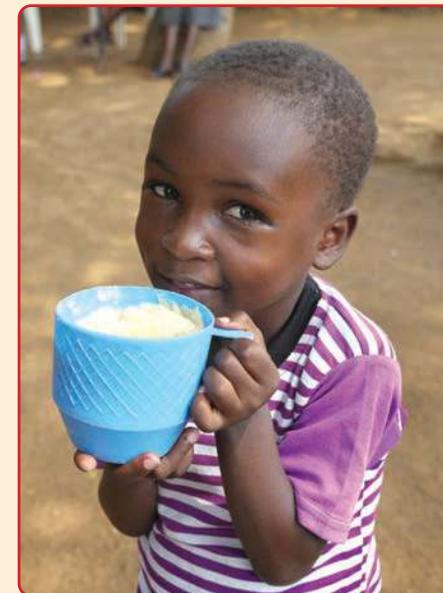
*"Let every step you take on earth be a prayer."* — Black Elk ✨

*Scott Giblin, a retired social worker, lives with his wife, Joanne, in Piermont, New York.*

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*Lakota Chief Gary Cheeseman sings and drums at the ceremonial site, an Indigenous graveyard, where the Maryknoll immersion trip began and concluded. (Scott Giblin/U.S.)*

# *Giving the* **OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN**

By Giovana Soria

*Retired Maryknoll Lay Missioner couple continues to serve in Bolivia*



Sean Sprague/Thailand

**F**or Hiep Vu and Tawny Thanh, mission never stops. The married couple, who recently retired as Maryknoll lay missionaries, continues to serve in their beloved Bolivia, where they volunteer in local efforts for the underprivileged.

Although they now feel at home in Bolivia, their story began far away, on another continent. At the end of the Vietnam War in April 1975, as North Vietnamese troops closed in on the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon, their hometown, young adults Vu and Thanh (now 66 and 67) both fled their country to seek refuge in the United States.

"Tawny and I left with many conflicting feelings of losing our families, our youth, our friends and the anxiety about an uncertain future," says Vu.

They were evacuated to Guam before being sent on to the States. There, the two friends learned that

the communists had taken control of their city. "Being with each other when the news that Saigon fell, we cried our hearts out," he says. "We shared the pain of losing our country."

Thanh's first stop in the United States was Fort Chaffee in Arkansas. "I became a nobody with no future," she remembers. "I looked at the masses of people poured in to the camp from all walks of life. Each one of us had a story to tell, each of us asked, 'What will the future be like?'"

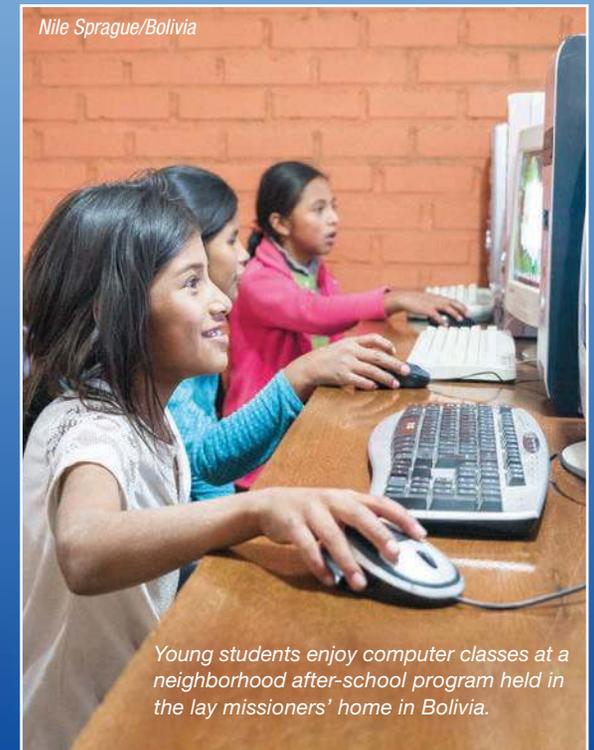
Meanwhile, Vu arrived at Camp Pendleton in California.

