



U.S. Catholic Church in mission overseas

# MARYKNOLL<sup>®</sup>

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*Daring To Dream*

## FROM THE EDITOR

**W**hile we sleep, our minds mull over in dreams the events of our daily lives. Awake, we dream of our aspirations: the things we yearn for, desire to accomplish or hope to become.

One story in this issue features three seminarians set to be ordained to the priesthood this June. Their dream is to become Maryknoll priests. In another article, on the sending of four Maryknoll lay missionaries, Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso goes further, calling Maryknollers “a bunch of dreamers” working for a world that Jesus “dreamed of.”

In fact, dreams run throughout this issue. My article on Father Kyungsu Son’s work in Peru recounts his efforts to help blind people fulfill their dreams to thrive and be independent. A feature on the Maryknoll Sisters in Cambodia reflects the realization of their dream to help Cambodians rebuild their ravaged nation through education.

We also tell the story of an immigrant whose community in Guatemala was served by Maryknoll missionaries. He fled political violence to find the American Dream and now serves as a leader in the Church’s ministry to Indigenous people. Our Partners in Mission column this issue, from a volunteer in Bolivia, is even titled “Maryknoll Dreams.”

We all dream. We dream in our slumber, and we dream in our hopes and longings. Many — as evidenced in our article on the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians — dream of peace and security. Let us join them with our prayers for the same.

*Lynn F. Monahan  
Editor-in-Chief*



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

*Romans 8:28*



24

*Adam Mitchell/Bolivia*

## FEATURED STORIES

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>10</b> Cultivating Mission in Cochabamba<br><i>By Deirdre Cornell</i> | <b>40</b> Building a Future of Hope<br><i>By Mary Ellen Manz, M.M.</i> |
| <b>18</b> Hearts on Fire<br><i>By Andrea Moreno-Díaz</i>                 | <b>46</b> Healing through Faith and Culture<br><i>By Leonel Yoque</i>  |
| <b>24</b> Dream On<br><i>By Meinrad Scherer-Emunds</i>                   | <b>52</b> Churches for Middle East Peace<br><i>By Susan Gunn</i>       |
| <b>34</b> Sheep Find Their Pastor<br><i>By Lynn F. Monahan</i>           |  |

## DEPARTMENTS

- |                             |                                |  |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>2</b> From the Editor    | <b>23</b> Prayer for Vocations | <b>61</b> Readers’ Responses   |
| <b>4</b> Photo Meditation   | <b>30</b> Orbis Books          | FRONT COVER:<br>A child is served by Maryknoll’s Apoyo Escolar afterschool program in Cochabamba, Bolivia. |
| <b>8</b> Missioner Tales    | <b>56</b> World Watch          | COVER CREDITS:<br>Front: Nile Sprague/Bolivia<br>Back: Matthew Sim/U.S.                                    |
| <b>16</b> Spirit of Mission | <b>58</b> Partners in Mission  |  |

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.

# Laudate Deum

*By Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.*

*Let all that was and is and will ever be  
Praise God from whom all creation erupts  
Like a million billion galaxies and hummingbirds  
Like swans, planets, centipedes and stars  
Things visible and invisible like  
Jellyfish, quasars, magnetic fields and gravity  
Microbes, molecules, marigolds and manatees  
Rainbows and rice paddies row on flooded row  
Praise God.*

*Let all that grows and dies, eats and plays  
Reproduces and decays, swims and flies  
Praise God from whom all motion flows  
Like babbling brooks and rivers  
Mighty to behold, waters wet and wonderful  
Gentle breezes, gendered hurricanes  
Earthquakes and melting glaciers  
Volcanoes, canyons, deserts and dust  
From whom God created us  
Praise God.*

*Let everything that borrows breath and time  
From the eternal, most merciful One  
Praise God from whom all life evolves and  
In whom we live and move and have our being  
Gorillas no less than grasshoppers  
Cobras as much as caterpillars modeling  
Death transforming into glorious resurrection  
Which alone should inspire all to  
Praise God.*

*Come join us, all you valleys and empty spaces  
Who make way for mountains and music notes  
And without whom chaos and cacophony  
Would surely triumph over beauty and truth  
Were it not for holy silence that births within  
All human brains the grace to look in wonder  
At all that is and was and, dreaming of what  
May yet be, sees, tastes, hears and touches  
God and whispers a resounding, "Amen."*



# MISSIONER TALES



Sean Sprague/El Salvador

**S**orghum is a most incredible plant. It can survive in South Sudan's harsh semi-arid environment and resists pests and diseases that ravage maize or cassava. There is really only one predator that can damage an entire crop in a short time: birds.

If left unchecked, small sparrow-like birds that congregate in the hundreds will eliminate the farmer's main source of food. With no access to advanced technologies nor government extension agents for support, Toposa farmers build rudimentary platforms in their fields and send their young children to stand there all day long. I call these children the "bird chasers."

The boys and girls, 6 to 10 years old, stand in the hot sun from dawn to sunset, shouting and yelling every

time a bird comes by. Many children have to miss school, especially when the harvest is almost ready. They are in those fields seven days a week for about a month.

Bird chasers have to be alert and aggressive. Some use a willow stick as a weapon, placing a small ball of clay on the end that they whip at the birds. Others bang on pots or pans or blow a whistle, but most simply yell and shout.

As I teach my classes in South Sudan where I work as a Maryknoll lay missionary, we hear the hoarse shouts of these children desperately protecting their valuable crop. I often wonder, what does the future hold for these children who must forgo school to prevent birds from eating their food for next year?

*Gabe Hurrish, MKLM*

**A**nother sister and I served in Panama as pastoral ministers in a priestless area of 40,000 people. When a young husband, a jockey at the local racetrack, died in an accident, I visited his widow. She was inconsolable. She wept, moaned and wailed. After several visits, I thought maybe I was making it worse by reminding her of her sorrow.

A few weeks later, a group of women appeared at my door. "You have to talk to her," they insisted. "She is neglecting her children. We have taken food to her, but she needs to pull herself together."

I visited her again and asked, "Do you have a picture or a statue of the Blessed Mother?" She brought me a portrait of the Sorrowful Mother. I pointed and said, "Look, she lost her only son."

The widow stopped crying. She sat up straight, glared at me and then snapped, "She got him back in three days!"

This woman who had been crying for weeks — so distraught that she was neglecting her children — was angry. But, at last, she had named her anger and moved forward in the process of mourning. There was not much to say now. I embraced her and said goodbye. Just a few days later, she was back to caring for her house and her children.

*Elizabeth Roach, M.M*

**O**ur students in El Salvador, where I served until recently as a lay missionary, sacrifice so much to attend high school. There is a lot of temptation to join gangs or to drop out. I find hope in the Resurrection through their perseverance.

I first met Raúl's family 16 years ago. Raúl, then 9 years old, lived with his mother and older brother in a part of town that was controlled by gangs. His

father had been murdered.

Raúl participated in our sports program. He had a passion for soccer and was an excellent teammate. In his first year of high school, he entered our scholarship program. He studied hard and went for tutoring every Saturday morning at the local Jesuit university.

Raúl's dream was to become a chef. After high school, he attended culinary college. Only about 9% of Salvadorans graduate from college, and Raúl and his family had to make many sacrifices to realize his dream. In 2020, he graduated with a technical degree in culinary arts.

Now Raúl gives back to the next generation of scholarship students. He joined the committee that organizes the scholarship program. Even though he works full time, he mentors students and leads reflections at meetings.

*Larry Parr, MKLM*

**A**t the height of the civil war in 2015 in South Sudan, we gathered for the Good Friday service in our plastic-sheeted Catholic church in our U.N. camp. As the Passion reading was being read, I received an urgent communication. Many people fleeing the fighting were running to our camp, and our church was needed as a temporary shelter for them.

Just as our service ended, we could see the people coming toward us. I told the congregation: "Today we remember the suffering and death of Christ on the cross. Let us open our arms to now receive the suffering Christ in the people coming to us for help."

The Church community immediately responded with compassion and accepted them as their brothers and sisters.

*Michael Bassano, M.M.*

# Cultivating Mission in Cochabamba

By Deirdre Cornell

Photos by Adam Mitchell

*A Maryknoll center in Bolivia finds new life through its green project*

**H**ummingbirds whir and monarch butterflies flit from one bush to another. Koi swim in small pools. Chickens roam the grounds, as do two llamas — Domingo and Catalina — munching on hibiscus flowers.

The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers center and residence in Cochabamba, Bolivia, bustles with life.

“What I love here are two things,” says Maryknoll Father Alejandro Marina, 57, the local superior. “One is the history of what we have done here as Maryknoll ... Second, I love the ongoing potential of this place in service to mission.”

Father Marina, who was incardinated into Maryknoll after serving through the associate priest program, first came to the Cochabamba center two decades ago. Now, he says, he has spent the past couple of years identifying responsible uses for the center’s land and buildings.



*Clockwise from left: Maryknoll Father Alejandro Marina, Eliza Encinas Díaz, Isabel Huanca, Elva Caballero and Leonel Cerruto are shown at the Maryknoll center in Cochabamba, Bolivia.*



Karen Villarroel (hat) and Lola López work for the Social Justice Foundation at the center.

Among the several partner organizations that have found a home on the five-acre property is Kawsay (“to live” in the local Quechua language). In addition to office space, its members and staff use an eco-friendly outbuilding with a kitchen and outdoor ovens. There, they practice techniques such as baking pastas made out of legumes and vegetables, or dehydrating potatoes that can be stored for years and then ground into flour.

Kawsay Director Leonel Cerruto explains that these methods are taught in workshops offered to marginalized people in both urban and rural communities, promoting sustainable practices.

“In a throw-away culture where everything is disposable, even nature and people, our Mother Earth School recovers ancestral knowledge and analyzes new technologies,” he says. Before leading Kawsay, Cerruto worked for many years

at San Gabriel, an Indigenous-language radio station founded by Maryknoll.

Initiatives like Kawsay’s are urgent, Cerruto says, noting that Bolivia has been experiencing widespread drought and subsequent fires that burn out of control.

“As the Church, how can we not raise consciousness and seek alternatives?” he asks.

A leader from another partner organization says that Maryknoll’s support of their organic produce collective has been “a blessing.” Rene Encinas, former president of the Association of Ecological Agricultural Producers (APAE), says their goal is to offer nutritional alternatives for families.

