

U.S. Catholic Church in mission overseas

# MARYKNOLL<sup>®</sup>

Spring 2021

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*Light for the Future*

## FROM THE EDITOR

Lent in a time of COVID-19. Sadly, we've been here before. Little did we know as we began Lent last year that a year later we would still be in the grips of this deadly pandemic. It was not even officially a pandemic then, and wasn't until the World Health Organization declared it so on March 11. The death toll and infection rates we've seen were unimaginable, as was the impact on our daily lives.

"How we long to go back to that sure safety/ Where bad habits, cool indifference, and/ Cruel apathy made us blissfully forgetful/ Of death's sad certainty," writes Maryknoll Father Joseph R. Veneroso in this issue's photo meditation.

We have spent the year mourning, not only for lives lost but for our lost lives, for all that we've missed, from the essential to the trivial, from the sacred to the mundane. We have coped with sudden unanticipated changes, and we have coped with daily monotony. We have suffered.

Amid this disruption of the world as we knew it, many of us have also counted our blessings and gained new appreciation for whom and what we love. As people of faith, we also have hope—hope that in the worst of circumstances, even in death, there is a tomorrow, a renewal of life beyond our temporal existence. There is a light, a new dawn and a resurrection.

Lynn F. Monahan  
Editor-in-Chief

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Melisiana John and her son Alvini in Ndoleleji parish in Tanzania, where Maryknoll Father Hung Dinh is pastor.

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# MARYKNOLL

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

Romans 8:28

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The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, the Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic and the Maryknoll Lay Missioners share the Maryknoll name and charism of commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ, sharing God's love with people worldwide. While these three Catholic organizations often work together in mission, each is responsible for recruiting and supporting its own missionaries. The Maryknoll Affiliates is a movement grouped into local chapters both in the United States and abroad of lay people who seek to reflect the Maryknoll charism within the context of their own lives, careers and communities.





*Photo meditation on Lent and Easter*

# FROM ASHES *to Easter*

By Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

*Called to leave behind slavery  
To sin and self-centeredness  
Still we hesitate to cross such a vast,  
Empty, trackless wilderness fearing  
Our newfound freedom most of all.*

*Reminders of our mortality haunt every step.  
Dust we are, to dust we shall return.  
We know. We know. O would that we did not!  
How we long to go back to that sure safety  
Where bad habits, cool indifference, and  
Cruel apathy made us blissfully forgetful  
Of death's sad certainty.*

*At length we reluctantly resolve to forge ahead,  
Not realizing our prayers and penances  
Would lead us to walk his Way.  
But now we are Pilate, we the soldiers,  
The crowd, the women, Simon, Veronica.  
We stand at the foot of the cross and  
Cannot help but wonder why  
Undergo such sacrifice and  
Unspeakable suffering and humiliation.*

*As if reading our unspoken thoughts, he says,  
“Do you still not see or understand?  
Nothing you can do, no sin you can commit  
Will ever make me stop loving you.”  
And with that he bows his head and dies.*

*Before daybreak we rise to walk  
Alongside the mourning, myrrh-bearing women.  
The stone removed, our sadness devolves into despair.  
An empty tomb taunts us with renewed doubts.  
Grave robbers? The owner? The wrong tomb? Or...*

*“Why seek the living among the dead?”  
He says our name.  
He whom we thought dead now lives again  
We rush back with Magdalene  
To spread the Good News and henceforth  
To live for him who died and rose for us.  
Amen  
Alleluia*



# Missioner Tales

It was the Monday of Holy Week at Ndoleleji parish in the Shinyanga Diocese in Tanzania. After the morning celebration of the Eucharist, the catechist told me that a woman named Martha, who couldn't speak, wanted to go to confession.

Martha came into the sacristy, knelt down and sighed profoundly. She crossed her arms on her chest and bowed deeply.

She pointed to the sky, then clutched her heart. She raised her fists in anger, then again crossed her arms on her chest and bowed deeply. She repeated this several times with different gestures.

As Martha communicated her sorrow and her desire to return to God through signs and gestures, I could feel God's love and mercy powerfully alive in that small rural sacristy.

I gave her absolution and a sign of peace. I experienced as never before the meaning of the words of the prophet Joel, "Rend your hearts and return to the Lord."

