

MARYKNOLL

U.S. Catholic Church in mission overseas

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A young girl with dark hair in pigtails, wearing a light blue and white school uniform, is smiling broadly with her right arm raised high. She is in a classroom setting with other students and desks visible in the background.

Spirit of Hope

FROM THE EDITOR

Two themes abound in this issue of *Maryknoll*: hope and opening doors. Hope is central to Christianity and embodies the very essence of Jesus' message. In this issue, as always, we bring you a variety of examples of Maryknoll missionaries manifesting hope.

Pope Francis renewed hope when he opened the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica at the start of this Jubilee Year, signifying passage into the fullness of divine Grace. We feature the event in our photo meditation. Other Holy Doors have opened in cathedrals and shrines around the world for the Jubilee.

Maryknollers open doors in mission — sometimes, quite literally. In this issue we visit the jungles of Guatemala, where Maryknoll priests have constructed a dozen chapels, and Hong Kong, where a school founded by the Maryknoll Sisters celebrates its centenary.

Of note, too, in this issue is our tribute to Father Gustavo Gutiérrez, who died in October. Dominican Father Gutiérrez, considered the father of liberation theology, opened doors by approaching theology from below, from the perspective of the marginalized and the oppressed. Father Gutiérrez's groundbreaking seminal work, *A Theology of Liberation*, published in English by Maryknoll's Orbis Books 52 years ago, profoundly impacted Catholic social teaching and Church leaders, including our current pope.

This approach to theology from the perspective of the peripheries has come to epitomize mission — and Maryknoll — in the post-Vatican II era.

Lynn F. Monahan
Editor-in-Chief

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

Romans 8:28

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Magazine of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers



10

Octavio Durán/Guatemala

FEATURED STORIES

- | | |
|--|---|
| 10 Hope Triumphs in Guatemala
<i>By Deirdre Cornell</i> | 40 Spoons and a Spinning Top
<i>By Deirdre Cornell</i> |
| 18 A Maryknoll Heart Beats in Kowloon
<i>By Andrea Moreno-Díaz</i> | 46 Maryknoll at the Second Vatican Council
<i>By James H. Kroeger, M.M.</i> |
| 26 A Tribute to Gustavo Gutiérrez
<i>By Robert Ellsberg</i> | 51 God Walks with Migrant Workers
<i>By Leonel Yoque</i> |
| 34 Sharing Jesus' Heart
<i>By Jennifer Tomshack</i> | |

DEPARTMENTS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 4 Photo Meditation | 55 Prayer for Vocations |
| 8 Missioner Tales | 56 World Watch |
| 16 Spirit of Mission | 58 Partners in Mission |
| 30 Orbis Books | 61 Readers' Responses |

FRONT COVER:
A student at Maryknoll Convent School raises her hand in class. The school in Hong Kong celebrated its centenary in February.

COVER CREDITS:
Front: Paul Jeffrey/Hong Kong
Back: Andrea Moreno-Díaz/U.S.

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.

OPEN WIDE THE DOORS


By Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

*Open wide the doors of grace
Let every saint and sinner in.
Welcome every tribe and race
To help each person seek the face
Of God who ever dwells therein.*

*Open wide the doors of faith
To all who wander in the dark
Where guided by a heavenly spark
They may find courage for the fight
That conquers even death's dread night.*

*Open wide the doors of peace
Where violence and war prevail
Though mercy and forgiveness fail
May all thoughts of vengeance cease
God's reign on earth at last to hail.*



A photograph of an elderly woman with grey hair, wearing a brown quilted jacket over a green sweater, touching a golden relief on a dark door. The relief depicts a figure in a long, flowing robe. The door is ornate with brass studs and other reliefs. The scene is dimly lit, with the golden relief being the primary light source.

*Open wide the doors of truth
Free all those bound by clever lies:
The aged, the grown, the child, the youth
And may true freedom be the prize
Full human life to realize.*

*Open wide the doors of hope,
Come all burdened with despair.
Fear not to light a candle where
Darkness deepens all the more
Walk bravely through the open door!*

MISSIONER TALES



Octavio Durán/Guatemala

A group of our Maryknoll community including myself went to the Amazon region of Bolivia to celebrate Holy Week with the Indigenous people of Santísima Trinidad parish. It was wonderful to learn about the joys and struggles of the people as well as their cultural traditions celebrating Easter.

During the Easter Vigil, a 7-year-old boy joyfully sang out the word “Alleluia” with all his strength. He had trouble pronouncing the Ls in that word and sang “Ayeyuya” instead.

The pronunciation did not matter. What was more important was the joy

of singing that Jesus is Risen and is present in this Indigenous community.

Michael Bassano, M.M.

As a Maryknoll sister, I spent my first three years in mission in Guatemala City, where I learned to read the newspaper in Spanish. Later, I went to a town more than 300 kilometers (about 200 miles) away, where the rural population spoke the Mayan language called Mam. There was no newspaper delivery, but the sacristan told me I could get newspapers in a little shop down the street. When I told the shopkeeper

I wanted to buy a newspaper, he asked me, “How many pounds?” He sold old newspapers by weight to vendors who used it to wrap their produce on market day. There are things about culture that you don’t learn from books!

Bernice Kita, M.M.

I am a nurse currently in mission with Maryknoll Lay Missioners in Tanzania, where access to medical care is nearly impossible for the families I serve. One day I visited a couple who requested that I assess their 6-month-old daughter. They had taken her to the hospital, yet could not understand the information they received there about her diagnosis of cerebral palsy. As I unwrapped the baby, I noticed the telltale scarring on her arms that I see on so many children with disabilities. The child had been taken to a witch doctor before being treated at the hospital.

As an outsider, I’m not privy to this world of witchcraft, and I don’t know exactly what occurs in these sessions. But I do see the permanent scars on many children I work with. None of it will heal cerebral palsy. Education is critical for these families, yet without help, it is severely lacking.

The couple now understands their baby’s diagnosis of cerebral palsy. They have been trained in methods of basic physical therapy for muscle relaxation and administering medication to control seizures. Now they know what can be done to help their child live up to her full potential as she grows.

Anna Johnson, MKLM

The sun was close to setting at the end of a very hot and dusty day in the Amazon of Brazil, where I served as a Maryknoll brother. I was still far from home, and exhausted after long hours of uninspiring tasks. As I pulled into a gasoline station, I saw a poorly clad young man by the gas pump. I confess that my first thought was not at all charitable — “Oh dear God, this is all I need right now, to deal with a beggar!” But, when my car came to a stop, I was surprised by his cheerful greeting, “Fill her up?” I got out of the car, while he started to pump the gas.

As I finally, really looked at him, I saw that he had a large misshapen head. Yet his manner was very pleasant, and it was easy to converse. He seemed so open that I dared to ask, “Does your head hurt much?”

His response was gentle and uttered without self-pity: “All the time.” The bone in his cranium, he said, was constantly growing. He had been to some of Brazil’s better hospitals, but no treatment was available. The condition would eventually kill him. At no point in our conversation did he express resentment about his state in life. We parted with friendly goodbyes.

As I drove away, I realized that the real beggar, the truly needy one, had been me — awash in my own self-pity. The young man at the pump, on the other hand, was a remarkable person and a marvelous witness. He manifested the quality of life that comes when one allows oneself to be embraced by a spirit of gratitude.

Mark Gruenke, M.M.

HOPE *Triumphs* IN Guatemala



By Deirdre Cornell || Photos by Octavio Durán, OFM

A Maryknoll priest builds the Church in Guatemala by constructing chapels and forming lay leaders

María Luz Morales, 49, recalls the chapel of her childhood in the village of El Caoba, Guatemala. “It was so tiny, made of wood planks,” she says. “There were no chairs or pews. People sat on tree stumps.”

In El Caoba on a recent Sunday, Maryknoll Father William Senger baptized 10 babies and young children. More than 100 people attended a lively liturgy in the spacious, beautifully decorated new chapel. It is one of a dozen buildings that Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers have constructed for the parish of San Juan Apóstol, where Father Senger is pastor.

“Our dear Maryknoll priests have been a treasure,” Morales says. “They came to build up our parish.”

San Juan Apóstol parish is comprised of 20 remote communities in Guatemala’s humid northern lowlands known as the Petén. El Caoba started as an airstrip in the jungle, Morales recounts. Like the other villages in this tropical rainforest encompassing a third of the country’s territory, it was settled by subsistence farmers such as her parents who came to homestead.

Father Senger keeps a busy sched-

ule to reach the parish seat, San Juan Apóstol Church in El Remate, and 17 chapels. The late Maryknoll Father Edward “Ted” Custer had arrived in 2008 to serve these communities that had gone decades without a priest. Father Senger joined Father Custer in 2014, after four years at the vicariate’s cathedral in the town of Flores, the department (state) capital.

The priests kept a running tally of the chapels that needed construction or renovation. Father Senger — affectionately known as “Padre William” — recalls one of them.

“It was a rustic chapel, with walls of ill-fitting wood,” he says. “Termites infested the wood.” When the pests reached the wooden tabernacle, it was time to act. A new chapel was built, where Mass is held twice a month.

Another hamlet, accessible only by dirt road, is 12½ miles from Father Senger’s rectory in Macanché. Its 40 Indigenous families, even the children, speak Q’eqchi’. Maryknollers including the late Father William Mullan, who had learned the language, used to offer Mass there in a dirt-floor cabin. That chapel was finished last year.

Maryknoll Father William Senger pauses with altar servers after Mass at one of the dozen chapels constructed by the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers in Guatemala’s Petén region.



Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Jesus Estrella Sibrián and María Pedrina Popol Chapén (left, right) serve the parish's 20 remote communities with Father Senger, the pastor.

"Since Maryknoll has been in this parish, we've built 10 new chapels, one by one," Father Senger says. "We'll be finishing another this month," he adds. "It's 90 percent complete."

Labor is donated by the men in the communities, Father Senger explains, and overseen by a master builder. The vicariate's priest architect draws up the plans, and parishioner Alejandro Córdova Mayen coordinates construction.

In addition to the chapels, the Maryknoll Society undertook another significant project for the parish's future, building a house for the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Jesus. Construction was slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Córdova says, but in May of 2021, the sisters moved in. The property includes a

chapel and a large, sheltered outdoor area (a "multipurpose salon") for programs.