“Lots of producers are growing — but not in a healthy way,” he says, citing pesticides, genetic engineering and large-scale monoculture as harmful agricultural practices. In contrast, APAE consists of “60



Karla Rojas (left), of the new language school, instructs pupil Sister Kang JuJin of Korea.

families who are conscientized and committed to the environment.”

“Our land in Cochabamba is very productive,” Encinas says. Growing organically is not the problem, he continues, marketing is. Founded in 2018, APAE struggled to find buyers.

“We began to knock on doors,” Encinas says.

Eliza Encinas Diaz, current president of APAE, says: “It hasn’t been easy, but it’s not impossible, either.” Her family grows a variety of vegetables on their land. Thanks to partners like Maryknoll, she says, they are able to make a living.

“We made an agreement with APAE, and they started a weekly fair here,” Father Marina says, “not only to sell vegetables but to teach people in the city better nutrition.”

Every Thursday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., shoppers browse APAE’s abundant produce and Kawsay’s offerings of honey, bread, soaps and other products. Andean music plays

in the background. Joining the fair are neighbors, people from local small businesses, and members of other partner organizations on the property.

Carlos Prado, an author and practitioner of natural medicine, usually gives a presentation. A longtime friend of Maryknoll whose interest in horticulture was nurtured at the center, Prado recently “went through the vegetables one by one and talked about each of their nutritional benefits,” Father Marina says. He adds that Prado helped create a catalogue of the property’s plants and trees.

Three priests, two brothers and four seminarians use the center and residence as a home base, coming together regularly for Mass, meals and gatherings. Maryknoll Brother Joseph Bruener is kept busy as house manager.

The seminarians’ enthusiasm, especially, adds much energy to the

center — an ideal place to hone their ecological skills. Yohana Maswizilo dons a beekeeper suit to remove honeycomb from two beehives. Another candidate, Barack Odeka Auka, tends saplings. “We assist in a reforestation project in the Amazon,” Father Marina explains. “We are trying to grow some of those trees here, in order to learn all the process.”

Assigned to Cochabamba for two years, the young men are there to complete their Overseas Training Program (OTP) — an essential part of formation for Maryknoll priests and brothers — as they prepare for a lifetime as missionaries.

Maryknoll has a long history of cultivating mission in Cochabamba. Formerly known as the Maryknoll Mission Center in Latin America (CMMAL), the center housed multiple programs. Since the Maryknoll Language Institute’s opening in 1965, some 12,000 missionaries studied Spanish, Quechua and Aymara

there. In 2002, a comprehensive international mission formation program was launched, drawing new participants — including Father Marina, who is originally from the Diocese of San Isidro, Argentina. A host of leadership programs were offered from 2007 until CMMAL closed.

“We were in a process of right-sizing, and with the pandemic everything was complicated,” Father Marina explains. “Imagine, all these programs were focused on in-person relationships.”

He continues, “The CMMAL project closed in 2020, but Maryknoll didn’t close. We still offer people here what they need to be a good missionary.”

Father Marina points to the example of language study. A newly formed school rents office and classroom space at the center. Its staff consists of four former Maryknoll Language Institute teachers.

Viviana Flores is director of the



Mercedes Sayqua of Kawsay develops a natural hair product using traditional herbs.



Oscar Rosas (right) teaches Spanish to Father Melchor D. Andaya of the Philippines.

project, called the Intercultural Linguistic Center for the World from Latin America, known by its acronym in Spanish as CLIMAL. Osvaldo Mamani assists in administration. Although it was intimidating to incorporate on their own, Flores says, the teachers took courage from their experience with Maryknoll.

“We knew how to work in a classroom,” she says. “We have worked with a variety of students from different cultures, countries and languages.” She adds, “Maryknoll was a window to the world for us.”

The center continues to offer language classes to people preparing for mission in Latin America — including Maryknoll’s short-term volunteers, lay missionaries, and OTP priest and brother candidates.

Like this project, Father Marina says, “other organizations use the buildings to have a place to do mission. Talking to each one of them, we saw possibilities to work together. And that gave new life to this place.”

Something else was happening, he says. Inspired by Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*, in 2021 the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers committed the Society to the care for God’s creation. The priests and brothers serving in Bolivia agreed to take on a green project at the center and residence.

Cochabamba, a sprawling metropolitan area of 1.4 million inhabitants, suffers from climate change exacerbated by haphazard urban planning. Just next door to the center, a 26-story apartment building was erected, interfering with the area’s groundwater system. In response, the local neighborhood organization blocked another construction project and called for studies on potential environmental impact.

“Here, with the help of our partners, there is an opportunity,” Father Marina says. “Our goal is to make this center and residence an ecological witness for Cochabamba.” ✦

# Spirit of Mission

## *In the Shadow of the Cross*

By Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

One of the first challenges a missionary faces overseas is learning to communicate in a different language. Scripture gives us ample warning that to communicate the love of Christ to all peoples, we must do a lot of “dying” to ourselves. We are “strangers in a strange land” (Exodus 2:22), and in a new place, missionaries will make linguistic mistakes and even babble senselessly like babies during those first strenuous years of learning a new language.

Saint John the Baptist modeled the new way for us: for Christ to increase, we — that is, our egos — must decrease. Returned Maryknollers love to share stories of how our fumbling in a foreign language at least gave people a good laugh, if not the profound theological insight intended.

But these little embarrassments turn out to be mini lessons, not just for missionaries but for all Christians and even all people. Like it or not, everyone alive will eventually experience the unavoidable limitations and diminishment that are an integral part of life.

Maryknoll Lay Missioner Donna Wienke, though blind, parlayed her

handicap into a teaching tool. The cleaning woman at Sogang University in Seoul, where Wienke taught, watched spellbound as Donna read braille with her fingers. Turns out, the cleaning lady’s daughter was also blind. “I never realized blind people could do anything,” the mother confided to the missionary.

Anglican missionary Rev. Michael Lapsley fought for years to overturn apartheid systems in South Africa and Rhodesia. For his efforts he received a letter bomb which exploded, destroying both of his hands and an eye. Afterward, Lapsley concentrated his energies on creating and running the Institute for Healing of Memories in Cape Town. In his book *Redeeming the Past* (Orbis 2012), Lapsley says, “I think I can be more of a priest with no hands than I ever was with two hands.”

Truth is, every one of us is wounded and handicapped either physically, emotionally or spiritually. We learn, often the hard way, that we are no longer as young and perfect as we once — if ever — were. The older we get, the larger and darker the shadow of the Cross touches our lives.

“Old age is not for sissies,” an adage goes. It’s the one “handicap”



*A elderly woman prays fervently during Mass at a Catholic church in Tianjin, China. (OSV News photo/Kim Kyung-Hoon/Reuters/China)*

that befalls everyone lucky enough to live that long. It manifests itself often in small, maddening ways.

Once accustomed to jogging three miles several times a week, I’m now “lucky” if I can walk to the corner. Ten years ago when I got hearing aids, the technician was surprised at how enthusiastic I was about getting them. “I’ve worn glasses since I was 7, I had a quadruple bypass in 2002 and got a pacemaker a year after that,” I said. You can call me a bionic priest.

Unfortunately, many times the shadow of the Cross does not portend an improvement in the quality of life, but a harsh, albeit subtle limitation. For many, it is hard to accept the loss of freedom, manifested when they are forced to surrender

their car keys. For others, the physical changes their bodies undergo can threaten their identities.

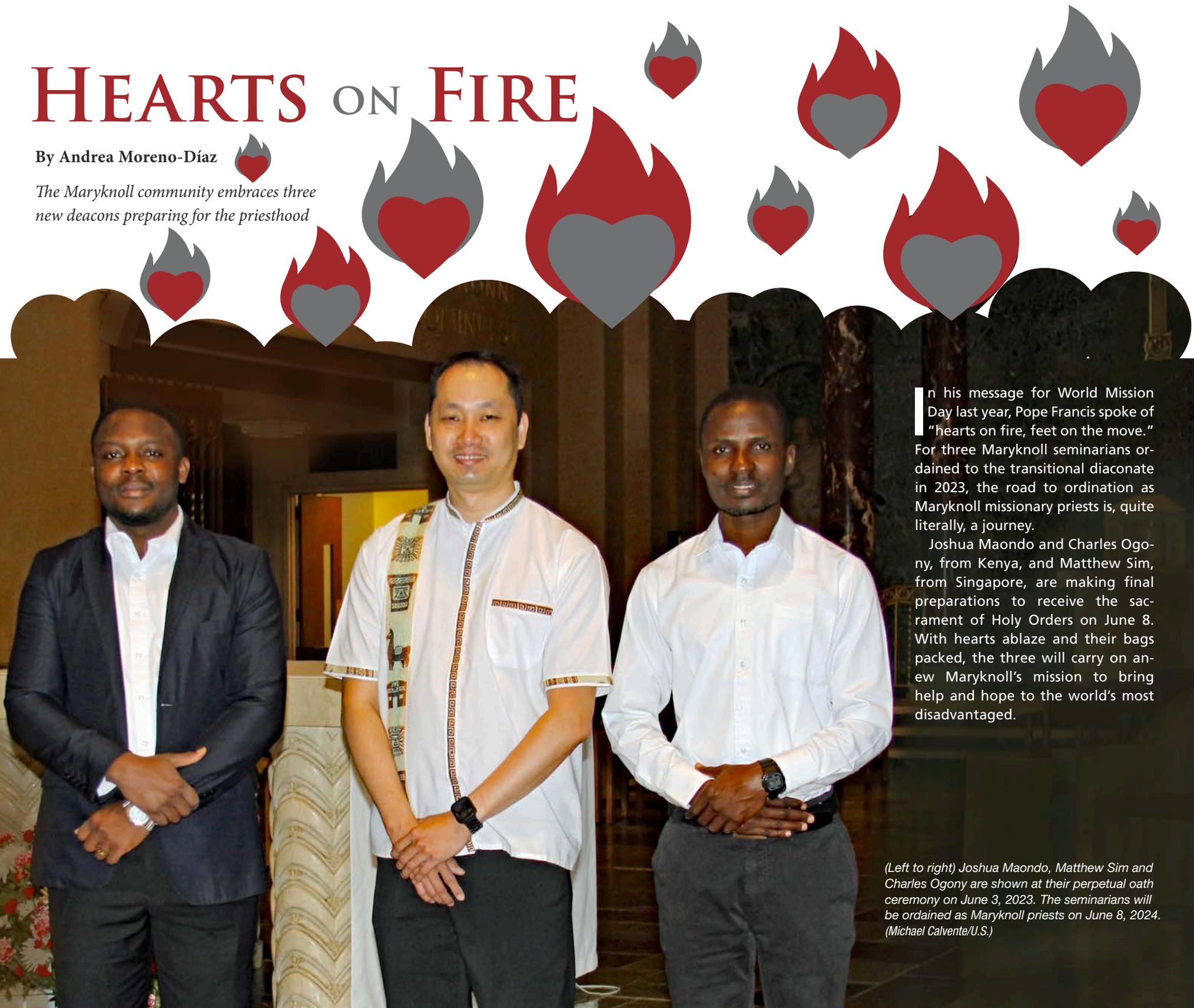
Yet here is where we might all have one last mission: to show the world we can live as fully as possible and not be defined by our diminishment, whatever its form. Here we might come to a fuller appreciation of the wisdom of Saint Paul: “I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ” (Colossians 1:24).