*Joseph Healey, M.M.*

Even COVID-19 has not stopped my daily walks on jungle paths in Western Equatoria, Yambio, South Sudan, where I serve as a Maryknoll lay missionary. Wearing my mask and social distancing, I encounter wonderful ordinary people along the way. An elderly man sits on a teak tree stump. I greet him in Arabic with the respectful hand motions common to this area. A woman pumps water at the well and I walk over and pump for her. She can't

quite figure out why this foreigner is helping her, but she is grateful.

Then there are the children, dozens of them, everywhere I go. They come running and laughing and sticking out their dirty hands. But their hearts are pure gold.

I greet them with my limited Pazardé, the language spoken here, and we all laugh. They practice their limited English, and we laugh again. I bless them and move on.

God is good and I love these walks.

*Gabe Hurrish, MKLM*

For over 10 years, I have spent the third week of January as a volunteer Spanish interpreter with a large U.S. and Guatemalan medical team called Children of the Americas. They go to a different part of Guatemala each year to do pediatric and gynecological examinations, surgeries, etc. Gathering with this group feels like a family reunion.

Last year I was embarrassed when both soles of my old sport shoes came unstuck and flopped when I walked. It was quite an awkward evening at the hotel, where they surprised me with a spontaneous celebration of my 80th birthday.

The next morning Audrey, a U.S. nurse, and Julio, a Guatemalan prosthetic specialist, presented me with a special gift: a brand new pair of shoes!

*Bernice Kita, M.M.*

My work with the Rosemiriam Dagg Center continues serving the community of

Musoma, Tanzania. This center teaches young women who have disabilities or are otherwise at risk, such as young single mothers or those living with HIV/AIDS, to learn sewing and crafts so they can have a better future. We sell their beautiful bags, napkins, cards, etc.

We recently finished the construction of our second shop, enabling us to move the first shop to the new location and make the previous shop into a classroom. Right now students are sharing sewing machines in a cramped space.

One miracle that happened recently is that we created a mural for the center. You do not see much art around here, so it has attracted lots of attention. The Serengeti National Park is not too far from Musoma. It helped inspire the animal theme of the mural, which also includes women enjoying each other's company.

A friend of mine created the mural. It was a labor of love. She spent so many hours working on it, and many others got involved in helping. At the bottom of the mural are the Swahili words, "Matumaini kwa waketi ujao," which means "Hope for the Future."

*Angelica Ruppe, MKLM*

On my first trip to Bangkok, I was nervous about the possibility of being taken advantage of in the airport. I was pleased to see a prepaid taxi service and took it to our Maryknoll center house in the city. When at one point the driver spoke haltingly about another charge, my fears were getting confirmed. I decided to memorize the large numbers on his taxi registration card in case I needed to report him.

When I got to the house, I learned there actually was an extra bridge toll and that the number I had memorized was the number of the Thai calendar year!

*John P. Martin, M.M.*



Michael Bassano/South Sudan



# Rediscovering Tribal 'Earth Wisdom'

By Maria-Pia Negro Chin

*Missioner trains farmers from tribal villages in Thailand to face climate change while caring for the earth*

After completing an agricultural class, a young indigenous farmer in Thailand said he “had to apologize to the earth for his previous behavior, for using chemicals that were poisoning her and throwing trash that ruined her face.”

The teenager was a student at the Research and Training Center for Religio-Cultural Community (RTRC), which focuses on community and agricultural development work with ethnic groups. Founded by Father Niphot Thianwihan, the center helps these indigenous communities rediscover their relationship to God’s creation and provides sustainable farming alternatives that empower them while encouraging them to live in harmony with the environment—something Pope Francis calls “integral ecology.”

Maryknoll Father Lawrence Radice has been a visiting teacher at the center for a decade. Ethnic minorities in the mountains of Thailand, he says, have often been marginalized and are economically disadvantaged. Over



Father Tidkham, a Betharram priest who works with the Karen indigenous people in Chiang Mai, and villagers ask God to bless their rice field. (Sunthorn Vichitporn/Thailand)





Maryknoll Father Lawrence Radice celebrates Mass with visitors from Singapore on a mission exposure trip to villages in northern Thailand. (Sean Sprague/Thailand)

time, he continues, their “Earth wisdom” and centuries-old connection with the earth have been eroded, resulting in plastic waste and using pesticides and herbicides in farming.

“A lack of harmony harms the earth, harms our relationship with each other, which, of course, hurts our relationship with God,” says the missionary from Grand Junction, Colorado. “Integral ecology re-thinks the Genesis story and places humans as part of nature, not dominant over it.”