Yet a parish is made up of more than buildings.

The bricks and mortar that hold the parish together are the 60 catechists, delegates of the Word, Eucharistic ministers, chapel coordinators and youth leaders who meet on the fourth Saturday of each month for ongoing formation. Recent topics have included Bible study, the Synod on Synodality and, last year, Guatemala's Eucharistic Congress.

"We have catechists in all the chapels who can share the Liturgy of the Word on Sundays," Father Senger says of the delegates of the Word. These lay people are trained to lead services in the ham-

lets where the priest (who says five weekend Masses) is not scheduled to offer Mass.

The level of engagement is impressive. The parish has 200 altar servers, with 35 in El Remate alone. Ministry leaders meet regularly with their counterparts from three nearby parishes. Some even participate on a diocesan level: for example, Córdova is head of family ministry for the vicariate and one of two lay people on the bishop's pastoral council.

Francisco Mejía García is coordinator of El Remate. He ensures that services at San Juan Apóstol Church

run smoothly and organizes the patronal feast on Dec. 27. He arranges activities for youth, assistance for families in need, visits to the sick and Communion calls.

"Whatever happens in the community, people say, 'Call Francisco,'" Mejía says. "You identify what's needed, what is lacking, and that's what you make a priority."

A warm welcome is key, Mejía says. For example, four children in the First Communion class are not yet baptized. "I told their families, 'Don't be embarrassed, come, we'll baptize them, too. There is room for everyone.'"



During a Sunday Mass, proud parents and godparents present their children for baptism in the spacious, beautiful chapel built by the Maryknoll Society in the village of El Caoba.



Left: Delegate of the Word Mario Méndez Méndez serves at the Macanché chapel built by Maryknoll. Middle: María Luz Morales recounts El Caoba's humble beginnings.

Right: One of the parish's 18 chapel coordinators, Francisco Mejía García, leads the committee of San Juan Apóstol in El Remate, constructed as the parish's main church.

Such an approach is appreciated by the communities. Some families are still dealing with the trauma of Guatemala's legacy of violence. The country's bloody civil war (1960-1996) reached even the remote jungles of the Petén, where Maryknoll missionaries accompanied the people during those difficult decades.

A catechist named Mario Méndez Méndez, 61, recalls the fear of those times. As a young man in 1984, he was giving a Liturgy of the Word service at his chapel when soldiers arrived and stood at the door. "As soon as the service finished, they took me," he says. He and 40 other young men were shipped off in the army to other areas.

Nowadays, emigration takes *peteneros* (people from the Petén) far from home. Every family seems to have someone in "el Norte," the North, in reference to the United States. María Luz Morales' son, for example, works 11-hour shifts at a restaurant in California.

One chapel has lost its Eucharistic ministers, Father Senger says. "We had a couple good people, but they left." In another community, he observes, "there are hardly any men there. They're all in the States."

With education, there is hope for a better future at home. The missionary supports 20 students with scholarships. The eldest is studying to become a teacher.

Father Senger has spent his priestly life building the Church in challenging places.

Born in Devil's Lake, North Dakota, as one of 15 siblings, young Bill Senger graduated at the top of both his high school and seminary classes. Ordained in 1973, he was first assigned to Venezuela, where he served over a decade. He then served 17 years in the Amazon rainforest, in Bolivia's Pando region.

When priests were needed in Honduras, Father Senger volunteered for Central America. He goes where he is needed, he says. Even after five decades in ministry, the missionary's farm background comes through. Hardworking and uncom-

plaining, at 78 he still finds purpose in serving.

His easy-going demeanor belies his zeal for completing the mission he shared with Father Custer, who died in March of 2024. This year, Father Senger says, he will construct the final chapel. "We're going to build the last one, then they'll all be covered."

The last chapel will serve 100 families that were displaced from another area of the Petén and granted land within the parish's territory. In this rugged terrain that is home to people of such strong faith, the resettled community bears an apt name: El Triunfo de la Esperanza — literally, "the triumph of hope." ✠

Christ Our Light

by Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

In the Book of Genesis, the first thing God creates is light. Not so God can see, but rather so that we can. The Bible and all of Creation will reveal God.

Light illumines everything. Without it, nothing is visible. Yet light itself is invisible! It must be reflected off of something. But for the full miracle of light to be experienced, one more thing is required — sight. The mystery of light needs a source, something to reflect it, and someone to perceive it.

Psalms 19:2 proclaims, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament proclaims the work of God’s hands.” Photos from the James Webb Space Telescope reveal the sublime truth of this passage. And here on Earth, to those with spiritual eyes, every flower, bird, butterfly, towering mountain and crashing wave speak of the power, majesty and glory of God.

The Book of Exodus describes a burning bush, on fire but not consumed, as God reveals the Divine Name to Moses. A pillar of fire leads the Hebrews through the desert from slavery to freedom. The prophet Isaiah proclaims, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (9:1). For Christians, that great light is the full knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

In Catholicism, a vigil light bears witness to the presence of Christ in every tabernacle, in every church. Catholics light votive candles for special intentions and for the repose of our dearly departed. We light candles at baptisms, as the faith is spread from parents and godparents to the newly baptized. And the Paschal Candle at funerals signifies the presence of Christ in our darkest hour.

Nowhere does light play a more central role in Catholic worship than in the Easter Triduum. The Holy Thursday liturgy ends with a solemn procession bearing the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar of Repose. The faithful keep vigil by candlelight while the church goes dark. The altar is stripped, the tabernacle emptied, and the vigil light extinguished.

No Mass is celebrated on Good Friday as the Church mourns. Two candles accompany the veneration of the cross; later, two candles attend Christ’s Eucharistic presence for Communion. Then the church plunges again into darkness. That evening, the traditional *Tenebrae* (Latin for “darkness”) service employs a candelabra with seven candles. One by one, after each reading or song, a flame is extinguished until only one light remains.

As this last candle is borne out of



Worshippers hold candles that illumine the darkness during the Easter Vigil at St. John the Evangelist Church in Center Moriches, New York. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz/U.S.)

the church and darkness descends, the worshippers slam their prayer books on the pews, symbolizing Christ’s “harrowing of hell.”

The Holy Saturday liturgy begins where Good Friday left off, in darkness. As night falls, a new fire is ignited and blessed. The new Paschal Candle, inscribed with the numerals of the current year, is consecrated. The lit Paschal Candle is borne aloft into the darkened church while a deacon or celebrant intones three times, “Christ, our light!” The people respond, “Thanks be to God!”

The new flame passes from one taper to the next until light illumines the whole church. The *Exsultet* (Latin for “Rejoice”) is chanted, praising the light of Christ that shattered forever

the darkness of death and sin.

Jesus says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

But Jesus also says, “*You* are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:14) What Jesus is, we are called to be. Our words, actions, witness and relationships are to reflect God so that God continues to be revealed.

This calling to be the light of the world may seem overwhelming, if not impossible, given the deepening darkness of the world around us. The Gospel of Saint John reassures us: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (1:5). The darker the night, the brighter the guiding star. ✠

A Maryknoll Heart Beats in Kowloon

By Andrea Moreno-Díaz || Photos by Paul Jeffrey

A school founded by pioneering Maryknoll Sisters in Hong Kong celebrates its centenary the Maryknoll way

As Maryknoll Sister Susan Glass ambles down the sunny corridors of Maryknoll Convent School, throngs of little girls in light blue or orange uniforms greet her with shouts of joy and a collective hug.

The school marked its anniversary on Feb. 11, celebrating a century of affordable, quality education for Hong Kong students and instilling in multiple generations the Maryknoll Sisters' spirit of service.



Primary section students at Maryknoll Convent School prepare to present for English class. Skills such as voice projection, pronunciation and confidence are emphasized.



First grade students paint banners to celebrate their first 100 days of school. This initiative combines academic lessons with dynamic activities that foster socialization.



Secondary section students throw the shot during physical education class. MCS offers 64 extracurricular clubs and teams focused on sports, music, service and academics.

“Our emphasis is going beyond borders, whether it be geographical or sociological, to go beyond yourself and do something that’s outward looking,” Sister Glass says of the culture of the school. She is spiritual advisor to both the primary (ages 6-12) and secondary (ages 13-18) sections.

The prevailing spirit of “going beyond” has been at the heart of MCS from the start.

Founded in 1925 under the leadership of Maryknoll Sister Mary Paul McKenna, the school began as a kindergarten for 12 students before it moved in 1937 to the current facilities in Kowloon Tong.

During the Second Sino-Japanese War, when fighting broke out in Hong Kong in 1941, MCS became a first-aid post. The sisters cared for the wounded until a shell hit the school. As Hong Kong fell, the sisters pleaded to remain in the school to no avail. They were sent to Stanley Internment Camp in southern Hong Kong Island along with other prisoners, and the school became a Japanese military hospital.

A few sisters were released; others were exchanged for Japanese prisoners. In 1943, the remaining sisters left Hong Kong but never gave up the dream of returning to their beloved school. When the Japanese surrendered in 1945 at the end of World War II, the sisters returned to MCS and recovered the plundered buildings. They resumed classes and created educational programs for refugee children from China.

Today, MCS has 880 primary and 835 secondary students and is ranked among the best schools in the city. Its brick buildings, French tile roofs and courtyards were inspired by the Maryknoll Motherhouse in New York. In 2008, the all-girls school was declared a historic monument of Hong Kong.

Preparing a fitting celebration for such a legacy was no easy task, but Francisca Chan, of the class of 1992 and coordinator of the centenary, had a vision in mind.

“To spread kindness to the underprivileged. We want that to be part of our centenary,” Chan says. “Education is important, but also the values students learn and carry throughout their life.”

The yearlong celebration included a kick-off ceremony, a gala dinner, a symposium and a concert by alumnae and students. Cardinal Stephen Chow accepted the invitation to celebrate the anniversary Mass.

Students participated in an initiative called 100 Acts of Kindness that included donating used uniforms for reuse or upcycling, creating “boxes of hope” with toys for children in need, packing Christmas presents for patients at Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital and fashioning dog toys for animal rescue charities.

“The spirit of service — this is the spirit of the Maryknoll Sisters,” says Cordelia Chung, chairperson of the Maryknoll Convent School Foundation. “We want to make sure we pass that on.”