Lent prepares us for just such a revelation. The shadow of the Cross may indeed increase and darken every year, but that’s only because the light of the Resurrection radiates more brilliantly with each passing day. ✠

# HEARTS ON FIRE

By Andrea Moreno-Díaz

*The Maryknoll community embraces three new deacons preparing for the priesthood*



In his message for World Mission Day last year, Pope Francis spoke of “hearts on fire, feet on the move.” For three Maryknoll seminarians ordained to the transitional diaconate in 2023, the road to ordination as Maryknoll missionary priests is, quite literally, a journey.

Joshua Maondo and Charles Ogonny, from Kenya, and Matthew Sim, from Singapore, are making final preparations to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders on June 8. With hearts ablaze and their bags packed, the three will carry on anew Maryknoll’s mission to bring help and hope to the world’s most disadvantaged.

*(Left to right) Joshua Maondo, Matthew Sim and Charles Ogonny are shown at their perpetual oath ceremony on June 3, 2023. The seminarians will be ordained as Maryknoll priests on June 8, 2024. (Michael Calvente/U.S.)*



Maondo at St. Basil Church (Courtesy of Maondo/U.S.)

## Following in Footsteps

For Joshua Maondo, 29, the path to priesthood was envisioned from a young age. Born in Kakamega, in western Kenya, Maondo says his faith was nurtured at home. “The Catholic faith came through my grandmother,” he says. “When she married my grandfather, she converted the whole family.”

When Maondo became an altar boy after his First Holy Communion, his grandmother could not have been prouder, he says. She encouraged her grandchildren to go to catechism classes and reviewed with them what they learned. Maondo would often discuss with her ways in which the Church’s teachings could be practiced within African culture.

Maondo first learned of Maryknoll missions as a student of linguistics and literature at Kenyatta University in 2012 from Father Lance Nadeau, then a chaplain at the university.

Although he had dreamed of becoming a priest since childhood, Maondo felt that the Maryknoll experience was unique: “You can easily single out [Maryknollers] from the rest of missionaries. The way they handle people, with a lot of care, a lot of compassion — the way they

move with the people.”

He began his overseas training — a two-year-long experience of mission formation for Maryknoll priest and brother candidates — in Cochabamba, Bolivia, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. He says that despite the risk, he resolved to remain by remembering that he was following in the steps of early Maryknoll missionaries.

In Cochabamba, Maondo participated in ministry to prisoners at the maximum-security prison El Abra. He also served as a tutor for children after school at Hogar San Martín-San Vicente, a home for at-risk children and youth.

“You can see hope in them,” Maondo says of the students he was tutoring then. “You look at their faces and you can see gratitude: ‘I’m glad I’m here ... I look forward to a brighter future.’”

When Maondo returned to Chicago to continue his studies at Catholic Theological Union (CTU), he volunteered at the Aquinas Literacy Center to teach English to the immigrant community. He currently serves as a deacon at St. Basil Visitation Church and also assists at St. Benedict the African Church.

Maondo says the word “community” sums up his thoughts about mission. “Community lifts you up,” he says. “At the end of it all, it’s you in service to the community.” He wishes his grandmother, who passed away in 2016, could have seen him become a priest.

When talking about his own dreams for the future, Maondo says he wants to see “a blossoming Maryknoll.”



Ogony growing trees (Courtesy of Ogony/Bolivia)

## A Sign of Peace

Charles Ogony’s first steps in his vocation began in childhood, guided by his family in Migori, Kenya. His grandfather donated a plot of land for the construction of a small chapel and his father became a catechist. That was when, Ogony says, he began walking in the faith.

When Ogony was only 6 years old, he witnessed robbers violently attack his father as they attempted to steal from his home. The attack left a huge impression on him, yet instead of resorting to resentment, the young boy began considering what he could do to foster harmony among people.

“I saw priesthood being a sign of uniting people together,” he says. “If God calls me, I should respond so that I can be a sign of peace.”

Ogony also encountered Maryknoll in 2012 as a student of education, geography and history at Kenyatta University, where, he says, Father Nadeau’s homilies were exceptional: “He could make students from different churches, different religions, come to the Catholic Church.”

With Father Nadeau’s encouragement, Ogony met other Maryknollers. “We saw the same spirit of welcoming, of compassion,” he says.

He remembers thinking that Maryknoll must be “special.”

Ogony began his overseas training in Bolivia in 2019. When the outbreak of COVID-19 prompted lockdowns and caused many international volunteers to flee the country, Ogony remained to help in any way he could.

Alongside fellow Seminarian Matthew Sim and Maryknoll Brother Ryan Thibert, Ogony volunteered at Hogar San José, a home run by the Little Sisters of the Abandoned Elderly for senior citizens at risk of homelessness. “Changing their clothes, serving them food, that was the mission,” he recalls.

On his own initiative, Ogony also began a ministry to accompany the homeless population of the city. Soon he became known as *Hermano Carlos* (Brother Charles) to the marginalized street people he befriended. Fresh from language school as a learner of Spanish, Ogony shared meals with them, singing and listening to their stories. “The way they received me was quite humbling. I fell in love with that ministry.”

Back in Chicago in 2021, Ogony continued his studies at CTU while he served at the Blessed Sacrament Youth Center, tutoring children from violent neighborhoods in an afterschool program. He also currently assists at St. Benedict the African Church.

Ogony, 30, is open to going wherever mission will take him: “Being a missionary is to go out and meet the marginalized and listen to their stories. That is the gospel we can write in their life — and they’ll also write the same in our life.”



Sim with parishioners in El Paso (Deirdre Cornell/U.S.)

### Joy in Sacrifice

Matthew Sim, 43, was born in Singapore — a vibrant Asian city-state of diverse faiths. Raised as a Buddhist, he graduated from Nanyang Technological University with a major in education in 2005.

Sim traveled to Hong Kong to teach math and science at Singapore International School in 2011. There, he met Maryknoll Fathers Michael Sloboda and John McAuley.

Inspired by their work, and deepening his faith as he prepared for the sacraments of Christian initiation, Sim began considering the path to priesthood. At times he thought, “Maybe I’m not worthy,” he recalls, “but if you hear carefully, in the homilies of the priests, in the people that surround you, they will tip you off, as if they’re the silent whispers of God.”

His discernment was strengthened by serving as an acolyte and Eucharistic minister at St. Anne’s Church in Stanley, Hong Kong.

Although usually supportive, his parents, who are Buddhist, raised objections upon learning more about the vows for priesthood. Sim says Fathers Sloboda and McAuley reassured him: “If God wants you to be a Maryknoll priest, it’ll happen.”

When his parents came to visit him in Hong Kong, Sim was pleasantly surprised to find his family wanted

to understand more. They attended a Mass where he was serving and spoke to the Maryknoll priests.

For Sim, that encounter was “a God-given opportunity” for his family to understand his vocation. “I think [my father] saw the joy I had when serving at the altar. He said to the sacristan, ‘take a picture of me and my son.’ And that was the first time he acknowledged me as a Catholic.”

With his family’s blessing, Sim began his overseas training in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 2019. When schools closed due to the pandemic, he saw that underprivileged children with no computer access were left unable to attend online classes.

Relying on his expertise and creativity as an educator, Sim began serving at Centro Nueva Vera Cruz as a tutor — even as he himself was a beginner learning Spanish.

“You might be entering a culture where you can’t speak your language,” he says. “You might be functioning at maybe 50% - 60%, but you have to remember: you’re 100% to those people.”

Sim finished his master of divinity degree at CTU in Chicago, and is now serving with Maryknoll Father Raymond Finch at Cristo Rey Church in El Paso, Texas. Last year, they celebrated the parish’s 50th anniversary with a trek up Mount Cristo Rey and a parish dance.

“Contemporary culture talks about sacrifice as if it’s something painful,” Sim says. “But if you go back to the Scriptures, when Christ made the sacrifice, he was filled by the Holy Spirit ... this is the same experience as being a missionary.”✠

# Prayer for Vocations

O Jesus Christ Our Savior, you are the master of vocations. You proclaimed to us that “the harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few.” With hearts full of gratitude, we accept your invitation to follow you. May you send us as shepherds from your heart to journey with your flock, the people of God.

Inspire more men and women to come with tenderness to tend your flock with charity and compassion.

As salt of the earth and light of the world, let all your devoted servants bring joy to the marginalized, hope to the forlorn and peace to the troubled. May we be the fragrance of your nearness, attracting the whole world to your divine presence.

Mary, Our Mother, you were ever ready to follow God’s will. Pray for all who are discerning a vocation, that they may seek it bravely and live it faithfully. Amen.