Every year, men and women from the hill tribes—such as the Hmong, Karen, Kachin and, most recently, the Lahu—go to the center for two months of leadership training with classroom and hands-on education on the best ways to care for their environment, improve their farming and support their people. After

connecting their ancestral roots with renewable agricultural methods, they return to their villages to practice what they learned and work the land. After some time, they head back to RTRC, in the Diocese of Chiang Mai, for another four to six weeks to continue training and sharing their experiences with each other on the best approach to support their people.

“I work with farmers on how to adapt to climate change conditions,” says Father Radice, who is now working full-time at the center. Teaching subsistence farmers to adapt to climate change will help them to continue feeding their families. The priest helps villagers find crops suited to their environment and teaches composting to help the soil withstand harsh rains and higher temperatures. “Compost also has

a much more important role here in the tropics,” he says. “It increases the carbon content of the soil so that the soil itself is ecologically healthy, having a balance of water and air that supports a diversity of beneficial microorganisms that are important for more nutritious crops.”

“We teach them to see, analyze and think ‘this is why you do this,’” he says. “When you start to teach people to question what they see, it changes them. And it can change the world.”

Student Jaroen Dinu, for example, became a youth leader. After returning home from RTRC, he taught the village children about the environment through music, creating an ecology-minded musical group.

“He has young people helping him pick up trash in the village,” Father Radice says. “In the beginning the people thought maybe he was crazy, but now they too are seeing their environment and village in a new light.”

Recently, Thai universities asked why RTRC students return home to share their new knowledge with their people when most university students move away from village life. Father Radice credits the center’s call to critical consciousness.

“We ask the students to reflect on: ‘Who are you? Who is your family? What is the village?’ in order to help them recognize their social, religious, economic and cultural relationships, and that consciousness



Staff members of RTRC (l. to r.) Ms. Phut, Mr. Sornchai, Father Radice and Mr. Manut make biochar by burning organic waste material. (Courtesy of Lawrence Radice/Thailand)



ties them back to their rural home," he says. "Without that, the city, the potential for money, has a big pull."

In their villages, the RTRC students have become mentors to others. During the COVID-19 lockdown imposed in Thailand, thousands of people who work and live in Bangkok were forced to return to their villages. Once home, Father Radice explains, they encountered challenges during rice planting season due to climate change.

"Temperatures are hotter and rain unpredictable," he says. "But adapting to climate change is the focus of many of my lessons, and so those I have taught are now teaching the homecomers."



Father Radice (left) and Somboon, a student of the Lahu ethnic group, work on composting. (Courtesy of Lawrence Radice/Thailand)

Father Radice says being back home is encouraging young villagers to try to make a living off the land rather than work in the big cities. He adds that the center is exploring creating a new agricultural and environmental program to support these workers, who might feel disconnected from the land.

The missionary's own consciousness of God's creation was nurtured by his mother when he was growing up on four acres of farmland in Colorado. He remembers nature walks and camping trips with his family and how his mother would pick up trash to clean up the forest.

"I don't know if it was something my mom said or whether it was her actions that said, 'When you go into the forest or go onto the mountain, it should be better for your having been there,' " Father Radice says.

This drive to make the world a better place led him to Maryknoll, he adds. During his overseas training as a Maryknoll seminarian in Tanzania in 1982, he kept thinking about how to help people going through drought and famine.

"Finally, after prayer and thought, I came upon the idea of tree planting since the area I lived in, Ndoleleji, had had serious deforestation," he recalls.

Father Radice, who has a dual bachelor's degree in chemistry and physics from Regis University in Denver, Colorado, says his drive to tackle agricultural matters is tied to the critical thinking and scientific process that formed the basis of his education at Regis and to the experience he had on his family farm, where he learned gardening, composting and

how to take care of livestock.

To tackle the reforestation project, he says, "I also had to study and learn a lot about forestry and East African farming."

Father Radice's drive to learn new farming methods to pass on to farmers only grew throughout the years. Since his ordination in 1985, the priest has served the poor and marginalized in Tanzania, Thailand and China—focusing on pastoral and ecological work.

Father Radice, 70, is grateful for the doors Pope Francis has opened when talking about integral ecology and ancestral cultures. He is overjoyed, for example, that Sunthorn Vichitporn, one of the teachers at RTRC, organizes a "Laudato Si' week" in Karen villages to call people to reflect on Pope Francis'

encyclical on the environment and to take action.