The Foundation was incorporated



At the start of each school day, primary students line up for morning assembly to listen to announcements.

in 2004 to take over the running of the school when fewer sisters were available to serve.

Fearful that they would have to give up the school, the late Maryknoll Sisters Jeanne Houlihan and Rose Duchesne Debrecht, who had been administrators and teachers at MCS, consulted with alumnae.

"What do you do when you get a call from the sisters?" says Amy Ho, class of 1979 and current supervisor of the school's primary section. "You drop the telephone and run

back to school."

At a gathering with 40 alumnae, Ho remembers the late Maryknoll Sister Agnes Cazale "almost in tears" at the prospect of losing the school.

"Someone suggested, 'Can we take over?'" Ho says. "There's no precedent in Hong Kong. There's never been an alumni lay group taking over a religious school."

For Ho, who had been on the committee that wrote the Basic Law of Hong Kong as the British colony prepared to be transferred to China,

this felt like a calling.

"I was familiar with the setting up of organizations, and that's what I did with Sister Jeanne Houlihan," Ho says. "There's something about this school we want to preserve and if the sisters were indeed successful in educating us, then we would be the vessels of those somethings."

Ho embarked on another mission in 2019. She took a ferry across the Pearl River Delta to nearby Macau to ask Sister Susan Glass, then serving at a parish, to join the school

staff. Three years ago, "Sister Sue," as she is known by students and staff, joined MCS.

Sister Glass, 81, was first assigned to Hong Kong in 1980. Before then, the missionary from Milwaukee had taught in Catholic schools in Hawaii. In Hong Kong she set up a lay formation center in the New Territories and worked with the Diocese of Hong Kong to prepare for the hand-over to China in 1997.

Now, as spiritual advisor at MCS, Sister Glass offers students, parents and staff a space for contemplation.

Teenage students meet with her in the prayer room for counseling. Primary students place their textbooks on a table and pray with Sister Glass for good test scores.

"When Pope Francis asks us to be signs of hope for young people, the best sign is to be the best person we can be and to be happy about it," says Sister Glass. "If young people see that, it would be a sign to them that they also can be happy and fulfilled."

With the staff, Sister Glass leads teambuilding and spiritual exercises. "I think they appreciate that," she says. "I have the same experience with the parents. Once a month we have a faith-sharing group."

Teamwork and mentorship are instilled in MCS students from the start. Primary students are mentored by secondary students, who

are in turn matched with alumnae who come back to the school to give talks and offer guidance.

"It's one way for us to connect our students with alumnae who are role models," says Ophelia Ngan, Class of 1984 and supervisor of the secondary section. "We offer a person who has gone through their journey to tell them about their own trials and tribulations, their choices, their careers," she says.

The final event of the centenary is an example of such intergenerational collaboration. Led by an alumna, some of the primary and secondary

students authored an interactive theatrical play to be performed at the closing ceremony.

For Sister Glass, the centenary is both a look back at the dreams envisioned by the Maryknoll Sisters and an opportunity to imagine what the future will bring.

"We can't just stop and say, 'Hey, isn't this great?'" Sister Glass says. "What are we going to do for the next hundred years? How are we going to move that legacy into the future?" What truly matters, she says, is "to hold on to things that are going to move us forward." ✠

Maryknoll Sister Susan Glass, MCS spiritual advisor, gives Communion to a secondary section student during an All Saints Day Mass held at Maryknoll Convent School.



"These commandments that I give you ...
impress them on your children."

— Deuteronomy 6:6-7



Paul Jeffrey/Hong Kong

Maryknoll Sister Susan Glass teaches young people to know and live the richness of the Christian message: Love one another. This is possible because of your generosity.

Will you support her in this ministry of bringing hope to the young?



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A Tribute to Gustavo Gutiérrez

By Robert Ellsberg

The father of liberation theology leaves an enduring legacy



Joseph Hahn/Maryknoll Mission Archives

With the passing of Dominican Father Gustavo Gutiérrez, who died in October at the age of 96, the Church has lost a prophet and groundbreaking theologian who substantially enlarged its social teaching. The poor of the world have lost an advocate. And Maryknoll has lost a great friend.

Father Gutiérrez, a Peruvian priest who studied in France, was one of the guiding lights behind the historic 1968 conference of the Latin American bishops at Medellín, Colombia, which applied the teachings of Vatican II to the social reality of poverty and injustice in their continent. It was from that conference that a “preferential option for the poor” entered the vocabulary of the Church. In 1971 he

published his classic work, *A Theology of Liberation*. Translated into English by Orbis Books in 1973, it became the foundation of a whole school of theology and, incidentally, the cornerstone of our publishing program.

To celebrate Father Gutiérrez’s 60th birthday, in 1988 Maryknoll and Orbis sponsored a symposium that attracted many of the great theologians from Latin America and around the world. By this time, his influence was without question. But his theology also raised alarms in both political and Church circles. Two documents from the Vatican scrutinized the theology of liberation, and many of his fellow theologians — though not Father Gutiérrez himself — were subjected to investigation and discipline.

What was the dangerous content of his work? Like all great theologians, Father Gutiérrez wrestled with the problem of how to talk about God in terms of the questions posed by the historical moment. For many modern theologians, that involved the meaning of faith in an age of reason and skepticism, the challenge of the “nonbeliever.” For Father Gutiérrez the question was how to talk about God in relation to the suffering of the poor, the challenge of the “non-person.”

This was not an academic question; it was posed by the reality outside his window in the parish of Rímac, a poor neighborhood in Lima, where Father Gutiérrez served for many years as a pastor. This was a vantage point shared by most of the world’s population, and by the

Maryknoll missionaries with whom he worked. Yet, for most theologians from Europe and North America this reality remained under their radar screens.

For some philosophers the suffering of the innocent called into question the existence of God. But for Father Gutiérrez this reality instead called into question the injustice of the world’s social structures and the shameful complaisance of the Church. The God of Life, revealed fully in Scripture and in Jesus Christ, challenged all Christians to make a “preferential option for the poor.”

Who are the poor? In an interview some years ago, Father Gutiérrez answered this question: “The poor are those who are treated as non-persons, those who are considered insignificant from an economic, political,



Dominican Father Gustavo Gutiérrez gives a presentation on liberation theology at the Maryknoll seminary in 1984. (C. Martin/Maryknoll Mission Archives/U.S.)

and cultural point of view. The poor count only as statistics; they are the nameless." But, as he went on to remind us: "Even though the poor remain insignificant within society, they are never insignificant before God." And this bears concrete implications for all those who call themselves disciples of Jesus.

Father Gutiérrez often visited Maryknoll and enjoyed close friendships with many Maryknollers who worked in Peru, including during the terrible times of the *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) terrorist insurgency of the 1980s and early 1990s and the government repres-

sion in response to it.

Maryknoll Father Stephen Judd, who served in Peru, knew him well. Father Judd remembers: "Without a doubt the enduring impact of the life of Gustavo Gutiérrez comes from the words he used for an article in 1986 during those most troublesome times in Peru: 'We still have time.' That phrase closely defines a pattern in Gustavo's life of always finding and having time for each person who graced his path, no matter the person's social or class standing, be they colleagues, strangers, rich or poor, bishops or anyone he just met."

Father Gutiérrez's relationship with Orbis Books extended over decades of writing and many publications, including *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*; *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the People*; and, recently, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Spiritual Writings*, a contribution to our Modern Spiritual Masters Series. In 2023 we published a 50th anniversary edition of his seminal *Theology of Liberation*, an occasion that was celebrated widely around the world.

Through Father Gutiérrez's work the "preferential option for the poor" became a hallmark of the Latin American Church and eventually the official magisterium of the Church. It has been embraced by Pope Francis, who welcomed Father Gutiérrez to the Vatican, and who responded to his death by calling him "a great man, a man of the Church who knew how to be silent when he had to be silent, who knew how to suffer when it was his turn to suffer, who knew how to carry forward so much apostolic fruit and so much rich theology." Father Judd speaks of Father Gutiérrez as a pioneer of the "synodal" path that Pope Francis has set for the Church.

At many points over the past 50 years critics wrote the epitaph for liberation theology. (Father Gutiérrez quipped that if liberation theology was dead, why was he not invited to the funeral?)

Nevertheless, when it came to the



Father Gutiérrez's theological starting point was his pastoral work with the poor. (Lawrence Rich/Maryknoll Mission Archives/Peru)

future of his theology, he remained remarkably detached. As he wrote in the conclusion to his great first book: "All the political theologies ... are not worth one act of genuine solidarity. ... They are not worth one act of faith, love, and hope, committed — in one way or another — in active participation to liberate humankind from everything that dehumanizes it and prevents it from living according to the will of God."

He would surely agree that the best way to honor his memory is not through words, but through action; his hope was that those who read his books might take one step further in friendship and solidarity with the poor.



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

ORBIS  BOOKS
Spotlight

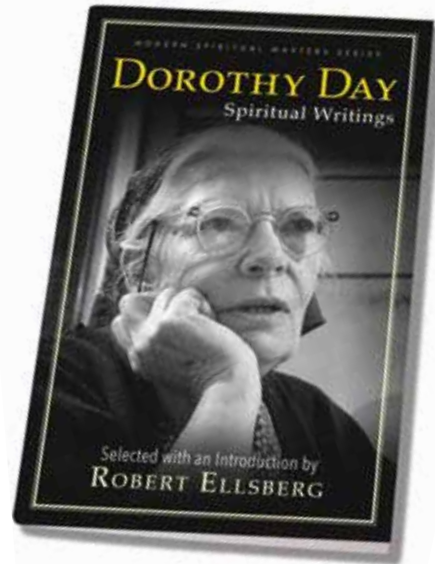
Preview by Robert Ellsberg

The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us. — Dorothy Day

It is 50 years since I met Dorothy Day, when I took a leave from college at 19 to work with her at the Catholic Worker in New York. Within months she appointed me managing editor of her newspaper, thus pointing me in the direction of my life's work — not just as an editor, but as her editor.

Having edited five previous volumes of her writings, I have now edited a sixth: *Dorothy Day: Spiritual Writings*. It is, perhaps, my favorite, representing the fruit of a lifetime spent trying to understand the spiritual roots of her public witness.