—Charles Ogony

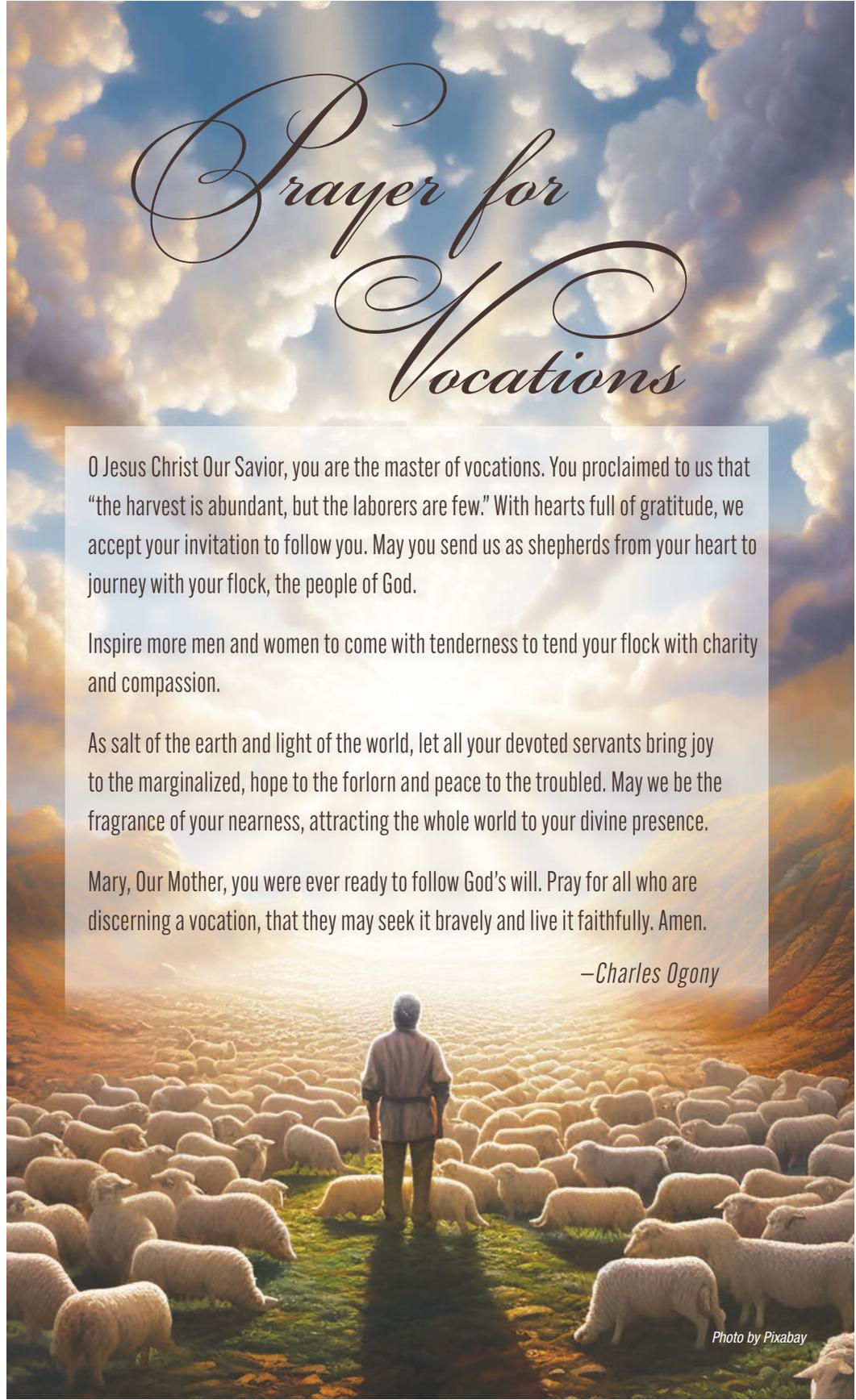


Photo by Pixabay



Maryknoll Lay Missioners Sarah Bueter, Kathy Flatoff, Theresa Glaser and Julienne Hoang (left to right) are shown after their covenant and sending ceremony held on Dec. 2, 2023 at Cristo Rey Church in El Paso, Texas. (All photos courtesy of Maryknoll Lay Missioners/U.S.)

# Dream On

By Meinrad Scherer-Emunds

*Maryknoll lay missioners are sent to serve in Kenya, El Salvador and Cambodia*

**G**o out and dream — that was the message given by Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Texas, to three new lay missioners and a returning lay missioner during the Dec. 2 Covenant and Sending Mass for the Maryknoll Lay Missioners Class of 2023.

During his homily at Cristo Rey Church in El Paso, Bishop Seitz said, “It became clear to me as I read up about Maryknoll and your history, y’all are a bunch of dreamers. And as I thought about it, I realized that’s a really good thing.”

In our dreams, he said, we recognize “a world that Jesus dreamed of.”

Maryknoll’s founders and the missioners who followed “took up the challenge to go out ... and show that that dream was not just a dream but the possibility for a new world, a new life,” Bishop Seitz said.

Elvira Ramirez, Maryknoll Lay Missioners’ executive director, noted the significance of the date of the Mass: the anniversary of the 1980 martyrdom of four churchwomen in El Salvador. “On this 43rd anniversary,” Ramirez said, “we honor their memory and their witness. Their lives have inspired many to stand on the side of marginalized and oppressed communities.”

The event also marked the fruition of a dream for Maryknoll Lay Missioners. Last year, the organization moved its mission services department from the Maryknoll campus in Ossining, New York, to El Paso. For the first time in the organization’s 48-year history, the new missioners’ orientation program took place near the U.S.-Mexico border.

Maryknoll lay missioners serve currently on both sides of the border in ministries including immigration law, hospitality for



Maryknoll Lay Missioners Executive Director Elvira Ramirez confers the mission cross on Bueter as Maryknoll Father Lance Nadeau and Maryknoll Sister Leonor Montiel look on.

migrants, a border immersion program, pastoral outreach and children's programs.

This year's orientation program connected candidates with such local ministries. Each Monday, they volunteered at migrant shelters at the parishes of Holy Family and Sacred Heart.

"Preparing for mission service was a tangible sign of change for the persons in the eight-week orientation program," Ramirez noted. "And moving the orientation to El Paso marks a sign of change for Maryknoll Lay Missioners as well."

During the Mass, the new candidates signed covenants pledging to serve for three and a half years in Kenya, El Salvador and Cambodia. They were joined by a returning missionary who committed to serving for two years in Kenya.

Sarah Bueter, of South Bend, Indiana, will serve in El Salvador. Bueter

said she sees mission work as "an extension of God's solidarity with creation." She continued, "That God chose to become enfleshed in a particular way in the margins is a sign of great hope and tenderness."

The young missionary has worked in a wide range of settings, including Catholic Worker communities in Denver and South Bend, a Jesuit social action center in Honduras and the Kino Border Initiative.

Bueter also spent a summer in Bethlehem, Palestine, in a conflict transformation program.

"Faith isn't about living perfectly," Bueter said. "It's about living differently, which at times looks a bit upside down."

Her decision to become a Maryknoll lay missionary was influenced by the examples of people working at the Kino Border Initiative. "I would watch them meet a migrant mother with grace and attentiveness, like they had just

met Christ the King himself. And of course, they had!"

Like Bueter, Theresa Glaser is no stranger to international service.

In 2008, she volunteered for a year in West Africa as a member of a Catholic Relief Services HIV/AIDS care team. The team supported people in remote villages with food and medical care, attended to vulnerable children orphaned by AIDS and offered educational programs for prevention.

During her decades as a teacher in Ohio and South Carolina, Glaser chose to work in inner-city high schools. Glaser, who retired from teaching in 2021 and most recently lived in Taylor Mill, Kentucky, holds a doctorate in biological sciences from the University of Cincinnati. Prior to teaching, she worked as a research scientist, including for six years in Australia and Switzerland.

"Going into mission," Glaser said, "means living in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable of the world; working together to improve the circumstances of the lives of others."

Glaser, who says she looks forward to returning to Africa, will serve in Kenya.

Volunteering with refugee children in the Philippines while she was in her 20s led Julienne "T.T." Hoang to a career of advocating for refugees, asylum seekers and victims of abuse and human trafficking. The desire to return to hands-on international mission service, however, remained in her heart.

In the meantime, Hoang served as an active parishioner at Holy Vietnamese Martyrs Catholic Church in



Hoang, a cantor, leads the responsorial psalm sung in English and Vietnamese.

Austin, Texas. She sang in the choir, was a lector and eucharistic minister, taught catechism and helped organize fundraising events. She is also an active member of Dong Hanh Christian Life Community, a Vietnamese-American Catholic association grounded in Ignatian spirituality.

Hoang retired from her most recent job as a regional analyst with the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement to join the orientation program.

In Cambodia, she plans to help victims of human trafficking. "Trafficking is the most heinous crime because it takes away a person's human dignity and self-worth," she said.

"Each of us is called to mission when we are born, whether we choose to listen to this call or not," Hoang said. "God has a mission for each of us."

Joining the three new missionaries, Kathy Flatoff, a nurse from Tomah,



Maryknoll Father Raymond Finch, Ramirez, Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Sister Montiel and Father Nadeau pose with portraits of the four churchwomen martyred in El Salvador.

Wisconsin, is returning to Kenya. From 2018 until 2021, she served as a Maryknoll lay missionary in a medical dispensary in Mombasa.

Since returning to the States, Flattoff said, "I have been enjoying the comforts of home, but the thought of returning to Kenya has never been far from my mind and heart."

She added, "The heart of a missionary is forever changed by service to the poor, the oppressed and other marginalized populations. After much reflection and prayer, I feel that God and my missionary heart are calling me back to Kenya. ... That is where God wants me to be."

She will work in health care for the Diocese of Kitale, which runs three small rural hospitals.

Maryknoll Father Lance Nadeau, superior general of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, gave the keynote address.

Speaking to the lay missionaries during a reception following the Mass, Father Nadeau joked, "Some people have wondered about your adventurousness, your audacity, your risk-taking, your blatant craziness. They should wonder, and so should you! You are choosing to be an outsider who entrusts herself to another culture's insiders."