Five years later, Vu and Thanh reunited in California, where they married and settled down. Vu became an electronics engineer and Thanh owned her own clothing retail business. Although they found their careers rewarding, they felt



Nile Sprague/Bolivia

*(Above) Maryknoll Lay Missioner Hiep Vu visits a Lahu tribal family in Chiang Dao in 2005. (Below) Vu and his wife, Maryknoll Lay Missioner Tawny Thanh, serve in Cochabamba.*



Nile Sprague/Bolivia

*Young students enjoy computer classes at a neighborhood after-school program held in the lay missionaries' home in Bolivia.*



Maryknoll Lay Missioner Tawny Thanh tends to a child at the daycare of an institute run by the Misioneras Parroquiales del Niño Jesús de Praga in Cochabamba. (Nile Sprague/Bolivia)



While serving along with her husband as a lay missioner in Thailand, Thanh visits a weaver in a Lahu tribal village in Chiang Dao in 2005. (Sean Sprague/Thailand)

called to do more. Not having children, they decided to serve others through ministry.

When Vietnam opened up in 1994, the couple visited Vietnamese religious sisters serving there. That was the beginning of their call to mission. For almost 30 years, their journey has led them to accompany children, youth, refugees, prisoners and people with disabilities in Asia and Latin America.

Vu and Thanh joined the Maryknoll Lay Missioners in 2000 and served in Asia for 10 years. Their first assignment was to Thailand, where they worked with refugees from Myanmar who had fled their homes following a military coup. The couple remembers visiting camps of 1,000 to 3,000 refugees. "They lived in the jungle," Vu says. "We used to bring food, clothing and mosquito nets."

After Thailand, Vu and Thanh served in Myanmar. Vu taught computer skills to seminarians, introduc-

ing them to the internet and showing them how to seek out news and information. "Information was controlled by the government," Thanh explains. "Wherever we went, the taxi driver had to report where we were going. There wasn't freedom to do mission."

Vu and Thanh were next assigned to Vietnam, where they served in a program to reintegrate juvenile offenders into society. The youth learned skills like welding, computing and motorbike and auto repair. The program also helped them find — and pay for — further job training. In addition, Vu served at Sao Mai Center, a school for about 80 children with autism.

After a furlough to care for Vu's elderly father, the couple rejoined the Maryknoll Lay Missioners in 2015. This time, they accepted an assignment to Latin America, and they embarked on mission to Bolivia, the country where they would

remain even after retiring.

In Cochabamba, the couple lived in the community of Punata and both served at the Instituto Virgen del Rosario, sponsored by the government and run by the religious sisters, the Misioneras Parroquiales del Niño Jesús de Praga. The institute trains people in gastronomy, hairdressing, computing, dressmaking and crafts.

Vu says his expertise as an instructor in computer skills was put to good use. At the institute, he taught computer classes for a training program of two and a half years. "I looked for students who wanted to learn and I helped out," he says, adding that students can only learn when they are given the opportunity.

A student of the institute, Victor Hugo, says he is thankful for the missioner's teaching. "We are very grateful to Jaime [as Vu is known] because he comes from far away to teach us," says Hugo, who hopes to become a computer technician. "Life

is difficult, but if you don't make an effort to study, you won't achieve anything," he continues.

Thanh also volunteered at the institute, serving in its daycare. A teacher, an assistant and Thanh (who is known as Antonia) took care of 20 children and provided educational activities. "The children are used to Antonia," says Karina Arias, the teacher. "Children would come with a cold, diarrhea or other health issues and Antonia had the patience to take care of them."

Thanh also offered cooking classes at Guadalupanos Special Education Center to special needs students with Down syndrome and other chronic conditions.

She recalls a little girl with Parkinson's disease. "She wanted to do everything, but her hand was shaking and she could not even hold a cup of flour without spilling it," Thanh remembers. Yet, the child was interested and eager. With some help, the



Maryknoll Lay Missioner Hiep Vu teaches computer classes at the Instituto Virgen del Rosario run by religious sisters in Punata, Cochabamba. (Nile Sprague/Bolivia)

little chef made it through the class.

As the couple made plans last year to retire, staying in the country that had won their hearts, they knew they still wanted to help people as much as they were able. Exploring volunteer options, Vu visited Stefano Catholic High School in the south of the city of Cochabamba. The school of about 900 students had one computer room with 14 computers but lacked teachers.

"I spoke to the principal and offered to teach computer classes," Vu says. Since there are too many students for him to teach, they came up with a solution. "We divided them in groups of 30 students and acquired software so they can learn" in a self-directed manner.

Most of the students hadn't even seen a computer before, he says. They are learning Microsoft Office with Microsoft Word and Excel. They also learn critical thinking through educational computer games. "They are more excited about computer

classes than any other subject," says Vu. "They always wait outside the room for the previous class to leave."