In this book I have tried to outline the distinctive elements which integrated her faith and her engagement with the world. This began with her emphasis on the radical social implications of the Incarnation. God, through Jesus, entered our humanity and our history. This meant that we could not find him apart from other people, especially the poor. Jesus linked our salvation with the works



of mercy — feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, welcoming the stranger: “What you do for the least of my brothers and sisters you do for me.” This was the basis for Dorothy’s life of radical hospitality and service, but also her commitment to work for peace and justice.

A second important theme comes from her adaptation of St. Therese’s spirituality of the Little Way — performing all our daily tasks and encounters in the presence of God and a spirit of love. In this way, daily life could become an arena for holiness. Dorothy applied this to her life at the Catholic Worker, but she also pointed

to its social implications for her work for peace and justice: the significance of what we do or fail to do. We could not calculate the power of that which appears small and “irrelevant.” These actions were like the loaves and fishes that Jesus multiplied.

Another chapter describes her devotion to the saints, her effort to take them down from their pedestals and show them as fully human. Above all, they reminded us that we are all called to be saints, that this is the common vocation of all who aspire to be followers of Jesus. Dorothy also spoke of the need for new models of holiness — saints to change the social order. “Where were the saints not just to minister to the slaves but to do away with slavery?”

And then there is Dorothy’s practice of what she called “the duty of delight” — an effort to find God in all things, in the sorrows of life as well as its joys.

For Dorothy this practice was a matter of the will. We can choose to put love where there is no love. This was a foundation for Dorothy’s daily life.

There is much more in this book: reflections on her spiritual journey, on prayer, and the ongoing call to conversion. There are her thoughts on the Church and the sacraments, and on Dostoevsky’s line: “The world will be saved by beauty.” And there are her views on peacemaking and what she called “the revolution of the heart.”

Dorothy Day is now herself under consideration for sainthood. I was fortunate to know her in the last years of her life. But most of what I know about her has come from studying her writings. I hope, through this book, that others can know and love her too. ✦

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



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and expectation of good things to come, despite our
not knowing what the future may bring.*

—Pope Francis
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Sharing Jesus' Heart

By Jennifer Tomshack

Photos by Andrea Moreno-Diaz

Two Maryknoll lay missionaries at different stages of life are commissioned to serve in Bolivia and East Africa

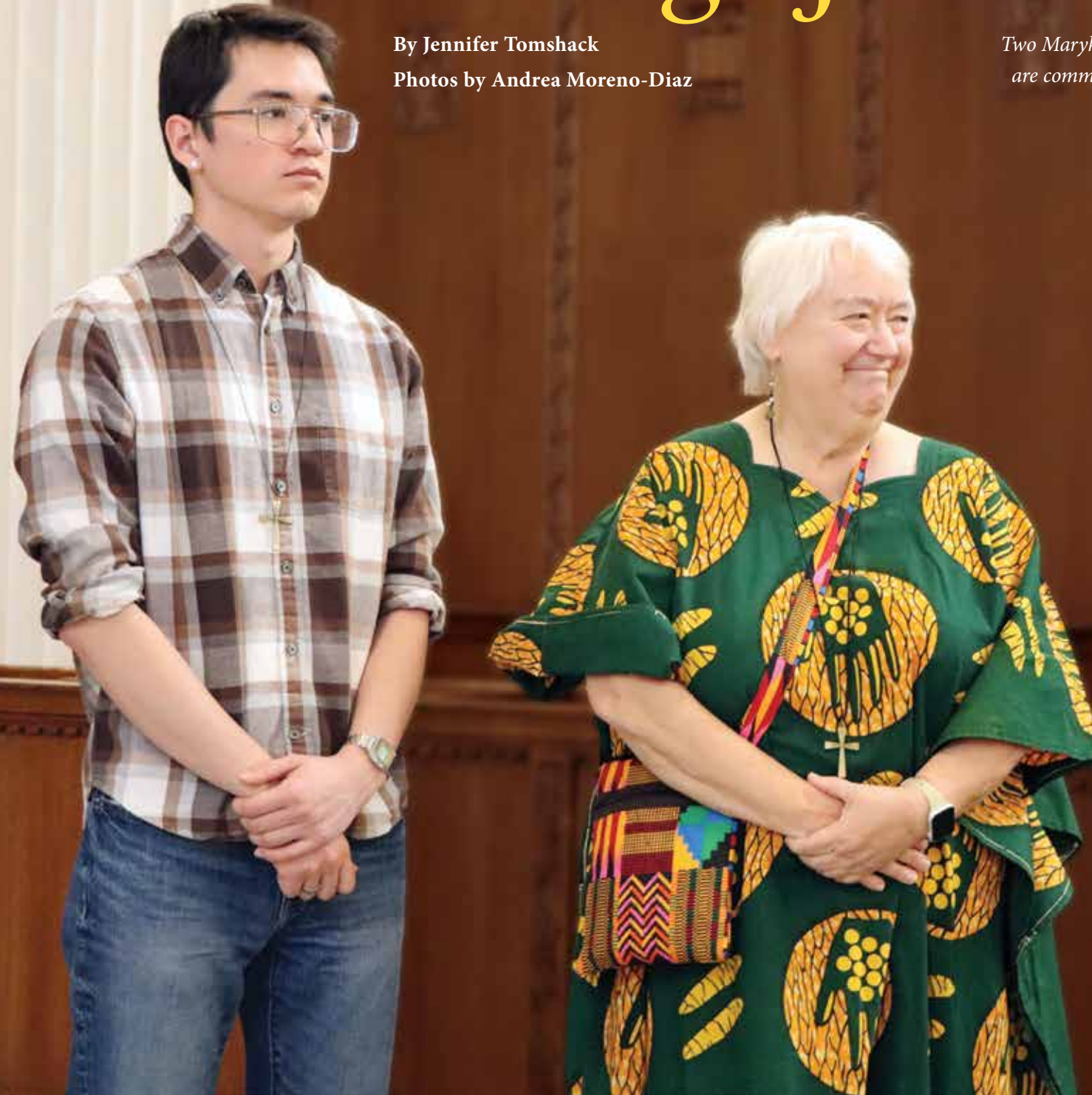
Compassion compelled Jesus to act, and the same is true for missionaries, said Father Juan Zúñiga, secretary general of the Maryknoll Society, who presided over the Covenant and Sending Mass for the latest Maryknoll lay missionaries to answer the call to serve abroad.

Joshua Sisolak and Marjorie Humphrey were sent forth to Bolivia and East Africa respectively on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024, at the Annunciation Chapel of the Maryknoll Sisters Center in Ossining, New York.

"You are called to share the very movement of Jesus' heart. A heart that sees, is moved, and responds," Father Zúñiga said to the two missionaries. It is "a mission that meets people where they are, that seeks to heal and restore, and that proclaims the Reign of God." Noting Maryknoll Lay Missioners' five decades of service, he added, "Marj and Josh, as you follow in these footsteps, you are part of this legacy."

Although Sisolak, a recent graduate of the University of Notre Dame, is a new missionary, he knows Maryknoll well. He is the son of a returned Maryknoll lay missionary: Edward Sisolak, who served from 1995 to 1999 in Thailand. "I've known about Maryknoll for as long as I can remember," the young Sisolak says.

Maryknoll Lay Missioners Joshua Sisolak and Marjorie Humphrey are called to serve in Bolivia and East Africa during their sending ceremony.





Representatives of the Maryknoll Sisters, Lay Missioners, Affiliates and Society bless the mission crosses.

"I grew up hearing about my dad's experiences and the impact that it had on his life and forming the character and faith he has today," he adds.

Executive Director Elvira Ramirez says, "It's very special for all of us at Maryknoll Lay Missioners to see a father pass the torch of mission to his son, especially as our organization is approaching our 50th anniversary next year."

Sisolak comes from Ashland, Montana. Most of his classmates were from the Crow and Northern Cheyenne tribes, and he witnessed different traditions and rituals. "This experience gave me a glimpse into the lives of those who experience hardship and oppression," he says.

While studying in college, Sisolak worked as a videographer and video editor and participated in volunteer service opportunities. After graduating with a degree in film, television and theater and a minor in theology, he returned to his hometown

to work at St. Labre Indian School.

"I began my discernment of becoming a missionary two years ago while I was still an undergraduate," he says. "Knowing Maryknoll well meant that I didn't have to search for very long." He finds in the lay missioners' organization "a radical way of living out the Catholic faith in today's world."

Sisolak's orientation took him to El Paso, Texas, where the mission services department of Maryknoll Lay Missioners relocated last year, and to Washington, D.C., where he participated in a collaborative lay formation program of Franciscan Mission Service.

"We wholeheartedly welcome Josh at a time when we celebrate the nearly 1,000 lay missioners who have been sent through Maryknoll Lay Missioners," Ramirez says. "Much has been accomplished, but there is still much to be done!"

Humphrey was already one of

those lay missioners, having served in Kenya and southern Sudan from 1987 to 2007. After nearly another two decades back in the States, Humphrey is returning to mission.

"The greatest joy of my life was being on the ground in East Africa. I took a trip there on my own last year just to kind of see. ... At my age, am I still able to do this? And I found that I can.

"I've learned so much from East Africans," she adds. "Their joy in the face of adversity and the importance they place on relationships."

Born and raised in Idaho, the missionary earned a bachelor's degree in communications and religious studies and a master's degree in education from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. She later studied to become a physician assistant at St. Vincent Catholic Medical Center in Staten Island, New York.

Humphrey's vocation as a missionary emerged during her years at a

Catholic Worker house of hospitality in New York City. She grew close to the movement's cofounder Dorothy Day and served as an editor for the *Catholic Worker* newspaper.

Humphrey was also deeply influenced during this formative period by three Maryknoll sisters living in a tenement in the neighborhood. Sister Mary Mercy Hirschboeck, the congregation's first doctor, became a role model for her and, in 1987, Humphrey joined Maryknoll Lay Missioners.

Humphrey found her place in East Africa's rural clinics. She honed her skills as a physician assistant providing care in makeshift facilities such as camps for displaced people.

Some of her most impactful work took place at the Kitale AIDS Program in Western Kenya, which she joined in 2000 at the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. She faced skepticism about introducing antiretroviral therapy, which had become standard treatment in the developed world.