However, he added, many blessings will come in embracing the call to intercultural mission. The most important thing, he concluded, is "seeing our shared humanity in others ... being other-centered and reverentially attentive." ✠

*Deirdre Cornell contributed reporting to this article.*

*Meinrad Scherer-Emunds is director of communications for the Maryknoll Lay Missioners.*

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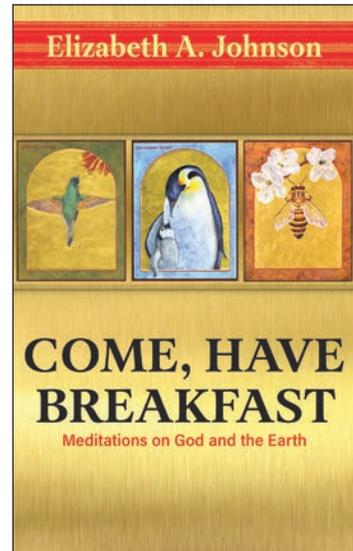
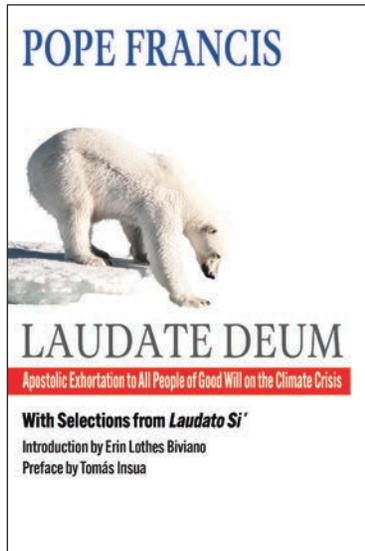
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Spotlight

Preview by Robert Ellsberg



“The world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point.”  
—Pope Francis, *Laudate Deum*

Pope Francis’ recent apostolic exhortation, *Laudate Deum*, is a short but urgent follow-up to his historic encyclical of 2015, *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*. In that earlier document he firmly established ecological concerns as central to the agenda of Catholic Social Teaching. Along with a spiritual framework for “ecological conversion,” he outlined issues of climate change, biodiversity, the peril facing our oceans and access to fresh water. His new document reflects his disappointment in the intervening

years with the limited response to the climate crisis of our time.

Addressing the irreversible effects of rising global temperatures, decrease in ice sheets and other signs of the times, he critiques the “technocratic paradigm,” addiction to a fossil-fuel economy and the “weaknesses of international politics,” while leveling particular criticism at those who sow resistance and confusion. As Erin Lothes Biviano writes in her introduction, Pope Francis here writes as a prophet, priest, poet, and most of all “a pastor, deeply

concerned for people throughout the world, and above all for the poor.”

With selections from *Laudato Si’*, this Orbis edition makes for an essential resource for all Catholic readers and all people of good will. It is a call to face the preeminent crisis of our times and to draw on all our spiritual wisdom, scientific knowledge and political will to meet the challenge.

In what serves as a Scriptural and theological complement to the pope’s message, prize-winning theologian Elizabeth A. Johnson has written *Come, Have Breakfast: Meditations on God and the Earth*. The title comes from the seldom-quoted words of Jesus, following his resurrection, when he invited his disciples to join him for breakfast at the Sea of Galilee (Jn 21:12). As Johnson notes, “These three simple words, followed by generous action, open a portal into an ecological image of the living God who is active with cordial hospitality toward all creatures, nurturing their lives, desiring that all should be fed.”

Viewing planet Earth through the lens of Scripture, Johnson offers a series of stunning meditations, each one offering a snapshot of one aspect of the holy mystery who creates, indwells, redeems, vivifies and sanctifies the whole world. Together, they offer a panoramic view of the living God who loves the earth, accompanies all its creatures in their living and their dying, and moves us to care for our uncommon common home.

In his endorsement, James Martin, SJ, calls Elizabeth Johnson “one of the world’s greatest and most gifted theologians.” Along with *Laudate Deum*, as Mary Catherine Hilker, OP, says in her endorsement, this book “holds the power to expand our minds, inspire our hearts, and move us to action on behalf of our created kin and common home.”

May both books plant seeds in fertile ground. ✂

Robert Ellsberg is the publisher of Maryknoll’s Orbis Books.



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And Jesus wept.

—*John 11:35*



*A pilgrim prays on the steps outside  
the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem on Oct. 10, 2023.  
(OSV News/Debbie Hill)*

# Sheep Find Their Pastor

By Lynn F. Monahan

*A Maryknoll priest opens doors for low-income blind people in Peru*



**M**aría Inés Aspilcueta's dream as a young girl was to be a teacher. However, after graduating from high school in Lima, Peru, she had to work to help support her family.

Then, in her early 20s, she began losing her sight due to glaucoma. By age 26 she had become completely blind, and went into a severe depression which lasted three years.

"I realized I couldn't do anything solo. I was in shock," she says. "I stayed in my room crying, asking, 'Why me?' and wondering why did I have to go through this."

Eventually, she heard of and attended the Centro de Rehabilitación de Ciegos de Lima (the Lima Rehabilitation Center for the Blind), where she learned to use a cane to walk, to read and write braille, and to manage other daily activities.

"I thought I was the only person who had gone blind in life," Aspilcueta, 39, says. "But when I got to the center, I realized there were lots of blind people." From then on, her life began to improve little by little, she says.

The biggest change came when she was invited to learn massage at Casa Bartimeo del Sur, a nonprofit center that teaches massage therapy to low-income blind people.

The center, located in a former Maryknoll Sisters convent at Niño Jesús parish in Ciudad de Dios in the south of Lima, was founded by Grimaldo Zapata, who was blinded in a mining accident as a young man, and Maryknoll Father Kyungsu Son. The Maryknoll missionary helps support the Bartimeo center under the auspices of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers and the Diocese of Lurín.

Casa Bartimeo is named after the blind man, Bartimaeus, who was healed by Jesus in the Gospel of Mark (10:46–52).

"Casa Bartimeo is helping people with visual disability so that we can be independent," says Aspilcueta, who was in the first class at the center in 2013. "Instead of being a burden to our families or society, we can be part of the economic development of the country and our families."

After graduating from the Casa Bartimeo course, Aspilcueta opened her own consulting room in a commercial shopping center with two massage tables, employing another Bartimeo graduate to help her.

For Father Son, Casa Bartimeo is not just about helping people such as Aspilcueta to become more independent; it's a ministry to some of the most marginalized people in Peru. His ministry has expanded to address other needs of the blind, such as health issues, and to include a group of people who can see but are often unseen: inmates in the country's prison system.

*Blind students perform massage therapy during training at Casa Bartimeo del Sur in Lima, Peru. Maryknoll Father Kyungsu Son founded the training center in 2013 with Grimaldo Zapata, who lost his sight in a mining accident. (Nile Sprague/Peru)*



Father Kyungsu Son, in Roman collar, poses with students, teachers and assistants of Casa Bartimeo during a massage practice in Lima, Peru. (Courtesy of Kyungsu Son/Peru)



María Inés Aspilcueta walks to her therapy center, located in a shopping center, and demonstrates a short massage on her mother, Senaida Muñoz, right. (Lynn Monahan/Peru)



When Casa Bartimeo first opened, the school needed to find a way to provide students with hands-on practice for certification. Initially, Zapata and Father Son were stumped about where to find enough people to receive therapeutic massages from the program's 20 trainees.

Father Son came up with the solution: a captive audience.

He was then chaplain of a men's prison with 500 inmates, who he realized suffered from stress and other health issues that could be alleviated by massage. The class spent a month providing therapeutic massage to male prisoners without incidents. When the men's prison closed a year later and the inmates were sent to prisons far from Lima, the Casa Bartimeo students began practicing at a nearby women's prison.

Jorge Luis "Lucho" Peláez, who can see and who volunteers when the massage therapists go to the prison, credits Father Son with having the insight to help two groups of people at once: students who need to practice massage techniques and inmates who suffer physically and mentally in prison.

"To be confined is brutal," Peláez says. "It doesn't just hurt their soul or their spirit, it also hurts them physically."

For the inmates, the experience is so emotional that both men and women often cry during massage sessions, he says. "The hands of the student practitioners lift their spirit so that they can endure this intense burden."

Father Son says, "It's social and pastoral work, poor blind people helping poor inmates."

Richard Piccón, a massage therapist who, like Aspilcueta, was in the first group of massage students, is a part-time auxiliary teacher at Casa Bartimeo. He says he is grateful for the opportunity to help someone else. He tells the story of an inmate whose perspective impacted him.

Piccón recalls, "An inmate said to me, 'I'm getting out in four years. But Richard, you have a life sentence.'"

He continues, "I have accepted that. I have a life sentence, because I'm never going to see again. What I have learned during these years is simply gratitude for life, because I've met people whom I don't judge. I don't think about what they did or didn't do. I only see human beings who need help and I have the strong sense of knowing I can help them."

The massage sessions at the prison are so popular that the center can't accommodate all the requests. Father Son says that he, Zapata and the rest of the Casa Bartimeo team have come up with a plan. They propose to train the inmates themselves in massage therapy in prison, teaching skills that will also serve them when they are released. Casa Bartimeo will present the proposal to prison officials this spring.

"The inmates helped the blind, and now we're returning the favor," says Father Son, 78, who was ordained a Maryknoll priest in 1979.

Casa Bartimeo isn't the only place in Lima where blind people can learn massage therapy, says Zapata, but its mission is unique: to help the blind who don't have the resources for training.

Zapata lost his vision at age 25

and says he had to learn to adapt to life without sight. Once he accepted his reality, he won a scholarship to learn Japanese shiatsu massage. Afterward, Zapata began to pursue other forms of massage and physical therapy.

Building on his own success, he dreamed of opening a massage training center to help other low-income blind people earn a living.

At first, Zapata could not find anyone — neither in the government nor municipal agencies — willing to support the project. A friend suggested he approach Father Son.

“And he told me, ‘Grimaldo, I’m going to help you,’” Zapata recalls.

Father Son, who is originally from South Korea, says it is he who has been helped by the blind. Normally, he says, “the pastor goes out in search of the sheep, but in this case

the sheep, the blind, came to me. It’s the reverse. And they offered me this project to help.” His inspiration, he says, comes straight from the Gospel, adding, “I came to serve.”

His reward, he says, is the success of the 180 students trained so far by Casa Bartimeo.

Aspilcueta recently opened a second massage clinic, with four tables, in the upscale Miraflores section of Lima.

She also accomplished another goal through Casa Bartimeo. Since 2015, she has been an auxiliary teacher at the center, working alongside Zapata and Piccón.