Vichitporn recently helped organize a blessing that made a local rice field a sacred space. This blessing, Vichitporn says, discourages the owner from using chemicals on the land. "We are bringing our living faith into the field," he adds.

Reflecting on his own ministry, Father Radice says, "My work often has a kind of practical aspect of teaching about the earth, teaching about farming, but linking that and building that within a faith context" gives it a deeper meaning.

"Helping people to rediscover or recognize how God through the Holy Spirit has been active in their culture and lives and their deep cultural link to the earth is a joy," Father Radice says. ✞



Church leaders of the Karen indigenous people celebrate Laudato Si' week during which they reflect on Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment. (Sunthorn Vichitporn/Thailand)



# Spirit of Mission

## *Patron of dreamers and discerners*

By Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.

**F**ather Benedict Groeschel, who taught at Maryknoll School of Theology during the 1970s and 1980s, once opined, “I’ll tell you why St. Joseph’s a saint. Imagine sitting at the breakfast table every morning and having to look at the two most perfect people in the world!” In addition to being funny, Groeschel’s observation reveals a glaring gap in our knowledge of the foster father of Jesus.

Still, there is enough information about Joseph in the Gospels to paint more than a pious picture of the saint to whom Pope Francis has dedicated this entire year. Indeed, what emerges is a very human and relatable image of a man beset by problems, uncertainties and dangers, who, like us, had to live by faith.

Matthew describes Joseph as a “just” or “righteous” man. That is, he was someone who lived according to the law of Moses. Yet, his very dedication caused his first dilemma. Mary, his beloved betrothed, was pregnant—and the child wasn’t his. The law was very clear: the punishment for infidelity and adultery was death. How could he subject her to public condemnation and execution by stoning? He resolved to “divorce her in secret,” thus breaking off their engagement yet sparing her life. Joseph could rightly be considered the patron

saint of troubled marriages and broken engagements.

Instructed by an angel in a dream, he took Mary as his wife, making the child she bore from God legally his own. A patron saint for adopted and foster children!

Forced by the imperial census to return to his hometown, Joseph had to take his very pregnant wife to Bethlehem, “because he was of the house and lineage of David.” Again in a dream, Joseph was ordered to flee with his wife and child to escape King Herod’s murderous rampage. Leading the Holy Family’s flight to Egypt surely earns him the title of patron of refugees.

After Herod’s death, Joseph is again called by an angel in a dream to return home. But using his own good judgment, he avoids going back to Bethlehem due to the unpredictable Herod Archelaus, and instead goes to Nazareth. Joseph therefore can rightly be considered the patron saint of those in discernment.

After a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, losing the 12-year-old child for three days surely filled Mary and Joseph with anxiety. Mary expressed as much when they found him in the Temple amid the scholars: “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great



A statue of St. Joseph carrying the baby Jesus. Pope Francis has dedicated the year to St. Joseph starting on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in 2020. (Pixabay)

anxiety.” (Luke 2:48) Parents of missing children may find comfort in Joseph’s patronage.

The boy Jesus’ apparently brusque response to his mother—“Why did you look for me? Did you not know I must be about my father’s business?”—shows that even the Holy Family dealt with misunderstanding between parents and children.

And that’s the last mention of Joseph in the Gospel. Presumably, he died in the presence of Jesus and Mary, thus earning Joseph the title of patron of a happy death.

Joseph, by his absence no less than by his presence, stands out as the silent yet strong witness to family life to which all of us can look for in-

spiration and intercession.

At the end of his letter *Patris Corde* (With a Father’s Heart), in which he announced the Year of St. Joseph to be celebrated from Dec. 8, 2020 to Dec. 8, 2021, Pope Francis offers this prayer to St. Joseph for all of us:

*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,  
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary,  
To you God entrusted his only Son;  
in you Mary placed her trust;  
with you Christ became man.*

*Blessed Joseph, to us too,  
show yourself a father  
and guide us in the path of life.  
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,  
and defend us from every evil. Amen.* ✠

# FAMILIES WORKING *together* IN EL SALVADOR

By Carolyn Trumble

*A cooperative born out of the trauma of war gives Salvadoran women the opportunity they need to support their children*



In January 2020 there was great excitement at Acomujerza, a selling cooperative in Zaragoza, El Salvador, where Maryknoll Lay Missioner Melissa Altman serves. The members were about to turn their first profit since the cooperative's founding in 2002.