Yet Humphrey was undeterred. Inspired by the pioneering Doctor Paul Farmer, who provided her with advice, she and her team ran a successful HIV/AIDS clinic. "We saw hundreds of people who had 'one foot in the grave' return to healthy, productive lives," she recalls. "Children who were HIV-positive gained weight and recovered their energy so rapidly that we were astounded and overjoyed to see them resume a more normal childhood."



Sisolak, the son of a returned lay missionary, signs the Maryknoll Lay Missioners covenant pledging to serve in overseas mission while Executive Director Elvira Ramirez looks on.

Returning to the United States in 2007 to care for her elderly parents, Humphrey never lost her ties to mission. She joined Maryknoll Lay Missioners' board of directors and eventually became director of missions.

Now, she yearns to reconnect with the communities that shaped her — and to join the ranks of Maryknoll lay missioners in justice and peace ministries.

"Medicine is one kind of compassion and care. Another is listening to people and being present to them," Humphrey says. There's an epidemic of not listening, she explains, adding that people who are truly heard can develop the capacity to listen, thus breaking cycles that lead to violence.

Humphrey will begin her mission assignment with a short-term project in restorative justice in Uganda.

From there, she will go on to Kenya.

"Restorative justice has been shown to be an effective method of people coming to understand each other and stop hating each other," she says, "and then to start healing and moving forward."

As Sisolak and Humphrey pledged to serve in mission, Father Zúñiga reminded them, "You do not go alone. You go with the wisdom of so many that have come before you, and with the abiding presence of Jesus."

Ramirez echoed his sentiment: "We walk with Josh and Marj in body and in spirit as they go forth to love and serve in their respective journeys to Bolivia and East Africa." ✠

Jennifer Tomshack is the communications manager of Maryknoll Lay Missioners.



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Spoons and a Spinning Top

By Deirdre Cornell || Photos by Adam Mitchell

A Maryknoll brother in Bolivia serves at a home for boys at risk of living on the streets

Maryknoll Brother Joseph Bruener remembers the day that Daniel arrived at the San Martín-San Vicente home for boys in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

"His arms and legs were like little sticks, and his hair was falling out," the missionary says. The child was so malnourished he was almost bald. Asked his age, Daniel lies that he is 5 — but in reality, he is 7. "He is ashamed," Brother Bruener explains. "His growth has been stunted."

Daniel is one of 44 boys living at San Martín-San Vicente, where Brother Bruener serves two days a week. About half of the boys there have already experienced homelessness. The other half, like Daniel, were abused, neglected or abandoned, making it likely that they, too, would end up on the streets.

Before making the hourlong bus ride to San Martín-San Vicente, Brother Bruener goes to La Cancha, the city's huge, sprawling market.

Today, he buys two dozen aluminum spoons to replenish the home's supply. The visitors with him ask what they, too, can bring, and he replies, "A spinning top."

San Martín-San Vicente belongs to the network of Amanecer children's homes founded in Cochabamba in 1981 by the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. Another Maryknoll brother, Alexander Walsh, served with Amanecer for two and a half decades before returning to the States.

There are now more than three dozen centers or homes for children in Cochabamba, says social worker Jhonny Nava, who has worked at San Martín-San Vicente since 2013. These include orphanages, after-school programs and neighborhood youth centers. However, he continues, Amanecer homes such as San Martín-San Vicente are "the only ones for this population."

Daniel's parents turned him out



Maryknoll Brother Joseph Bruener volunteers at Hogar San Martín-San Vicente in Cochabamba, Bolivia.



As part of their daily chores, the boys enjoy collecting eggs from the hens and bringing food and water to the two cows, a heifer and calf, that graze the fields of the property.

of the house every morning to fend for himself. School staff, concerned, called the local social welfare department. When a social worker brought Daniel to San Martín-San Vicente, she said his teacher seemed to care more about him than his own parents.

Some of the older boys, including Bernardo, 16, have engaged in alcohol or substance abuse such as sniffing *clefa*, a type of glue. This highly addictive habit replaces cold, pain or hunger with temporary euphoria; however, it also causes irreversible damage to the brain and other vital organs.

Still, there is hope, Nava says. "The fact that they are still here and haven't run away means that they are trying to change."

The short-term goal is to keep the boys off the streets, says Nava. The long-term goal, he continues, is to reunite them with their families when possible. Parents are allowed to visit on weekends.

The boys living at the home are divided into two sets, ages 7 to 11 and 12 to 17.

The property includes cornfields and a huge garden with potatoes, onions and other vegetables. A large chicken coop houses dozens of hens. "The boys like collecting the eggs," Brother Bruener says. Two cows wander the fields. The boys' laundry, which they wash by hand at outdoor sinks, hangs on a clothesline. Walls painted with murals and motivational messages encircle a large soccer field.



Doorman Ivan Gutiérrez Choque, who has overcome disabilities, was himself raised in an Amanecer home, cared for by now-retired Maryknoll Brother Alexander Walsh.

In the fierce midday heat, most boys seek a patch of shade in the patio. The younger boys shoot marbles. The older boys play with spinning tops — except for Bernardo, who just stands watching.

Inside, it is time for lunch. Supervised by staff member Richard Fuentes, the boys in the younger group sit at rough wooden tables and chairs or stools in a small dining room. One of them says grace. At the end of the prayer, he adds, "and for children living on the streets around the world who are on their own and have nowhere to turn and no one to help them."

As is customary in Bolivia, the main meal begins with soup. Brother Bruener's two dozen spoons are quickly rinsed and put to im-

mediate use. Soup is followed by a bowl of rice or quinoa with lentils or beans, perhaps with a bit of meat or chicken. For dessert, fruit is served. Each boy washes his own bowl and spoon.

After the meal, it is time for homework. Brother Bruener shepherds the boys to an area with books, puzzles and games.

Before arriving in Bolivia in September of 2021, Brother Bruener spent 17 years in greater China, mostly teaching. The 66-year-old missionary from Wisconsin, who has a master's degree in English education, has also worked in schools in the States.

While the older boys attend a public secondary school within walking distance, the younger ones



After lunch the boys do homework and play educational games, most of them donated to the home by Brother Bruener.

go to an Amanecer school in downtown Cochabamba, transported by the home's vans.

"These children cannot be placed in a regular classroom," Brother Bruener says of the younger boys. "They cannot focus. They are so attuned to their surroundings and what is going on around them." This is due to the boys' traumatic backgrounds, he explains. "They are always on the defensive, and that takes a lot of their energy."

"This work takes a lot of patience," says staff member Ramiro Tola Mamani. "Some children need more attention than others."

As students, the boys face another problem, Brother Bruener says. "In Bolivia, kids get promoted by age, not grade level. Even if you've never set foot in a classroom before, if you're 10, you go to the assigned grade." Without extra help, they

can't catch up academically. And if they grow discouraged, they are more likely to drop out.

Students like Bernardo have already had many interruptions to their schooling. He and his older brother lived on the streets with their mother, who then left them. They dulled their pain by sniffing glue until Bernardo, a minor, was brought to San Martín-San Vicente.

Recently, his older brother had come to tell Bernardo that he came across their mother living under a bridge. Bernardo ran away to join them. Brother Bruener and Amanecer staff scoured the city until they found him. They urged him to return, and Bernardo came back.

The spinning top bought by visitors at the market is for Bernardo, whose face lights up as he receives it. Now he can join the older boys in their game.

"These are still kids," Brother Bruener says.

Although his duties as house manager at the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers center already keep him busy, the missionary says he will continue to serve at San Martín-San Vicente.

"It's a hard ministry and it's draining," Brother Bruener admits.

However, he adds, kids benefit from consistency — especially those such as Daniel and Bernardo. The need he witnesses at the home keeps him going back. ✠

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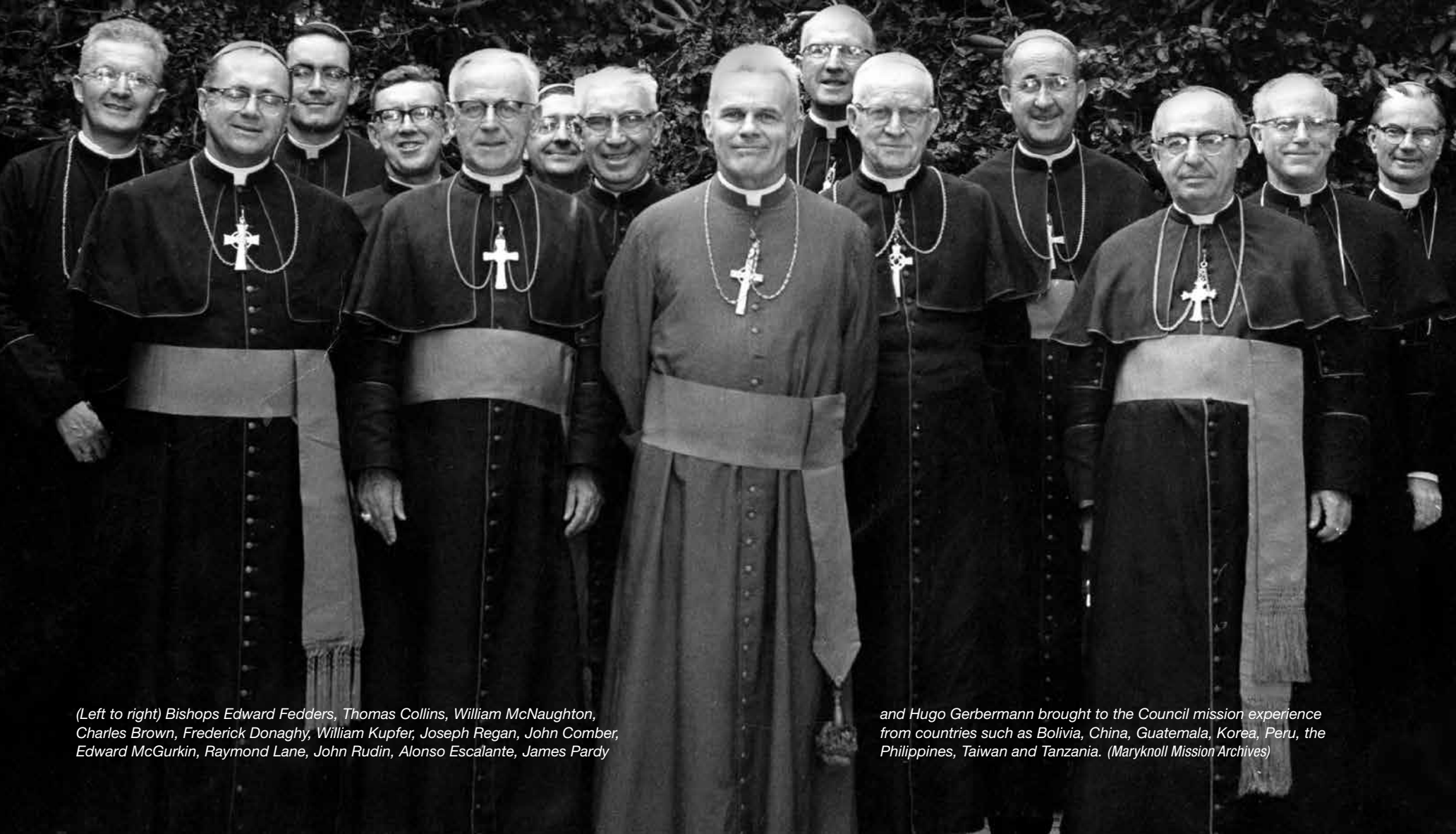


Vatican II at 60

Maryknoll at the Second Vatican Council

By James H. Kroeger, M.M.