“María Inés is an outstanding example of the success of Casa Bartimeo,” Father Son says. “Her skill, her enthusiasm and her compassion are wonderful examples for new students coming in.” ✠



Blind students of massage therapy from the Casa Bartimeo training center in Lima practice on inmates at a women’s prison. (Courtesy of Kyungsu Son/Peru)

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Maryknoll Father Daniel Kim, from Southern California, was ordained in 2017 and now ministers at St. Mary’s Church in Hunghom, Kowloon, Hong Kong. (Nile Sprague/Hong Kong)



# Building a Future of **HOPE**

By Mary Ellen Manz, M.M.

*Maryknoll sisters turn over educational programs to local leadership after three decades of compassionate service*

**M**aryknoll Sister Regina Pellicore summarizes the Maryknoll Sisters' 33 years of service in Cambodia: "All along the journey, our mission has been to provide the care, love and support needed for a better life."

Cambodia was still reeling from the deep trauma of the Killing Fields when the sisters arrived in 1991 following the Paris Peace Agreements. They were part of Maryknoll Cambodia, a team of Maryknoll priests, brothers, lay missionaries and sisters sent to aid in the nation's restoration.

"Cambodia was emerging from one of the most tragic episodes in the history of the world," explains Maryknoll Sister Luise Ahrens, who was among the first four sisters assigned to the small nation in Southeast Asia.

From 1975 to 1979, the Khmer Rouge regime had caused the deaths of an estimated 2 million people — roughly a quarter of the population. Educated people, in particular, were targeted: doctors, lawyers, teachers, professors.

"Those who had soft hands or wore glasses or who spoke the French language were shot right there," Sister Luise remembers being told by survivors. An entire generation of professionals, she continues, were "almost completely wiped out."

The missionaries soon found that Cambodia could benefit from various ministries.

Sisters Patricia Ann Arathuzik, Dolores Congdon and Joyce Quinn, who were experienced in nursing, dedicated their efforts to health care. Later, Sisters Juana Encalada and Leonor "Len" Montiel — joined for a time by Sister Bernadette Duggan — worked in HIV/AIDS ministry: Cambodia had one of the highest rates of HIV in the world.

Because of her background in tertiary education, Sister Luise was approached by the minister of education to work at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, the country's largest institution of higher education. "I asked him, 'To do what?'" Sister Luise recalls. "He answered, 'Anything you can.'"

*Maryknoll Sister Mary Little cares for a child at one of two preschools for Vietnamese refugee children. The Maryknoll Sisters have carried out extensive educational projects in Cambodia for three decades. (Sean Sprague/Courtesy of Maryknoll Sisters/Cambodia)*



*(Left) Maryknoll Sister Helene O'Sullivan instructs students at Horizons, a skills training program for low-income girls at risk for trafficking. (Courtesy of Maryknoll Sisters/Cambodia)*



*Maryknoll Sisters Ann Sherman (left) and Regina Pellicore (right) engage with students in Beoung Tum Pun's educational projects. (Courtesy of Ann Sherman; Sean Sprague/Cambodia)*



Sister Luise's colleagues described to her the university's reopening just a decade earlier with two faculty members and 36 students: "There were no books left, no labs. The Khmer Rouge had kept pigs there to show what they thought of education."

Over the ensuing 25 years, Maryknoll sisters helped to solidify programs at the Royal University. Sister Len, who has expertise in community organizing, taught in the emerging social work department. Sister Mary Little not only taught English, but also trained Cambodian staff to run the English language program.

Working with the university president, Sister Luise sought funding for staff salaries and opportunities for Cambodians to study abroad. She recruited and mentored international volunteers. The sisters also procured educational tools and developed the university library.

In other ministries, Sister Joyce had been working in partnership with

three Cambodian nurses. In 1994 the sisters moved into Beoung Tum Pun, a huge, poverty-stricken area on the southernmost edge of the capital city. There Sister Joyce started the Community-Based Health and Education Program (CHEP) on the grounds of the Church of the Child Jesus. Sister Regina, a teacher, arrived a year later.

It quickly became evident that along with medical services, training in basic hygiene and nutrition was needed. However, adults, who labored all day, were not as receptive as the children, who responded readily to songs and games.

The Child to Child program was the answer.

The international organization that runs this program reports that since the 1970s it has "partnered with and trained the world's leading agencies to equip children with the skills to stay safe, stay healthy, and achieve their potential." Its peer-based methodologies train child

leaders who then transmit these skills to their families and other children.

Administrators and teachers at Beoung Tum Pun's three primary schools had to be convinced to try the program; but once they saw its results, they welcomed it.

The program also encouraged teachers to integrate more participative learning in the classroom. "Our hope was that by modeling other ways to teach, they would adapt some of the more creative methods for their own subjects," Sister Regina recalls.

The sisters' project soon expanded. "Given our long-term presence in Beoung Tum Pun, the services of our programs continued to meet the needs of the community," Sister Regina says.

Because many older children either never attended or dropped out of school, literacy classes were launched. The goal was to strengthen these students academically in order for them to integrate into a regular classroom.

Since English proficiency is required for many jobs and for higher education, Sister Ann Sherman spent a decade teaching English to middle schoolers.

The School Assistance Program was started to tutor students and to provide school supplies and fees through a scholarship program.

"We support many students whose families live day to day," Sister Regina says. She explains that the focus is reaching the poorest of Beoung Tum Pun's 22,000 families.

Some are Vietnamese refugees. To serve these families, Sister Mary — who also worked at the opposite end of the educational spectrum at the Royal University — founded two preschools. There, Vietnamese-speaking children learn Khmer, Cambodia's official language; this eases their transition when they enter local government-run schools.

Working alongside non-governmental organizations and Cambodian entities, the sisters' projects

eventually reached each of Beoung Tum Pun's five villages.

"We have been rebuilding the foundation of the country, especially in education, by keeping children in school, from the little ones through university students," Sister Regina says. "Every child who learned to read, write and think critically about the future of Cambodia took a step in the right direction." She adds, "We paved the way for those steps."

A final example of how Maryknoll sisters brought education to their community-based projects is seen in the work of Sister Helene O'Sullivan. During her 20 years with survivors of trafficking, sexual abuse and domestic violence, the missionary incorporated vocational training in the shelters and programs where she served.

Most recently, Sister Helene founded Horizons, a vocational training project for girls. The students are helped to stay in school until ninth grade, when they can

enter a two-year course that will qualify them for employment in top hotels with good salaries and decent working conditions.

The project transitioned to the auspices of Caritas Cambodia last year.

This year, the projects pioneered by Maryknoll sisters in Beoung Tum Pun will also be transferred to partner organizations and Caritas Cambodia. Several staff members are being retained to ensure continuity.

The Maryknoll Sisters will complete their mission in Cambodia in 2024. Their three decades of service were made possible through close collaboration with Cambodian teachers, nurses and university staff.

When asked what she sees as Maryknoll's greatest contribution there, Sister Regina says, "Giving as many Cambodians as possible the opportunity to have a better quality of life."

She adds, "We hope that each one we have worked with passes on this blessing to others."✠



Maryknoll Sister Luise Ahrens talks with students in the library of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, which Maryknoll sisters helped to develop. (Sean Sprague/Cambodia)

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# Healing through Faith and Culture

By Leonel Yoque

*Leader of Maya ministry in the U.S. reclaims his identity and empowers future generations*

**A**s a child, Juanatano Cano witnessed the killings of many people, including his own uncle who was murdered in their home town of Santa Eulalia, Huehuetenango, Guatemala.

The decade of the 1980s was one of the darkest periods for the Indigenous people of Guatemala, who suffered the brunt of the country's 36-year civil war when the army regularly attacked the most vulnerable. "I couldn't sleep from the trauma of seeing so much killing," remembers Cano.

In 1982, when Cano turned 14 years old, he escaped to Huehuetenango City where he hid for some time. He was able to continue his studies afterward, working during the day and studying at night. He graduated from high school with primary school teaching credentials.

After completing his studies, Cano considered returning to Santa Eulalia, but the war continued. He tried living in the capital, Guatemala City, but discovered a harsh truth. "The hardest thing in the capital is to be Indigenous, being Maya, speaking our language Q'anjob'al," Cano says.



*Juanatano Cano (center) was invited to speak about his educational journey and the importance of honoring culture by the North Mason School District in Belfair, Washington. (Courtesy of Juanatano Cano/U.S.)*



(Left) Accompanied by wife Ana and children Leonel, Alan and Nova, Cano receives a doctoral degree in education in 2022 from Pepperdine University in California. (Below) Cano is pictured at an early age with his parents, who he says inspired him to serve. (Courtesy of Juanatano Cano/U.S., Guatemala)



"They used to say 'speak properly,' 'don't act Indigenous.' That hurts as a teenager. It traumatizes you and marks you for life," he says. "I was ashamed of my father and my mother because they wore their Maya clothing." He would ask himself: "How is it my fault that God made me Indigenous?"

According to sociologist Marta Elena Casaús Arzú, systematic op-

pression against the Indigenous can be traced back to the time of the Spanish colonization. In her book, *Guatemala: Linaje y racismo* (*Guatemala: Lineage and Racism*), she explains how racism constitutes a structural historical element that generates inequality and poverty even today.

Those negative experiences motivated Cano to leave his country

and migrate to the United States in 1988. It has been a long way for Cano — as for many others in search of their identity, not only in their own countries, but also in the countries to which they migrate.

After his arrival in California, Cano sought to reconnect with his Indigenous roots through his Maya culture. The Catholic faith that had been instilled in him in childhood gave him strength.

"I'm a Catholic thanks to Maryknoll," Cano says. When he was little, he met Maryknoll Fathers Daniel Jensen and William Woods. "I admire the work of missionaries from the United States who served in the Guatemalan altiplano," he says. "Missioners would work hand in hand with the people and learned to speak Q'anjob'al. They even celebrated Mass in our language."

Maryknoll began its mission in the west of Guatemala in 1943. One of its mission sites was Santa Eulalia. Many missionaries accompanied and defended Indigenous communities during the genocidal war.

Maryknoll's legacy is still remembered in his hometown, Cano says. His brother was named Daniel after the late Father Jensen, who served in Guatemala starting in 1962. As a last wish, the missionary requested his ashes be brought to Santa Eulalia, where they currently remain.

Father Woods served in Guatemala from 1958 until he died in a suspicious plane crash close to Quiché in 1976. The missionary was buried in Huehuetenango.