Thanh continues helping the Misioneras Parroquiales sisters, now as a consultant. Part of their mission is providing food to children and families in remote Andean Mountain communities outside Cochabamba. At Christmastime, they bring gifts to the children, gathering them together and playing games. "I enjoy sharing with the people, especially the children," says Thanh.

The couple, who served with Maryknoll Lay Missioners until 2021, still joins their fellow missionaries for holidays and special events.

Vu and Thanh plan to continue their mission in Bolivia as long as people there need them. "My hope is that the more people know, the more they are aware of what they need to better themselves," says Vu. "Since I started serving with Maryknoll, I've learned that education is the key everywhere."✠

## Maryknoll Lay Missioners has embraced a new focus on



Paul Jeffrey/South Sudan

# Nonviolence

Two men shake hands on a bridge at Kuron Peace Village, South Sudan. Maryknoll Lay Missioner Gabe Hurrish supports the village's peacebuilding work in a remote area that has experienced decades of violent conflict.

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# TRUSTING GOD'S PLAN

By Maria-Pia Negro Chin

*Saying "Yes" to God guides Bolivian woman's journey as a missionary disciple*



*Silvana Martinez smiles next to an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Sacred Heart Center, which helps to better the quality of migrants' lives in Richmond, Virginia. (All photos courtesy of Silvana Martinez)*

People often ask Silvana Martinez how she can have such a positive outlook on life. She responds that she is a missionary at heart. "Each of us has a little missionary flame since our baptism," Martinez says, who is originally from the southern Bolivian city of Tarija.

The flame in Martinez was set ablaze when she joined the Maryknoll Mission Center in Cochabamba, Bolivia, after working at a bank for 10 years. Her coworkers were surprised that she would leave her position as bank branch manager to start a new job for a third of the pay. But Martinez, now 41, had no doubt that she wanted to serve God.

"We, humanly, want to do things with a bit of security," she adds, "but I knew that God's plans were better than mine."

Among her many responsibilities at the Maryknoll center, Martinez

coordinated post-graduate programs, worked with foreign volunteers and facilitated workshops and trainings in various skills and topics. She learned from missionaries like Maryknoll Father Eugene Toland, an expert in methodologies that help people by "empowering them in their relationships."

For five years, Martinez also saw the missionaries in action: working in orphanages, with children living with HIV, and with the homeless.

Among many memories, she recalls when, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Maryknoll Lay Missioner Juan Gomez started making food to feed the growing number of homeless. The project began with 20 people, but soon, lines of hungry people came to get a meal. It later became a soup kitchen for the community. "That is what Maryknoll taught us," she says. "If you



*Martinez is pictured at the offices of the Catholic Volunteer Network located in Washington, D.C. Volunteering is an important part of her life, she says.*



*During a trip to Kenya last summer, Martinez visited a traditional Maasai Mara community. She found learning about the people's culture to be a highlight of the trip.*

want to do something, just start walking and the Lord will show you the rest."

That year, feeling she had accomplished her purpose at the center and discerning the call to serve beyond her country's borders, Martinez made a life-changing decision. She came to the United States with one suitcase and a heart full of trust in God. "I said to the Lord, 'I put myself in your hands. Direct me where you'd like me to be,'" she recalls.

Martinez arrived in Virginia and began looking for work with the Church.

"I saw how God provides," Martinez says. She shares that when she first arrived, not having a car, it was hard to get around Richmond. One night, while wondering how to get to a grocery store when she did not have anything to eat, she heard a knock on the door. It was someone from her parish bringing a plate

of food. "I said to myself, 'That is God,'" she recounts through tears. "Even though I have no family here ... I am not alone because God has put wonderful people in my path."

Martinez, a permanent resident, settled into a job as an administrative assistant at Sacred Heart, a Jesuit parish in Richmond. There, she uses her Spanish to serve parishioners from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

Best of all, working at Sacred Heart gives Martinez the opportunity to give to others. In addition to her administrative duties, she volunteers with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which supports people living close to the poverty line. She also volunteers with Richmonders Involved to Strengthen our Communities, a social justice ministry organization comprised of 22 congregations, including Sacred Heart. The organization raises awareness



*Martinez talks with children during a visit to the after-school program run by a Maryknoll lay missionary in Tacopaya, a remote Indigenous town in the Andean mountains of Bolivia.*

about affordable housing, labor issues, migration and care of creation.