"We had just started being debt free," says Altman. "Everyone had worked very hard so they could finally record a profit and disperse funds to the members at the end of the fiscal year, and then COVID-19 shut everything down."

During quarantine some of the staff were able to make masks in their homes for frontline workers. While the government has begun easing restrictions, the economic toll has been profound across the country.

Acomujerza (an acronym derived from the legal name of this industrial cooperative of women in Zaragoza) provides an opportunity for community members to earn a living by producing and selling clothing and other handmade goods. The cooperative was born out of a desire of members of the social concerns ministry at Nuestra Señora del Pilar parish to help children orphaned during the country's 12-year civil war. In the years following the war, which ended in 1992, these parishioners wanted to expand their outreach to women who needed to provide for their children. The dedication of the parishioners working with members of the Cleveland Mission Team and others led to the creation of the cooperative, which today has about 25 members.

The majority of members working at the cooperative are single moms. One of them is Esmeralda. She and her 11 siblings fled their countryside farm at the onset of the war when they were told soldiers were coming to burn everything. The family became displaced people in their own country.

After the war, Esmeralda took a job at a sewing factory, where, she says, it was common to have someone standing over her shoulder checking the pieces she made. Workers there were not even allowed to go to the bathroom when they needed. One day, she says, the workers were told they had to work through the night to finish an order. They did not get paid for overtime.

*The Altmans (left to right), Melissa, Eli, Evey and Peter, are building friendships in El Salvador that are changing the lives of others and their own. (Melissa Altman/El Salvador)*





*Esmeralda sews buttons on school uniform shirts at Acomujerza cooperative, where she has worked for 15 years and is now a head seamstress. (Ana Morales/El Salvador)*

Esmeralda, who was pregnant at the time, says the workers began to talk about organizing to stand up for themselves. Soon after, the factory shut down and everyone was out of a job. However, Esmeralda had not only gained valuable sewing experience at the factory, she also learned firsthand about workplace abuse.

Her sister Paula Perez, one of the founders of Acomujerza, invited Esmeralda to join the cooperative. There, to Esmeralda's delight, she not only acquired more sewing skills but also learned about self-esteem, working together in a group, conflict resolution and communication. Now, after 15 years at the cooperative, Esmeralda is one of the head seamstresses.

"The fact that I get to work with my friends and be part of the decision making is amazing," she says. "Even when times are difficult,

we always find a way to make it through the challenges we face."

Altman says she sees clearly the dignity that working at Acomujerza gives Esmeralda and the others who work there. "These women are coming together against sexism, violence and trauma from a terrible civil war," she says.

As members of the cooperative, they have a voice and they are able to make their own decisions, Altman says. However, they still struggle financially. Each worker makes only about \$1 an hour and at times they find themselves scraping together pennies to pay the cooperative's light bill.

Acomujerza members are not looking for a handout but a way to sell their products, she says. Altman's goal is to help open up new markets for their products. She sees her most important role as assisting with product development and tell-

ing the women's story so that those who hear it will be moved to lend their support.

Altman has also been able to connect Acomujerza to local young people and to supporters through a friendship bracelet project. The cooperative buys the fabric for the bracelets from a local family. Then the women at Acomujerza make strings and distribute them to four or five high school and college students, who make the bracelets in their homes and return them to be sold. The students are paid 25 cents for each bracelet and Acomujerza receives part of the proceeds from each sale.

The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Sisters and Lay Missioners bought a bulk order of the bracelets to give out at a conference. From that order, one bracelet maker earned \$75. "I did not have enough money to pay for my gym uniform; now I can buy it," the overjoyed student told Altman.

"These kids are using the money



*A youth joins co-op members at a bracelet-making workshop. (Rafael Borja/El Salvador)*

to lighten the burden of their parents by buying things like gym uniforms or school supplies," Altman says. "This is another way for us to help families. We hope we can connect more people who would like to purchase these products to help the



*Bracelets are made out of hand-woven Salvadoran cloth. (Melissa Altman/El Salvador)*



families in El Salvador earn enough money to stay in their communities and provide basic necessities for their families.”

As a mission family, Altman, her husband Peter, who works with internally displaced people, and their children, Eli and Evey, are building friendships in El Salvador that have not only changed the lives of others but their own lives as well.