Cano recognizes the importance of developing his faith. "Encountering Jesus made me recover my

dignity and find a purpose for my life," he says. "There's a healing process that comes from accepting yourself as you are and forgiving those who have hurt you in life."

Cano went from being a quiet voice to being a voice that resounds loudly within himself and among his Maya brothers and sisters: "I have been healing my wounds and recovering my identity while telling my story." His story is interlaced between recovering the values of his Maya Q'anjob'al culture and professing his Catholic faith.

As part of his journey in the United States, Cano works to motivate other immigrants and members of his Maya community to find the path for holistic healing. He went from being an undocumented immigrant to becoming an American citizen. Just as he did back home, he worked hard during the day and studied at night.

Cano now has a bachelor's degree in mathematics and a master's degree in administrative education. More recently, he earned a doctorate in education with a specialization in leadership development.

In 2005, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) appointed Cano as advisor, consultant and spokesman for Indigenous Maya communities. The Pastoral Maya ministry is part of the USCCB's subcommittee on Native American Affairs.

Under Cano's leadership, an annual Pastoral Maya conference is held in different states across the country. Last July, the conference was held at Holy Cross Catholic Church in Los Angeles, California.



Ana and Juanatano Cano, with other couples from the Mayan community of Santa Cruz Church in Los Angeles, California, join in parish liturgies and ministries. (Eliás Simón/U.S.)

With the motto “Telling Our Stories and Healing Our Families,” many participants were inspired. “Our stories are sacred — hearing that is an act of love. This has been a great value that our forefathers have bequeathed to us: an oral tradition,” Cano says.

In the conference, a great number of participants donned their typical dress, chanted in Q’anjob’al, performed folkloric dances, engaged in dialogue, listened to testimonies, enjoyed typical food and celebrated their faith at Mass. Cardinal Alvaro Ramazzini of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, and Archbishop José H. Gómez of Los Angeles participated in the event.

“It was a great opportunity to stop and reflect on how we treat each other emotionally, spiritually and physically,” says Cano, who is 55, married and the father of two boys and a girl. Some of the questions that promoted dialogue in the community were: What is our history? What are our victories and

our failures? The meeting was a motivating factor to continue the Pastoral Maya ministry.

“We don’t know what the future will bring,” he says. “Our work is to plant the seeds. By telling our stories and listening we open a path for our children and our children’s children.” Cano is regularly invited to give motivational and cultural talks at schools, universities and religious events. “We are Maya and we are Catholic!” he exclaims.

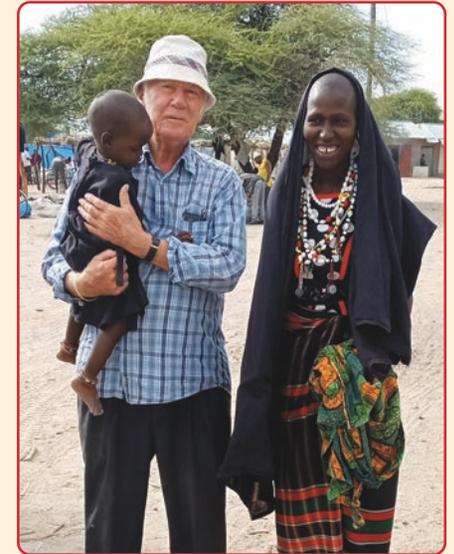
“During my childhood and adolescence, they told me many times: ‘Your language and culture are useless; they won’t get you anywhere. To be successful you have to speak Spanish well,’” Cano says. “All of that led me to deny my own culture. But I rediscovered my identity when I found Jesus, who accepts me and holds me exactly as I am.”✠

*Deacon Leonel Yoque leads the Maryknoll Society’s Discipulos Misioneros team, which focuses on Hispanic outreach.*

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Maryknoll Father Edward Schoellmann accompanies a mother and child in Tanzania. (Courtesy of Edward Schoellmann/Tanzania)

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# Pursuing Peace and Justice in the Holy Land

By Susan Gunn

*Churches for Middle East Peace seeks to heal divisions and to support the oldest Christian community in the world*

For more than 25 years, Maryknoll missionaries have looked to a group called Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) to provide ways for them to contribute to peace in the Holy Land. Especially at this time of deep division and violence between Israelis and Palestinians, our faith calls us not to lose hope but remain steadfast in our commitment to peace and justice.

Thirty-four Christian denominations and organizations in the United States, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, form the CMEP coalition based on their shared commitment to pursuing security, justice and equality in Palestine, Israel and the broader Middle East.

"They've come together from different perspectives, conservative and liberal, to agree upon multiple policy positions in the pursuit of lasting peace," says the Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, executive director of CMEP. "We meet regularly with the White House, senators, representatives, the State Department, and even heads of state. We've had the opportunity to speak and educate at the United Nations and at other global forums."



*Residents of Silwan in East Jerusalem express sorrow as their ancestral home, belonging to their family for 200 years, is destroyed. A court order allowed the municipal council, settler organization and border police to demolish the house. The family was given an hour to remove belongings. (Susan Nchubiri/Palestine)*

Kyle Cristofalo, CMEP senior director of advocacy in Washington, D.C., says CMEP has three advocacy priorities: holistic peace building, humanitarian economic assistance and human rights.

Maryknoll Sister Susan Nchubiri has worked closely with Cristofalo this past year, after the missionary gained experience in Jerusalem as part of an international team



Artists have painted messages of resilience and hope on the concrete wall separating Bethlehem and Jerusalem, built to segregate Palestinians. (Susan Nchubiri/Palestine)

organized by the World Council of Churches. The team offered a protective presence to vulnerable communities, monitoring and reporting human rights abuses.

"CMEP's annual advocacy summits in Washington, D.C., are a great opportunity for people of faith to come to the Capitol and speak to their congresspeople," says Sister Nchubiri, who attended the summit last April.

CMEP does more than just advocacy, however. "We want to educate American Christians about what is happening in the Middle East," Dr. Cannon says. "We travel with Israelis and Palestinians. We bring them to the United States to talk about their experiences and their realities." CMEP has also produced videos to share these voices with church audiences.

"Israelis are afraid," says Tania Hary, executive director of Gisha, an Israeli nonprofit organization founded in 2005 whose goal is to protect the freedom of movement of Palestinians, especially Gaza residents.

In 2005, the Israeli government decided to dismantle settlements and evacuate Israeli settlers and the army from inside Gaza in response to attacks on Israeli civilians by Palestinian militants. The purpose of the plan, according to then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, was to improve Israel's security in the absence of peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

The United Nations considers Gaza to be still under military occupation by Israel, a point disputed by Israel. Since the withdrawal in

2005, Israel continues to maintain direct control over Gaza's air and maritime space, six of Gaza's seven land crossings and the Palestinian population registry. Many Gazans say what is most taxing is Israel's control of their movement in and out of the enclave and their forced dependence on Israel for water, electricity, telecommunications and other utilities.

"As Palestinians, every aspect of our life is controlled by Israeli military orders and regulations," says Sami Awad, founder and former executive director of Holy Land Trust. Awad, the nephew of Non-violence International's founder Mubarak Awad, was born in the United States to Palestinian parents and received a doctorate in divinity from Chicago Theological Seminary. He began the Holy Land Trust in Bethlehem in 1998 to strengthen and empower the Palestinian community to develop nonviolent approaches to resisting oppression and building a peaceful future.

Rabbi Naamah Kelman, the first ordained female rabbi in Israel, also spoke in a CMEP video of non-violent principles for transforming conflict. "We are all survivors of trauma and the more we hear of each other's suffering, the more we might be able to move forward," she says.

Churches for Middle East Peace organizes "pilgrimage to peace" tours to bring people from the United States to the Holy Land to meet inspiring people like Hary, Awad and Rabbi Kelman and to gain a deeper understanding of the

issues. "Once you see injustice visited upon children, once you see the wall and go through a checkpoint, it really changes your perspective," Sister Nchubiri says.

Another aspect of CMEP's work is to support the Christian community in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, which constitutes the oldest Christian community in the world, dating back to the first century.

Before the horrific Oct. 7 attack by Hamas in Israel and subsequent Israeli bombardment and siege of Gaza, the Christian community in Gaza included approximately 1,000 people from Orthodox, Catholic, Episcopalian and Protestant traditions. The Armenian and Latin patriarchs have both stated that the level of death and destruction has reached a degree that threatens to completely eradicate the Christian community in Gaza.

"We hear regularly from our friends and brothers and sisters in the Holy Land about how difficult their current realities are, and yet they do not give up hope," Dr. Cannon says. "We can support their work by encouraging them, praying for them, and advocating on their behalf in the United States."

Because, Dr. Cannon says, "engaging in the work of human rights and advocating for justice is a discipleship journey for those of us who choose to follow Jesus." ✠

*Susan Gunn is director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns in Washington, D.C., a collaborative ministry of the Maryknoll Sisters, the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers and the Maryknoll Lay Missioners.*

# World Watch

## Ethnic Cleansing in Sudan?

By Thomas Gould

In the civil war in Sudan, independent sources confirm reports of renewed ethnic killings of civilians in the long-conflicted Darfur region.

The civil war that broke out on April 15 of last year pits the Sudanese army against a rival military group known as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The RSF and associated militias have been accused of ethnically motivated killings — in homes, schools and mosques — as well as other atrocities such as the systematic use of sexual violence against women.

The victims are primarily members of the Masalit tribe, who are Indigenous subsistence agriculturalists in the western Darfur region, where militias now associated with the RSF carried out genocide with the consent of the Sudanese government two decades ago. Ethnic tensions, long simmering between nomadic Arab herders and the sedentary agriculturalists, fuel the violence. Members of the Masalit tribe are recognizable for their darker skin that distinguishes them from their ethnically Arab neighbors.

The discovery of gold in the hills of North Darfur in 2012 accelerated tensions, as gold exports quickly rose to dominate Sudan's international trade, jumping to 72% of the nation's exports in 2013, up from 10% in 2010.

This turned gold mines into battlefields, bringing an influx of foreign profiteers and weaponry.

In 2019, generals from both the Sudanese army and the RSF supported nonviolent civilian protests against the authoritarian government of Omar al-Bashir and took part in the overthrow of the longtime dictator, initially forming an alliance between civilians and the military. For a brief time there was hope of relief for the Masalit people under new civilian governance.