The second of a four-part series reflecting on the significance of the Second Vatican Council



(Left to right) Bishops Edward Fedders, Thomas Collins, William McNaughton, Charles Brown, Frederick Donaghy, William Kupfer, Joseph Regan, John Comber, Edward McGurkin, Raymond Lane, John Rudin, Alonso Escalante, James Pardy

and Hugo Gerbermann brought to the Council mission experience from countries such as Bolivia, China, Guatemala, Korea, Peru, the Philippines, Taiwan and Tanzania. (Maryknoll Mission Archives)

Truly, a challenging task! How does one adequately capture the participation of the 14 Maryknoll bishops who attended the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)? A simple glimpse of the group photograph begins the story.

Bishop John W. Comber, who was Maryknoll superior general at the time of Vatican II, attended all four sessions of the Council. He was chosen to be a member of the commission on missions, which eventually produced the *Ad Gentes* document. Bishop Comber noted that “the mission schema, in addition to providing a basic theology of mission, explores the different stages of missionary activity, calls for a new international body to coordinate mission work, and urges the Church, as ‘People of God,’ to enter into a full and intensive participation in mission work.”

After his ordination in 1931, Father Comber served in mission in Fushun, Manchuria, China, for 11 years. At the outbreak of World War II, all U.S. missionaries in Japanese-held countries, including Father Comber and his two siblings, both religious sisters, were interned by the Japanese military. Along with other internees, in December 1943 the three were repatriated to the United States on the Swedish liner *M.S. Gripsholm*.

Bishop Raymond A. Lane, who also served his early days of mission in China, was interned by the Japanese in Fushun for the duration of the Second World War. He called this experience “our Babylonian Captivity.” Though there were numerous diffi-

culties, he noted later, “still we must say at the end of it all, that from a spiritual point of view, it has been a real blessing,” providing extensive time for personal prayer.

Within a year, Bishop Lane was elected the third superior general of Maryknoll by the 1946 Chapter. He recalled that in the Council there were “many things that give us great encouragement. But first let me say that success will require a complete about-face in our attitude, among high and low, on the world mission of the Church. This requires courage and conviction and great generosity.”

Two of the Maryknoll bishops at the Council served in Tanzania: Edward A. McGurkin in Shinyanga and John J. Rudin in Musoma. They considered themselves fortunate, because they had the assistance of Bishop Joseph Blomjous, their neighbor in Mwanza, in preparing for the Council. Bishop Blomjous, a scholarly Dutch White Father, helped them understand the vision of Pope John XXIII when he said that Vatican II was called to examine “new conditions and new forms of life ... which have opened up new avenues to the Catholic apostolate.”

During the Council, the Maryknoll bishops had the advantage of staying at the Maryknoll residence on the Via Sardegna, where the procurator, Father John M. Martin, and Brothers Philip Morini and Gilbert Figundio provided for their needs. Archbishop John Krol of Philadelphia, one of the four moderators who guided the daily proceedings of the Council, also resided at



Pope Paul VI greets Bishop Joseph Regan during a papal audience. Fourteen Maryknoll bishops attended the sessions of Vatican II. (Maryknoll Mission Archives/Vatican City)

the Maryknoll house during the entire Council; he truly loved the missions and was most generous in helping missionary bishops. In addition, Maryknoll often hosted several bishops from the States or from mission countries where Maryknollers worked.

Bishop William J. McNaughton, first bishop of the Diocese of Incheon in Korea, was one of the youngest bishops at the Council; he was only 35 when Vatican II began. The last surviving Maryknoll bishop who attended the Council, he died in 2020 at age 93. Significantly, he shared at great length his reflections and insights, widely published in various journals.

When asked what were the “greatest achievements” of Vatican II, Bishop McNaughton identified the three documents on the Church, the liturgy, and the laity. The Church is identified as the “universal sacrament of salvation” (*Lumen Gentium* 48); it is to be a clear sign of God’s profound love for all humanity. Bishop McNaughton noted: “I found the teachings on the litur-

gy, and especially on the Eucharist, very powerful.” Regarding the laity document, the bishop affirmed that “all the lay faithful, because of their baptism and confirmation, have the grave obligation to make the Gospel known. ... Our Catholic lay faithful are sleeping giants.”

Other Maryknoll bishops at the Council played a variety of roles. For example, Bishop Frederick A. Donaghy was the main celebrant of the morning Mass in Saint Peter’s on Sept. 21, 1964, the 25th anniversary of his episcopal ordination.

From a panoramic view of Vatican II, one sees how the Holy Spirit used the 14 Maryknoll missionary bishops to assist in the renewal of the Church. Our hearts overflow with gratitude! ✠

Maryknoll Father James H. Kroeger recently published Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language (Orbis Books – 2023) and Exploring Vatican II Treasures: Actors, Events, Insights (Faith Alive Books – 2024).

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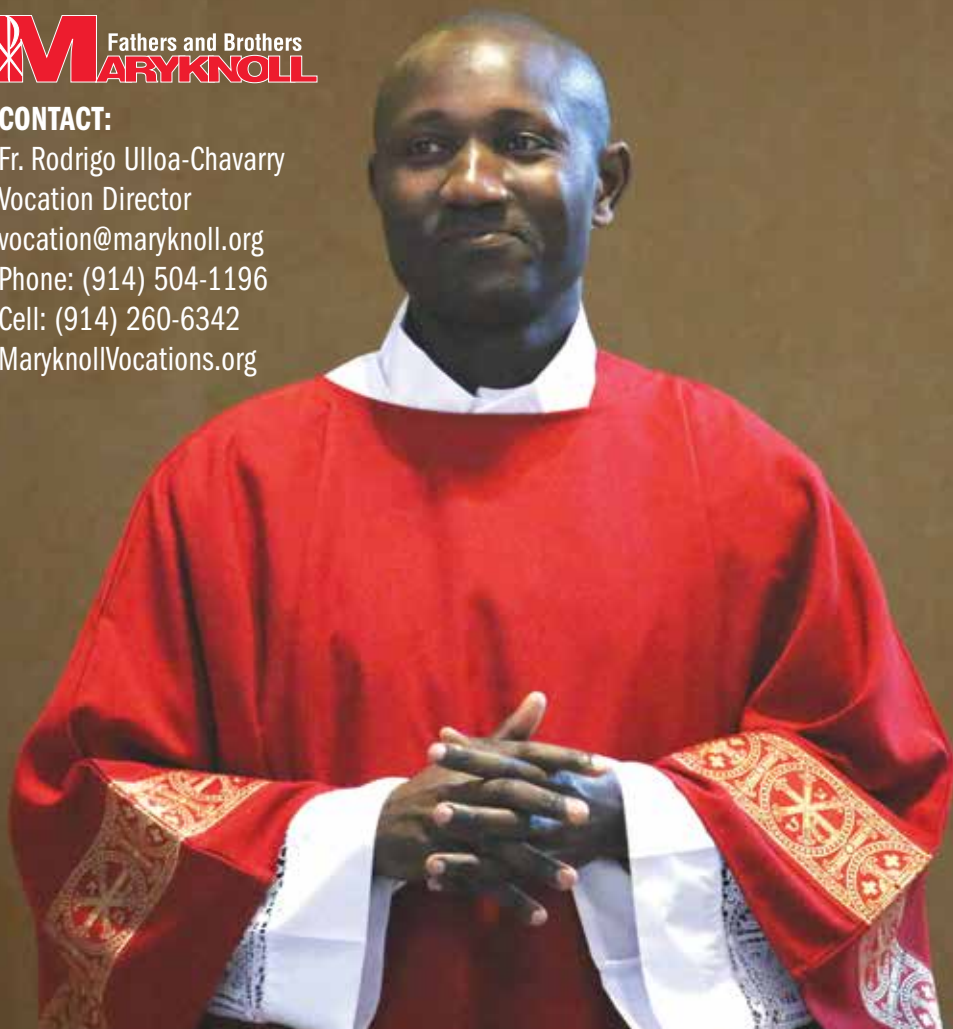
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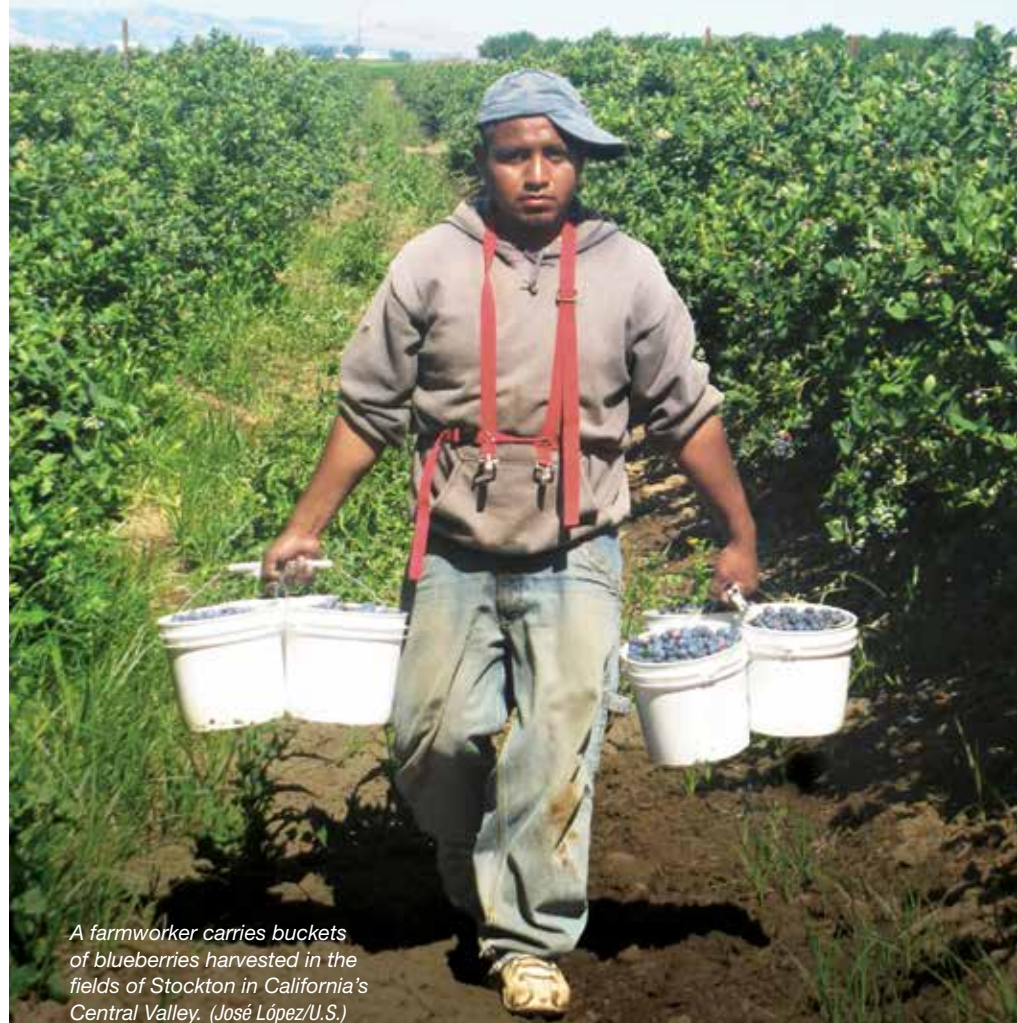