Although she is immersed in local activities, Martinez has not lost her connection to Maryknoll.

"Silvana has had a great love for Maryknoll since her days working with us in Cochabamba," says Kevin McCarthy, leader of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers' teacher-catechist team. "Since she relocated to the U.S., she has continued collaborating with us." He explains that Martinez has helped Maryknoll facilitate virtual courses on missionary discipleship formation.

In order to keep her own "flame" burning brightly, Martinez continues her own formation as a missionary disciple. She joined the Maryknoll Young Adult Empowerment Communities, a two-year accompaniment program, and now leads a young adult group at the parish, sharing the wealth of resources she acquired

through the program.

Last summer, Martinez broadened her mission horizons when she traveled to Kenya with other friends accompanying newly ordained Maryknoll Father John Siyumbu. They attended Father Siyumbu's homecoming and also gathered with Maryknoll seminarians in Nairobi.

Martinez said the trip's highlight was visiting different communities. "There is so much cultural richness," she says. "Being able to share with the people — the children! Eating with them, dancing with them, enjoying their culture."

Returning to Virginia, Martinez encourages U.S. people — especially young people — to live in the present and to trust in God.

"When you feel a calling, be brave, follow it," she says. "Go beyond the uncertainty. Take courage in the certainty that God does not abandon us on the journey." ✠

# World Watch

## Human Rights Abuse in the Philippines

By Susan Gunn

**T**he new president of the Philippines, Ferdinand “Bong Bong” Marcos Jr. — son of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos — inherits a presidency stained by bloodshed and human rights abuses. The past president, the authoritarian Rodrigo Duterte, made his crackdown on drug users and dealers the focal point of his rule of the predominantly Catholic Southeast Asian country.

Without mentioning documented harassment of journalists, “red-tagging” of Catholic sisters as communists, or killings by police and military forces, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken described the U.S. relationship with the Philippines as “extraordinary” when he met with Marcos in August. Blinken said the United States stands ready to work with Marcos in areas of defense, climate change and controlling the COVID-19 pandemic.

President Joe Biden also put aside past disagreements and ongoing concerns for human rights and democracy when he met with Marcos during the U.N. General Assembly in New York in September. “We’ve had some rocky times, but the fact is it’s a critical, critical relationship, from our perspective,” Biden said in a press

conference before the meeting.

Both leaders say what makes their relationship so important is “the situation in the South China Sea,” referring to sweeping claims by China of sovereignty over the sea where other countries, such as Vietnam and the Philippines, have long held maritime rights. The United States and the Philippines recognize the need to work together if they want to push back against growing Chinese power in the region.

But where does that leave the people of the Philippines, suffering under a government with weakened respect for human rights and democratic norms?

Brandon Lee, a U.S. citizen, journalist and activist who was shot in the Philippines in a suspected extrajudicial assassination attempt in 2019, released a recorded video message to Biden on social media.

“For nine years, I lived in the Philippines with my wife and daughter,” Lee said in the video. “I was an environmentalist, human rights volunteer and community-based journalist, writing to protect the indigenous people against the development aggression on their land and livelihood. In response to my advocacy and activism, Philippine military harassed, intimidated and threatened



*Filipino activists hold placards at a protest held during the inauguration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in Manila, June 30, 2022. (CNS photo/Vina Salazar, Reuters)*

me. I was under constant surveillance for five years and on August 6th of 2019, they shot me in front of my family. I nearly died. I suffered eight cardiac arrests and now I’m a quadriplegic. I cannot use my hands or my legs. I’m paralyzed from the chest down.”

Now living with his family in the States, Lee asks Biden to “raise the critical issue of human rights to the new Philippine administration.”

Lee alleges in the recording that during the past six years under Duterte, Philippine military and police killed

over 30,000 people with impunity. During the first month under Marcos, he says, illegal arrests and indiscriminate killings of activists have already taken place.

Lee concludes, “The U.S./Philippine relationship should not only be based on economic and military interest but most importantly, on the respect for human rights, justice and accountability to its people.” ✨

*Susan Gunn is director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

### FAITH IN ACTION:

- Learn more about human rights concerns in the Philippines <https://bit.ly/PhilippinesHR>
- Ask Congress to pass the Philippines Human Rights Act to suspend security assistance to the Philippines until the government demonstrates respect for human rights. <https://bit.ly/PHRA2022>
- Watch Brandon Lee’s video at <https://bit.ly/BrandonLeeVideo>

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](http://www.maryknollogc.org) or email [ogc@maryknollogc.org](mailto:ogc@maryknollogc.org).