But at the end of 2020, an African Union-U.N. peacekeeping mission in Darfur expired, leaving the Masalit exposed. Then, in October 2021, the two generals of the Sudanese army and the RSF forcibly took control of the government in preference for a power sharing agreement between themselves, a tenuous arrangement that collapsed in April of 2023.

This led to intense fighting throughout the country. Since the coup in 2021, some of the same perpetrators from the early 2000s resumed looting, arson, rapes and killings — atrocities that had never fully ended during the last two decades.

In addition to the deliberate killings of ethnic groups, Sudan has seen tens of thousands of civilian casualties and 6.8 million people displaced. The two



A young Sudanese woman who fled the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region takes refuge in a camp of makeshift shelters in Borota, Chad. (OSV News photo/Zohra Bensemra/Reuters)

forces have been evenly matched, with the Sudanese army boasting an infantry twice as large as its rival and the RSF receiving foreign funding from Russia and some Arab countries that want to profit from Sudan's gold. Both groups have committed war crimes, such as the torture of prisoners and other atrocities, according to the U.S. State Department. Ordinary civilians are paying a heavy price as the war-

ring generals vie for power.

Maryknoll Father Thomas Tiscornia, who was living in Sudan until the end of 2023, writes, "Please keep Sudan and its people in your prayers, that sometime in the future we will know the peace that the Lord offers." ✠

Thomas Gould is communications manager for the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

### FAITH IN ACTION:

- Ask President Biden to support recommendations by Human Rights Watch to investigate war crimes in Sudan through the International Criminal Court and through the U.N. Fact-Finding Mechanism. <https://mogc.info/Sudan-Action>
- Watch a short video of Maryknoll Father Tom Tiscornia talking about the three blessings that have sustained him in his ministries in Sudan, South Sudan, and Tanzania. <https://mogc.info/WW-Tiscornia>
- Read a report of the killings by Human Rights Watch: <https://mogc.info/WW-Sudan-HRW>

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

## Maryknoll Dreams

By Sandro Paiva

**M**y name is Sandro Aldo Paiva Crispin and I am a 44-year-old Maryknoll volunteer in Cochabamba, Bolivia. I serve in the museum at the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Center, where we share our collection of photos, publications and historical objects about Maryknoll in Latin America. This legacy is a wealth we cannot keep to ourselves.

I was born in Villa Karajara-Huanuni, a farming community. I grew up with my grandparents because my parents worked in the mines. My first languages were Quechua and Aymara.

My grandparents believed that all living things — plants, animals, even the mountains — speak to us. Everything is connected, from our faith to our social action and even our dreams.

With the help of the Catholic Church, at 8 years old I went to live at Hogar Arco Iris, a home in Cochabamba. It is a place where children from rural areas can stay in order to attend school. I learned Spanish — but never forgot my grandparents' wisdom.

At 15, I went to live with my parents in Huanuni. Most families there worked in the mines. There was a strong Catholic Action movement for the youth from mining families. We protested the injustices we experienced,

such as the pollution of nature during the extraction process.

Two years later, I returned to Cochabamba to finish my high school studies. I deepened my faith and spent five years in formation for religious life, including a year on mission in Paraguay. There I discerned my calling as a layperson.

After I returned once again to Cochabamba, the archbishop invited me to help lead the archdiocesan commission for mission. I went to 74 parishes and four quasi-parishes (mission churches) to animate parishioners to get involved in mission. Maryknoll has always collaborated with mission in Bolivia, and I found that we shared the same goal.

I participated in a formation program at the former Maryknoll Mission Center (CMMAL) in Cochabamba and got to know Maryknoll even better. In 2015, Maryknoll Father Stephen Judd invited me to help support CMMAL and later I officially joined the administrative staff.

Being part of Maryknoll meant sharing what came next. The COVID-19 pandemic made us realize that the CMMAL project was no longer sustainable. After five and a half decades of service, it closed in 2020.

But what closed was only a project:



Sandro Paiva shows his book on Indigenous wisdom of the Andes, on display at the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers museum in Cochabamba, Bolivia. (Adam Mitchell/Bolivia)

Maryknoll in Cochabamba continues dreaming of the Reign of God.

With the help of partner organizations and the leadership of Maryknoll Father Alejandro Marina, the property is once again a place of learning and encounter. In November we organized a retreat to talk to young people about mission and vocations within the Maryknoll movement. I feel at home in this family.

The dreams of our founders are alive. When China and other countries in the East were closed to them because of World War II, they sought new mission sites. They came to Riberalta, Bolivia, and from here extended to Latin America. They never stood still.

The three radio stations Maryknoll started in Bolivia (San Miguel, San Gabriel and San Rafael) continue to function. The school in Cochabamba established by the Maryknoll sisters,

now independent, is still running.

The parish I belong to with my wife, Carmen, and our sons Jesús Andrés, 8, and Martín Adrián, 3, was founded by Maryknoll, Santa Ana of Cala Cala.

In 2021, I finished my degree in philosophy and humanities at the Bolivian Catholic University; my thesis was published by the university the following year. I work as a teacher in different settings. In both my job and in my role as a Maryknoll volunteer, I impart values to the new generations.

There is a connection between dreams that are realized and dreams that are not ... and the dreams yet to come.

My goal is to preserve and further the historical memory of Maryknoll in Bolivia and beyond. It's to let people know about Maryknoll's legacy — and also the ongoing relevance of its work.

This legacy is life-giving. ✨

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## READERS' RESPONSES

### FROM AN OLD FRIEND

Please thank Father Bob McCahill for his interview in the Spring 2023 issue of *Maryknoll*, from an old friend in Bangladesh! I enjoyed the article about his ministry and the articles about other ministries too.

Also, please thank the lovely young lady — Jacqueline Romo — for the eye-and-heart-opening butterfly Way of the Cross, “The Passion of the Monarca Migrante” in the same issue. Another treasure!

Margaret Shield, CSC  
Ventura, California

pose (use of gifts) some years ago — a lot of time is spent on this, and yet it is really so simple: Love.

Mary Gail Royal  
Cedarville, Michigan

### GRACE-FILLED LIFE

What a grace-filled smile of Father Robert McCahill on your cover! As grace-filled as his purpose in life — God bless him. I love reading *Maryknoll* magazine.

Louella Armstrong  
Jackson Heights, New York

### EDUCATING HEROS

What a joy it brought to my heart to read about Gabriel! [“Educating Heroes,” Summer 2023] It pleases me that my little offerings can help to do so much for our deserving brothers and sisters.

Lucille Brady  
Washington, D.C.

### AS SIMPLE AS LOVE

I used to, for years, look at the pictures in the *Maryknoll* magazine and, of course, read an article or two about a Maryknoll relative or friend. In the last few years I started becoming interested in the articles on Tanzania, as I know a Maryknoll missionary who worked there.

I now generally read the magazine cover to cover, even though I'm not an avid reader. The articles on the immigration issue have been most helpful, especially “Borders of Hope” in the Winter 2024 issue. I have much more insight into these problems and how Maryknoll is trying to help.

I was also touched by the Winter 2024 cover. When I saw it, I laughed out loud along with the priest in the photo!

I pray every day that I may live my purpose in life. Also, I pray for many relatives and friends. I wrote to my nieces and nephews about their pur-

### REGENERATIVE FARMING

As a longtime friend of Maryknoll, I know that staying true to mission while remaining apolitical is not always compatible. The “climate controversy” letter in the Spring 2023 issue being a case in point.

As someone who grew up on a farm and remained in agriculture, I find hope in the regenerative farming movement. Its essence is a renewed focus on the biology and life of the soil. Basically, we stop treating soil like dirt.

One irrefutable fact regarding our precious planet is the concern for

global desertification. It should come as no surprise that this well-documented trend would contribute to famine and war. Without going into detail, suffice to say that reversing global desertification is within our capacity — given the will to do so — and in keeping with Pope Francis’ call in *Laudato Si’*.

*Dennis McLaughlin  
Cumming, Iowa*

### RESPONSE TO NAÏVE

Naïve? What could be more naïve than the letter from a reader in the Winter 2024 issue mindlessly parroting the anti-immigrant slanders of some of our politicians and their disciples? Without a doubt, a criminal element exists among the waves of immigrants at our borders, but if he and his ilk knew what they are talking about, they would know that the vast majority of the crime in this country is homegrown.

From long experience with immigrants, I can say with confidence that almost all are here in a desperate search, not just for a better life, but in many cases to stay alive. Believe me, almost all of them would rather have a peaceful life with their rights respected in their own countries.

*Rev. Michael Burton Roark  
Murfreesboro, Tennessee*

### DANGEROUS PASSAGE

Nice article about asylum-seekers crossing our southern border.

However, the vast majority of illegal crossings are not by qualified asylum-seekers, but by illegals who paid a small fortune to human traffickers for passage through very dangerous territory to our country. Many of these illegals will be indebted to the drug cartels for years to pay off their debt. If they don’t, the consequences will be brutal.

*Richard Ready  
Shawano, Wisconsin*

### ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

The Fall 2023 article by photojournalist Paul Jeffrey suggests that martyrdom has many forms. In the good works portrayed in “Serving Migrant Martyrs in Taiwan,” Maryknoll Father Joyalito Tajonera is indeed serving an Asian Catholic community well. My own research as a historian examines the implications of the ultimate sacrifice, and its mystery is astounding.

An example for consideration is the life of Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish priest who gave his life to save a Jewish prisoner at Auschwitz during World War II. Its beauty is that Kolbe was offered a white crown of purity and a red crown of martyrdom by the Blessed Mother. He earned both.

By Jeffrey’s article, we Christians are asked to consider what martyrdom means. Perhaps we may someday be asked to give the ultimate sacrifice of our own lives as well.

*Mark A. Sleboda  
Redford Township, Michigan*

*“That which you have given away returns.”*

*— Kaonde Proverb, Southern Africa*



*Lynn Monahan/Peru*

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*(Left to right) Deacon Arturo Medina, Friar Jarek Wysoczanski, Sarah Bueter, Julienne Hoang, Kathy Flatoff, Bishop Mark Seitz, Theresa Glaser and Maryknoll Father Raymond Finch celebrate the sending of the Maryknoll Lay Missioners Class of 2023 at Cristo Rey Church in El Paso, Texas. The four lay missioners were sent to El Salvador, Cambodia and Kenya (see story, p. 24).*

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