Deacon Patrick Okok attends Benefactors Day at the Maryknoll Center. (Diane Mastrogiulio/U.S.)

GOD WALKS WITH MIGRANT FARMWORKERS

By Leonel Yoque

Catholic leader works in ministry to serve agricultural workers



A farmworker carries buckets of blueberries harvested in the fields of Stockton in California's Central Valley. (José López/U.S.)

José López, director of Migrant Ministry for the Diocese of Stockton, California, is a beacon of hope for thousands of farmworkers who work in the fields.

Most of the workers obtain the H-2A visa that allows foreigners to enter the United States for temporary or seasonal agricultural work. Other migrants do not have such immigration status.

"We try to help them join church programs," says López. "The families and workers, mostly Mexican, come with economic and spiritual needs."

For six years, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers mission promoters have supported the Diocese of Stockton as it meets these needs.

The Diocese of Stockton assists more than 500 migrant families in six fields, including an area called "the islands." The farmworkers, who mostly live in housing owned by the growers, work as tractor drivers, irrigators and harvesters.

According to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, farms in this state produce 400 food products, including 20 percent of the country's milk and 50 percent of its fruits, nuts and vegetables.

For more than 20 years, López has led the migrant ministry in offering pastoral accompaniment, sacramental preparation and mission formation training. Priests celebrate Mass in the fields once or twice a month. "We made a map in which we assign parishes to nearby fields," he says.

The ministry also organizes teams to repatriate the remains of deceased farmworkers, assist widows, help the sick and address other needs. Because of its service, the Diocese of Stockton is a model for migrant ministry for other dioceses.

One of the recommendations that emerged at the National Encuentros for Hispanic Ministry was to work collaboratively. Maryknoll's Mission Formation Program is answering that call.

At the Pastoral Region XI of Hispanic Ministry, a commission that brings together Hispanic leaders from California and Hawaii, we had the opportunity to meet Hispanic leaders like José López and identify ways to work together.

Last August, I offered a retreat called "Missionary Disciples Making a Path as We Walk" to 40 young people and leaders at Guadalupe Chapel in Westley, California.

Alicia Cisneros, a volunteer who attends our mission programs, describes the challenges of ministry serving migrant farmworkers. "At first, it was very difficult because, for migrants, their priority is to work," Cisneros says. "When we tried to talk to them, there was mistrust. They didn't want to enroll their children to receive religious education or sacraments." This changed over time. "Little by little we gained their trust through celebrations and other kinds of get-togethers. Now we feel they are part of our family."



José López (holding diocesan banner) joins in a march organized by the United Farm Workers Union, walking for five days from Delano to Sacramento. (Raúl Guillén/U.S.)

Cisneros, who has served in this ministry for more than 20 years, teaches catechism to children. Her husband works with their parents. It's rewarding to see the children grow up, she says. "Some young people are now professionals," she adds. "They often greet me, 'Teacher Alicia, you taught me First Communion classes when I was a child.'" López, who was born in the state of Michoacán, Mexico, and is now 69, experienced firsthand the challenges faced by farmworker children. His father, a migrant farmworker for some 30 years, had been part of the

temporary labor force known as the Bracero Program (1942-1964). Back then his family traveled back and forth from Mexico to the States.

When López's family settled in California in 1968, he was 12 years old. Growing up, he helped in the fields. In 1983 he became a leader for migrant ministry in the Diocese of Stockton. Then in 1985 he was invited to represent the diocesan program at the III National Encuentro for Hispanic Ministry. He recalls the Encuentro phrase that impressed him the most: "From your seats to the streets!"



Erika Juárez (left) and her daughter Angélica Magaña, of the Harney Lane Migrant Center, lead a procession during a workshop for farmworker pastoral teams. (José López/U.S.)

Four decades later, that phrase remains relevant. Last year, 21 young farmworkers were confirmed at a Mass presided by Bishop Myron J. Cotta of the Diocese of Stockton. At the celebration, López says, someone thanked the bishop for being there with them. “The bishop smiled and replied, ‘This is our cathedral,’ referring to nature and the fields,” he says.

Named director of Migrant Ministry in 2001, López says he has learned from academically prepared leaders — but also from the farmworkers. “The wisdom of the rural people consists of a spirituality of

giving thanks to God,” he says. “In the mornings we say a prayer to entrust ourselves to God and we thank him for everything.

“We face challenges. Sometimes it is very difficult,” López adds. “But I know God is always with me.”

He refers to Pope Francis’ message last year for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees: “God walks with his people ... God walks with farmworkers.” ✠

Deacon Leonel Yoque, a Maryknoll mission promoter in Los Angeles, leads outreach programs for Hispanic Catholics in the United States.

Prayer for Vocations

Courage to Serve All God’s People

Oh Invigorating and Inspiring God,

My heart is restless seeing so many people suffer around the world. Yet my heart rejoices in seeing your Church renewed in its mission To all people, especially those who feel abandoned from your love.

We are thankful for your Son, Jesus Christ, who has shown us The path to authentic love for all humanity — an exemplary life Of sacrifice and service for us to follow. As disciples of your Son, As we grow and discover the realities of your redeeming love, Help us find the desire to love you more and more. Inspire us to see In our suffering and abandoned brothers and sisters of the world Signs of your liberating love.

Therefore, Oh Most Provident God, give us the courage to face The decision of our path. Give us the courage to unceasingly follow Our baptismal promise: to follow Jesus and to bring God’s message Of peace, mercy, and compassion to the ends of the Earth. One Mission. Shared by all the faithful. Perfect in Love.

—Dae Kim, M.M.

Global Debt Crisis Needs a Jubilee

By Thomas Gould

A global debt crisis looms over countries in the Global South, home to 85 percent of the world population. By the end of 2024, countries in the southern hemisphere spent over \$1 billion a day on debt payments alone. At least 45 countries are paying more than 15 percent of their annual budgets on debt, and debt payments are growing to consume more of each country's annual budget.

High interest rates and debt payments prevent developing nations from spending on the needs of their people. For example, almost half of the world's population lives in countries that spend more on debt than on either education or healthcare. The consequences of the disparity can be visceral. In Kenya, an effort by the national legislature to increase taxes in mid-2024 to address the high debt burden led to demonstrations across the country by young people, known as Gen Z, that left more than 50 people dead.

The untenable debt situation is only being exacerbated by climate change. Cash-strapped nations are unable to afford to mitigate natural disasters and are even more hard-pressed to recover from these events. The International Institute for Environment and

Development says this is a "vicious cycle of borrowing more money to support their people and rebuild their infrastructure, further compounding their debts." U.N. Secretary General António Guterres calls the situation a "systemic failure."

One cause of the systemic failure was COVID-19. A report by the German Catholic development agency Misereor noted that 55 percent of the countries in the Global South were in critical debt situations in 2024, up from 37 percent pre-pandemic. Countries took on debt to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, but while developed nations, such as the United States, could afford to borrow at artificially low rates, other countries had to borrow money in a currency they did not control.

Institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund provided some loans, but so did private lenders that operate with minimal oversight. Private lenders based in New York now control over half of all sovereign debt, according to a report by Oxfam.

Against this dire backdrop, Pope Francis has called for debt cancellation to be a focus of the Jubilee. In the papal bull that proclaimed the Holy Year, Pope Francis wrote, "If we



A member of the Maasai pastoralist community walks past his emaciated cattle at a traditional homestead near Bisil, Kenya. (GNS/Thomas Mukoya/Reuters/Kenya)

really wish to prepare a path to peace in our world, let us commit ourselves to remedying the remote causes of injustice, settling unjust and unpayable debts, and feeding the hungry."