“It is most impressive for me as a mom to witness my children advocate for the dignity of the friends they have come to care for in El Salvador,” Altman says. “They have friends who come from neighborhoods where the homes have dirt floors and my children have the ability to see that these friends are no different from their friends with a different economic reality. At 14, I see my son through his lived experience being the voice that says

every person, no matter what their economic situation, deserves respect and dignity.”

In his recent encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis calls us to be peacemakers and to work together as a human family for the common good. He encourages us to go beyond our comfort zones to form social friendships that will help us to build a culture of peace and dialogue in order to work together to care for each other.

The Altman family is living this message. Working together with Salvadoran families, they are striving to build a more just, compassionate and sustainable world. ✦

*Carolyn Trumble is a consultant who writes and edits educational materials for Maryknoll's Church Engagement Division. She served as a Maryknoll lay missionary in Brazil.*

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Maryknoll Father Paul Sykora greets a mother and baby outside Nueva Vera Cruz center in Bolivia, where the missionary gives schoolchildren homework help and a nutritious meal.



Maryknoll Lay Missioner Melissa Altman (fourth from left), co-op-members and friends stand before a mural of four churchwomen killed in El Salvador. (Peter Altman/El Salvador)



**M** Fathers and Brothers  
**MARYKNOLL**



# A fond ALOHA

By Jim Krupka

*Maryknoll Sister Ardis Kremer leaves Molokai  
45 years after bringing her adventuresome  
energy to the Hawaiian island*

When Maryknoll Sister Ardis Kremer was first invited by a more senior sister to live on the Hawaiian island of Molokai, her response revealed her character. The other sister needed a companion as she fulfilled her own assignment. Sister Kremer replied, "Sure, but I need a job."

That was in 1975, the beginning of a 45-year sojourn for Sister Ardis. Her insistence on having a job in Molokai was an expression of her tireless, service-oriented and cheerful spirit.

When you think of mission work, Hawaii may not pop first to your mind, yet its small, beautiful island of Molokai, with fewer than 8,000 people, was home to two saints: Saint Damien of Molokai and Saint



*With St. Damien of Molokai looking over her shoulder, Sister Ardis Kremer served for 45 years on that Hawaiian island before she returned recently to the Maryknoll Sisters center in New York. (Hawaii Catholic Herald)*

Marianne Cope, both of whom devoted their lives to working with people afflicted with Hansen's disease who were exiled to Molokai's Kalaupapa Peninsula.

Sister Kremer followed the example of these saints in being present to love and serve the people of Molokai, but when she speaks of her life, it is often in terms of adventure. "I am a dreamer," she admits.

Growing up on the Mississippi coast, she spent much of her time outdoors and on the sea. The daugh-

ter of an engineer who operated a boat-building business, she loved to sail. She was educated at St. John's Elementary and High School in Gulfport, Mississippi, but she yearned to see lands beyond the Gulf Coast.

As soon as she graduated from high school, she approached the Maryknoll Sisters about joining.

The Maryknoll congregation told her that she would have to wait a year before entering religious life. Accordingly, she studied for a year at St. Mary's Dominican College in

New Orleans, and got a job working for her uncle in his auto parts shop. "It was good fun," she says, echoing her assessment of many of her experiences. Meeting and being with people was her favorite part of the job, although she suspects her uncle may not have been thrilled with her tendency to hand out discounts to all comers.

After her year of waiting, Ardis Kremer was invited to Maryknoll, New York, to begin life as a Maryknoll sister. She was taken with the beauty of the Maryknoll motherhouse in Ossining, with its hills and streams. To a Gulf Coast girl who had never seen snow, the Northeast winter cold was shocking. But she embraced it, and in the midst of a heavy class schedule, found time to learn to ice skate.

Her Maryknoll vocation would fulfill her wish for travel. First assigned to Chile in 1965, she taught religious education at a time of political turmoil in the country. Sister Kremer acknowledges the environment was "scary." She next was sent to Micronesia, where she again taught religious education and drew on her girlhood skills in teaching children to sail.

Serving in Micronesia led to her assignment to Hawaii, where the Maryknoll Sisters have served since 1927, with nearly 400 women in mission there at one time or another. Initially, Sister Kremer was involved in catechetical and pastoral work in Honolulu, the state capital, while also earning a degree in licensed practical nursing from Kapiolani Community College. She then worked in The Queen's Medical Cen-



*An animal lover who has assisted the local veterinarian, Sister Ardis Kremer cradles two kittens. (Connie Krautkremer/Hawaii)*

ter and St. Francis Hospital.