# Partners in Mission

## *From the Bronx to Maryknoll*

By John Blazo, M.M.

**A**fter 34 years as an editor at *Maryknoll* magazine, Margaret Gaughan recently retired. “It has been a blessing to work at Maryknoll, where sharing faith is the reason for being,” says Marge, as she is known to her colleagues.

The eldest of the four daughters and two sons of Agnes and James Gaughan, Marge says faith was the bedrock of her family as she grew up in the Bronx, New York. She attended her parish elementary school, St. Frances de Chantal, and nearby Preston High School, both staffed by the Sisters of the Divine Compassion. “I was attracted to their charisma,” Marge says. She joined the community in 1966.

With a bachelor’s degree in English and a master’s in religious studies, Marge taught English in middle school and later served as a parish director of religious education. In 1981 she left her religious community and got a job in New York City as a proofreader and copy editor for business publications. But she began to miss ministry.

Providentially, in 1985 Marge attended the first Mass of a neighbor who was ordained a Maryknoll priest. At the festivities in the family’s backyard, Marge met several Maryknollers and staff members of *Maryknoll* mag-

azine, including then Managing Editor Frank Maurovich. “I told Frank that *Maryknoll* magazine had inspired me from the time I was a child reading my grandmother’s copy,” says Marge. “I even considered being a Maryknoll sister but was afraid of remote places with wild animals and snakes!”

Maurovich said the magazine had no openings but to send her resume. Three years later, he invited her to join the *Maryknoll* magazine team. Her long partnership with Maryknoll began.

She started as a proofreader and copy editor and soon was also doing interviews and writing stories. “I will always be grateful to Frank for having confidence in me and helping me grow as an editor,” she says.

“My main job,” Marge explains, “was to help missionaries tell their stories by making the stories more accessible to the reader.” That meant clarifying ambiguities, checking facts and bringing out hidden details that would make the story more interesting. “It’s like straightening pictures on a wall,” Marge says. “If the picture is crooked or upside down, the viewer can’t fully enjoy its beauty.”

Marge’s skill at “straightening pictures” helped *Maryknoll* magazine to win numerous awards over the years.



*Marge Gaughan and Maryknoll Father John Moran (right), shown with Maryknoll Father Raymond Finch, receive the Father Thomas F. Price Partnership in Mission Awards in 2019 for exemplifying the Maryknoll spirit of mission. (Diane Mastrogiulio/U.S.)*

And, working at Maryknoll went from being a job to a calling.

Marge says her life was enriched by the stories of Maryknoll missionaries. “I was touched by how much they loved the people they worked with overseas,” she says.

She got a taste of overseas mission on a reporting trip in 2001. “I was in El Salvador on September 11 interviewing survivors of two severe earthquakes when terrorists attacked the Twin Towers in New York just 40 minutes from my home,” Marge recalls. She was impressed that in the midst of their own suffering the Salvadoran people expressed deep solidarity with the people of the United States.

Editing each issue of *Maryknoll* for over three decades, from her desk in Ossining, New York, Marge became acquainted with Maryknoll mission sites all over the world. Her zeal for mission — and remarkable gift for

names and dates — made her a veritable repository of Maryknoll narratives.

“Marge is quite simply one of the best editors I have ever known,” says Lynn F. Monahan, *Maryknoll* magazine’s editor-in-chief. “It has been an inspiration to work with her.” He notes that Marge earned recognition not only from her colleagues at Maryknoll, but nationally, being honored in 2017 as Editor of the Year by the then Catholic Press Association, which cited her mastery at “refocusing and re-writing stories to make so-so articles good and make good articles great.”

In retirement, she continues to offer daily Mass and prayer for Maryknoll missions.

Marge says, “God’s hand has always guided me at every crossroads. I look forward to the next direction.”✠

*Maryknoll Brother John Blazo is a mission promoter in the United States.*

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## READERS' RESPONSES

### TRUE BROTHERS

I enjoyed Deirdre Cornell's article "Being A Brother" in the *Maryknoll* magazine Fall 2022 issue. The article discussed the life and career of Brother Tim Raible, including his service in Bangkok, Thailand, at the English language program started by Brother John Beeching.