Debt relief can take many forms, including grants, debt cancellation, or reduced interest rates. One thing

is certain, however: The current approach risks debt spirals that will have serious consequences for the Earth and much of its population. ✝

Thomas Gould is communications manager for the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns in Washington, D.C.

FAITH IN ACTION:

- Explore the Jubilee 2025 Debt Relief Campaign website <https://togetherwebelong.caritas.org/>
- Share our two-pager "Global Debt Crisis Needs Jubilee" <https://mogc.info/GDCNJ>
- Read the Misereor report on the Global South's debt crisis <https://mogc.info/GSDM2024>
- Learn about the Vatican's debt relief focus in the 2025 Jubilee year <https://mogc.info/jubilee2025>

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

Words, Deeds and Love

By Andrea Moreno-Díaz

Fung-Bing Ho has encountered several Maryknoll missionaries throughout her life and says, for her, that's simply "God's will."

Born in 1951 in Guangzhou, China, Ho was a child when her family moved to Macau, where she briefly attended a Catholic school. When her family moved again, this time to Hong Kong, she lost contact with Catholicism.

One day, by chance, she came across a group of people praying the rosary. When the Lord's Prayer started, Ho began reciting the prayer she had memorized as a child. "That was the invitation," she says.

At age 16, Ho became the first Catholic in her family when she was baptized at St. Teresa's Church. Maryknoll Sister Mary Doretta Leonard served there as a catechist. "She was so gentle, so kind," Ho recalls, "and that gave me a good impression of Catholics."

By then Ho was already working as a machine operator at a semiconductor factory to support her family, a job she started at age 13 after her father died from cancer. "So many teenagers earned their living working in factories," she says. "At the time we did not have compulsory education. I continued with my studies in the evening."

In the early 1970s, Ho joined the International Young Christian Workers

movement (IYCW), which advocates for the rights and dignity of young workers. Maryknoll Father Thomas Danaher was the group's chaplain at the time.

"He helped me know the value of work and the dignity of humanity," Ho says. "I built up my self-confidence."

Father Danaher espoused the See-Judge-Act methodology, which Ho, promoted to supervisor at 21 years old, taught in turn to new teenage workers. "You have to concern yourself with the problems and needs of your working place and your family," Ho says, adding that even "a small action can change the situation."

Ho also recounts that the IYCW was regularly invited by Maryknoll sisters to speak about workers' rights at Maryknoll Convent School.

After many years as a coordinator for IYCW, and during that time getting married and becoming a mother, Ho felt called to more fulfilling work. In 1993, she was hired as a pastoral caretaker to work alongside Maryknoll Sister Catherine Rowe at Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital.

At first, the work was challenging. "I told Sister Cathy I wanted to resign," Ho recalls. It was hard to accompany dying patients and to get used to the messy aspects of patient care.

"In Chinese culture, when a per-



Parishioner Fung-Bing Ho and Maryknoll Father Daniel Kim are shown at St. Mary's Church, where the priest serves on the parish staff. (Courtesy of Fung-Bing Ho/Hong Kong)

son passes away, we don't touch the body," Ho explains. "But by the grace of God and the Holy Spirit, I have touched many, because so many times nobody else came. I'd say, 'Go ahead peacefully. I'm by your side.'"

Sister Rowe encouraged Ho to persevere and she served in that ministry for 18 years before retiring in 2011.

During this time, Ho also continued learning. She attended the Holy Spirit Centre in Hong Kong, earning a bachelor's degree in religious studies. Maryknoll Father Elmer Wurth was a founding member of the center.

Ho traveled many times to New York to visit the retired missionaries she had known in Hong Kong. Little did she know that a new Maryknoll connection was about to come.

As a decades-long parishioner at St. Mary's Church in the district of Hung Hom, Ho was elated when Maryknoll Father Daniel Kim joined

the parish staff. "Father Kim is very approachable," she says. "The elderly, the young, and even the Sunday school children love him very much."

At St. Mary's Ho now helps other adults prepare for baptism, as well as leading the rosary and preparing the altar. Additionally, she participates in a prison ministry by visiting inmates serving life sentences.

Ho says that Father Kim's homilies relate to people's lives and are easy to understand. "Maryknoll Fathers evangelize with their words, deeds and love for the people," she says.

To describe the many Maryknollers she has known throughout her life, Ho uses a Cantonese phrase: 恩人 (*jan jan*), meaning *benefactor*. The first character means *kindness, mercy, charity and grace*. The second character means, simply, *human being*.

Ho describes the term in action: "People who do good to others." ✠

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READERS' RESPONSES

BE PRESENT TO OTHERS

Having served with Maryknoll in Bolivia, I was delighted with the Fall 2024 issue of *Maryknoll* magazine. The "attentive presence" of Brother Ryan Thibert and of Filomena Siles and Joseph Loney, a Maryknoll lay mission couple in Cochabamba — all working with marginalized people of the community — put flesh on the words in Isaiah 43:10-13 where God tells the Chosen People they are to be "witnesses." How we are present to others is evangelizing.

The photo of the Synodal gathering of October 6, 2023, with tables of 12 participants in dialogue — clergy, women religious and laity — is such a wonderful image of "church." It is the Body of Christ with many different members, each important, forming one living organism.

Be kind and loving, especially to the least of our brothers and sisters. Every person is the divine presence.

*Larry Brixius
Poulsbo, Washington*

KAMSAHAMNIDA

Along the lines of Father Joseph Veneroso's column in the Winter 2024 issue about his experience in Korea, another Maryknoll priest who spent many years in Korea, Father Edward Whelan, told me that Catholics in Korea say "*Kamsahamnida*" ("Thank you") when receiving the Eucharist with both hands open. I understand that now the common response is "Amen" as it is here in the States.

*Brian Kenny
Palmyra, Pennsylvania*

GIFT RECEIVING

In response to the Spirit of Mission column of the Winter 2025 issue, I believe many rabbis would say that unless the rabbi's life were in danger, he should have eaten neither the pork nor the (likely not kosher) chicken.

More generally, if you intend to offer me a gift but it's not obvious that I intend to accept it, then we ought to discuss the matter, and you ought not to feel offended if I turn it down. After all, why did you make the offer? To help me, or just to make yourself feel better? Going to a lot of trouble to give me a gift that I don't want is all the more reason for me to head you off; and in any case, I can and should thank you for your good intentions.

*Alan Brown
Yonkers, New York*

SINCERE GRATITUDE

Please allow me a space in your *Maryknoll* magazine to express my sincere gratitude to the superior general, Father Lance Nadeau, and all the hard-working people behind him.

In the article titled "Carrying the Flag of Mission" in your Fall 2024 issue, I was impressed by this quote from newly ordained Father Charles Ogony: "Father Nadeau preached unity; he brought real life issues and connected them to the Gospel."

Father Joshua Maondo, who was also recently ordained, said, "I've seen Father Nadeau do things I have never seen any other person do. I have seen him wash student toilets. I have seen him polish the church floor. I have seen him stand up for students

who were going to be expelled from the university unjustly.”

May you be blessed and continue to do your good work.

*Cyril A. Enang
Pine Bluff, Arkansas*

GENUINELY INSPIRING

As a Jewish individual, I want to express my sincere admiration for your congregation. Your commitment to the prophet Jesus’ teachings and dedication to serving the poor, sick and oppressed is genuinely inspiring. Thank you for making a positive difference in the world.

*Freddy de Freitas
Via Instagram*

CALENDAR APPRECIATED

Thank you to the Maryknoll missionaries for the good work you do and for sharing your articles on the *Maryknoll* magazine website.

Also, I want to thank you for the 2025 calendar that you sent in the mail. I was very happy to receive it. The calendar is very useful for older people and for following the liturgical calendar.

*Marilen Rodríguez
Northville, Michigan*

MADAM PRESIDENT

Thank you for publishing articles on your *Maryknoll* and *Misioneros* websites related to the reality of Mexico. Mexican society has more and more violence and less gover-

nance at national, state and municipal levels. It is not that other countries are paradises without crime or delinquency, but Mexico abounds with crimes and violence.

Mexico’s new president, Claudia Sheinbaum, should demand that the country’s top military and police commanders stop associating with criminal gangs.

*Carlos Chamorro
Kissimmee, Florida*

MURDERED PRIEST

May the Lord Jesus receive in his blessed hands the soul of his servant Father Marcelo Pérez of the Mexican diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas. And may God forgive those who murdered him. They took his body from this world, but never his soul. He will live in the hearts of hundreds of people who knew him.

Thank you for sharing the news of his death on your *Maryknoll* and *Misioneros* websites.

*Leonor Ramos Vázquez
Via Facebook*

Editor’s Notes: Father Pérez, an Indigenous Mayan and diocesan priest, was a fearless advocate for human rights who was killed on Oct. 20, 2024, allegedly by drug cartels. The article can be found at the link <https://ow.ly/4gyx50TQhPM>

The above two letters were received in Spanish and translated by Maryknoll and Misioneros staff.

JOIN FR. JOSEPH MCCABE, M.M., AND THE
MARYKNOLL FATHERS AND BROTHERS ON A

JUBILEE PILGRIMAGE TO ITALY

OCT. 14-25, 2025



Pope Francis has declared the 2025 Jubilee theme to be “Pilgrims of Hope.”

Together, let’s journey to Italy to celebrate Maryknoll’s legacy of providing hope to poor and marginalized people throughout the world. This pilgrimage will also be a chance for you to renew your relationship with God by experiencing the beauty and universality of our faith, as expressed through the ancient sacred sites of the Eternal City.

The pilgrimage itinerary was crafted for our group with help from **Verso Ministries, which has led thousands of pilgrims to Rome, the Holy Land, France, and other sacred destinations.**



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- All tickets and donations for activities on the itinerary.
- Registration with the Jubilee committee.
- And more!

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For more details or to register, go to
VersoMinistries.com/maryknoll



The editors invite Maryknoll readers to send us their views. Write to:

Readers’ Responses

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M Fathers and Brothers
ARYKNOLL



Maryknoll Lay Missioners Joshua Sisolak and Marjorie Humphrey (center) are joined for their sending ceremony by Maryknoll Sister Genie Natividad, Executive Director Elvira Ramirez, Father Juan Zúñiga and Affiliate Robert Short at the Maryknoll Sisters Center in Ossining, New York. (See story, page 34.)

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