After she moved to Molokai, Sister Kremer began working at Molokai General Hospital as a licensed practical nurse, and later worked at the state's Department of Health, where she served for 30 years.

She found her job, and many less official roles, too. Sister Kremer was actively involved in both liturgy and religious education at St. Damien of Molokai Catholic parish. When the pastor or deacon was not on the island, she served as president at Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Church's



*Sister Bitrina Kirway demonstrates the marvels of the smartphone to her Maryknoll Sister companions Ardis Kremer (left) and Rosalinda Barrozo. (Courtesy of the Maryknoll Sisters)*





## PROGRAM PLAN FOR 2021

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Sister Ardis Kremer (back, center) poses with members of the Maryknoll Sisters congregation who were serving in Hawaii. (Courtesy of the Maryknoll Sisters)

Communion service. Beyond parish life, she served for years as president of the Molokai Humane Society, and at times even assisted the local veterinarian when the usual assistant was unavailable.

Sister Kremer was the woman on the main street of Kaunakakai, Molokai's big town, who always wore a genuine smile. She was the one driving around the island in a well-used pickup truck, who could easily be mistaken for an island ranch woman. Her generosity and kindness flow freely, and, as Hawaiians might say, "aloha" comes naturally to her.

Her decades of work in healthcare on this rural island—known as "The Friendly Isle"—exemplify the depth of her calling as a missionary: being present and bringing good news through the ordinary stuff of life.

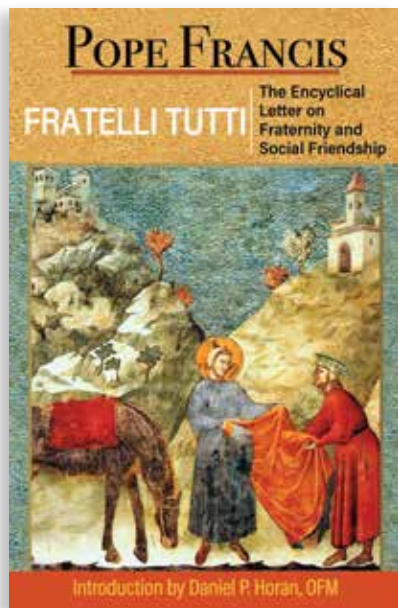
The evident joy, energy and enthusiasm she brings to life, and her love of God make it easy to understand why she classifies so many of her varied experiences as "great fun."

There is a saying on the island, "Don't change Molokai; let Molokai change you." However, in Sister Kremer's case, it's fair to say Molokai is better because she spent more than half her life there.

At 80-plus years, she loves the island but remains ready to go wherever Maryknoll sends her. In considering the possibility of going back to the motherhouse in New York, her main response is, "I hope they have a job for me." ✠

Deacon Jim Krupka is a Maryknoll Deacon Mission Partner and serves at parishes in Michigan and on Molokai, Hawaii.

# Orbis Books Spotlight



Preview  
by Robert Ellsberg

Since the commencement of his papacy in 2013, we have felt a strong resonance between the agenda of Pope Francis and the program of Orbis Books. In his strong mission-centered agenda, his emphasis on mercy and on care for the poor and for the earth, and his determination to reach out to those on the margins and peripheries, we found so many connections with our work. In the past seven years we have published over a dozen volumes of his writings, including addresses to young people, his morning homilies, reflections on mission and the Gospels, on the Creed, the Works of Mercy, and on migrants and refugees, along with his apostolic exhortations on the call to holiness and the Amazon Synod, and his encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*.

Last fall we were deeply moved to receive a personal letter from Pope Francis, commending Orbis on our 50th anniversary, and thanking us for all the efforts we make “to sow, even ‘against wind and tides,’ a culture based on fraternity.”

That theme of “fraternity and social friendship,” as it turned out, would be the precise focus of the pope’s most recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. The title is drawn from words of St. Francis of Assisi, who expressed his brotherhood and friendship with all creatures, especially the poor, underlining, as Pope Francis has so many times since selecting his papal name, the spirit that inspires his vision for renewing the Church.

*Fratelli Tutti* outlines the path to a culture of encounter and solidarity, calling on Christians and people

of good will throughout the world to recognize our common humanity, to build bridges, and to care for our common home.

The pope addresses specific issues, including the death penalty, the practical limitations of “just war” teaching, the rise of new forms of popular nationalism, the challenges of the pandemic, and the plight of migrants and refugees. Beneath all these topical issues lies a profound call to discernment and conversion and a conviction that in the Gospel of Jesus we may find a different way of being in the world.