As a Maryknoll volunteer, I taught at the school for 10 years beginning in 2009. The kind assistance and helpful advice provided by both brothers made my experience there most enjoyable and rewarding. Their support was one of the primary reasons I went back year after year.

My special thanks to Brother Tim and to Brother John, who sadly recently passed away, for an unforgettable teaching experience.

*James Martin  
Mesa, Arizona*

### HONORING SISTER JOAN

Among the departed Maryknoll missionaries listed in the last issue was Sister Joan Delaney, a missionary in Hong Kong, ecumenist, and a friend to so many.

I first met Sister Joan Delaney in 1983-1984 when I was the Catholic Tutor (a visiting Catholic scholar) at the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland. I was there for a year, and Sister Joan came in the early spring. We immediately became friends, and I began to discover the many friends she had made

through her own ecumenical work.

After my time at Bossey, I returned to Loyola Marymount University here in Los Angeles where I taught for 44 years. I am now semi-retired, but still doing ecumenical work. One of my commitments has been co-chairing the Archdiocesan Catholic/Evangelical Committee, and Sister Joan joined us when she moved into the Maryknoll community in Monrovia, California.

I will miss this indomitable woman.

*Thomas Rausch, S.J.  
Los Angeles, California*

### BLESSINGS AROUND

Thank you for *Maryknoll* magazine. I look forward to receiving it, as I have for so many years. I read it cover to cover in one sitting — even the very small print. Thank you as well for the "Maryknoll in Touch" mailings. I call them little bios. It is a great way to get to know the priests and brothers better. Thank you for the truly beautiful prayer cards by Father Joseph Veneroso and his photo meditations in the magazine. Being a member of the Maryknoll family is such a blessing and it has been a privilege to have known so many of you over the years.

*Velma Espinoza  
Denver, Colorado*

### TOO POLITICAL

I enjoy your *Maryknoll* magazine for the most part. I enjoy all the spiritual articles, the work of the Maryknollers and the achievements they make in

helping people in need and advocating for the faith.

However, I take issue with how political the magazine has become.

Global warming is a political issue, not a religious one. While the good Lord wanted us to be stewards of the earth, he didn't expect us to empower governmental bodies to rule over us and deprive us of basic human rights and the ability to utilize the resources he has provided.

I am a farmer's daughter. Farming is unpredictable wherever you go. The use of fertilizers and pesticides improves products and intensifies production. This is why America can provide for so many. I don't care what kind of education your "experts" claim to have. I thought our Lord and master is in charge of heaven and earth. Your contributors, me included, don't give money to the missions to push agendas. We want you to do God's work. I think we should pause to stop and think: Whose bidding are we doing?

Maureen Nolte,  
Cromberg, California

### COLUMN RAISES DOUBT

After several years of reading about environmental philosophies in your *Maryknoll* magazine, I can no longer remain silent. In the Fall 2022 magazine you ran a story in your World Watch column titled "It's Time for Renewable Energy." If you look to the places where

renewable energy has the largest market penetration — California, Germany, England and Texas — you will find the biggest energy supply problems. The problems are both cost and the reliability of power.

I admire the efforts of Maryknoll throughout the world. However, I am frustrated by its repeated articles on the environment that seem like they were written by environmental activists. Renewable energy is driving up the cost of electricity to consumers and reducing reliability. Who is bearing the biggest burden? The poor.

David Peters  
Houston, Texas

### FAITH INSPIRING

In your Summer 2022 issue of *Maryknoll*, there is a picture by a Russian painter depicting Mary Magdalene's encounter with the Risen Christ. I would like to give a large reproduction as a gift to my parish. It is such a striking image of their encounter and it would inspire faith to have it in our church for parishioners to behold.

Robert Joocharigian  
Royal Oak, Michigan

**Editor's Note:** *The image of Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection by Alexander Andreyevich Ivanov is available on the internet from Wikimedia Commons at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/> where you can search the title and download a photograph of it.*

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](mailto:mklmag@maryknoll.org)

*"Yet it was our pain that he bore,  
our sufferings he endured." – Isaiah 53:4*



Sean Sprague/Tanzania

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Maryknoll Father James Eble prepares the chapel for meditation at the Lake House of Prayer on the shores of Lake Victoria in Mwanza, Tanzania, joined by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Judy Walter (orange blouse) and neighbors who form a praying community. (See story, page 10)

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