In one particularly moving section, Pope Francis reflects on the parable of the Good Samaritan, asking us to consider, “Which of the persons do you identify with? ... Which of these characters do you resemble?” According to Francis, we face a fundamental choice: “Here, all our distinctions, labels and masks fall away: it is the moment of truth. Will we bend down to touch and heal the wounds of the other?”

The Orbis edition of the encyclical includes an insightful introduction by Franciscan Father Daniel Horan. While situating the encyclical within the tradition of Catholic social teaching, and in relation to the specific challenges facing the world today, he also helpfully lays out the Franciscan lens that informs Pope Francis’ reading of the Gospel and the world.

In his letter to Orbis, the pope underscored the important role books can play in offering “a compass that points the way, guides and allows us to cultivate a spirit capable of moving toward great goals that embrace the good that awaits us all.” He encouraged us in the “delicate task” of creating volumes that “give flight to the spirit” and that help people imagine that “a different way of writing history is possible.”

With that encouragement, and with this new encyclical, we look forward to embarking on our next 50 years! ✂

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



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— POPE FRANCIS  
World Day of Peace Message, January 2021



*A children's program in Nepal is coordinated by the Care and Development Organization, a non-profit organization supported by Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers. (Gregg Brekke/Nepal)*



# 'WELCOME HOME, *Father!*'

Text and photos  
by Sean Sprague

*In Hokkaido's port city of Muroran, Father Frank Riha is considered one of their own*

The train pulls into Higashi-Muroran Station on Japan's northern island of Hokkaido just before 9 a.m. Maryknoll Father Frank Riha is waiting outside in his full-size Toyota Crown hybrid to pick up his visitors.

The missionary serves in Muroran, a port city of 80,000. At 79, he looks strong and healthy, and he's happy to be here. He has served on Hokkaido for 43 years, and the first dozen were spent in Muroran. He only recently returned to this city, where

he was first assigned to the parish of Higashi (East) Muroran.

"It was my first parish as a pastor," Father Riha says. "Coming back after 30 years in a neighboring city was somewhat emotional for me. But the reception I received was beyond my imagination."

Born in Boston and ordained in 1968, Father Riha has spent all his overseas missionary years in Japan. For about seven years he served in other parts of the country before coming north to Hokkaido.

*At a barbecue after Mass, a smiling Father Riha mingles with members of his Higashi (East) Muroran parish.*







*In his previous assignment in the city of Tomakomai, Father Frank Riha enjoyed interacting with the children in Holy Mother Kindergarten, where he served as principal.*

Father Riha is not only pastor of Higashi (East) Muroran but also of the Noboribetsu parish as well. He is also the director and principal of the large kindergarten attached to the Noboribetsu Catholic church.

"When I first came to Muroran all those years ago, I used to celebrate Mass with the Benedictine Sisters at their nearby convent," he says. "I got involved with the kindergarten which the sisters were running. I would go once a week to teach the children English, or rather play with the children in English. When I went to [the neighboring city of] Tomakomai, I already had 10 years of experience working with kids and also teaching the teachers, not just English but talking about Christianity."

This proved useful when the bishop asked him to be the principal of the Tomakomai Holy Mother Kindergarten, which had between 40 and 60 children at different times.

Returning to Muroran, he finds himself director of the Noboribetsu Sacred Heart Kindergarten, with an enrollment of 140 children ages 3-6, and 20 teachers.

Today Father Riha drives his visitors to Higashi (East) Muroran Catholic Church compound. At some churches in Japan you keep your shoes on, but at this one you take them off and wear provided slippers. The highly polished wooden floors match the clean white interior of the church, recently rebuilt.

It's Father's Day, before the arrival of COVID-19. In the kitchen of the community room right behind the church, women are busy preparing a special feast.

Mass starts at 9:30 and the church is almost full. Most of the congregation is elderly, many of the women wearing lace veils. The missionary begins the liturgy with an altar server and two lectors at the unadorned,



*At an unadorned altar in Higashi (East) Muroran parish Father Frank Riha celebrates Sunday liturgy with a "different aliveness" than in Africa and Latin America.*

candle-lit altar, a beautiful carved wooden crucifix overhead.

Father Riha describes the typical Japanese Mass as unlike liturgies in Africa or Latin America with their drums or guitars. "It is a different aliveness here," he says. "Singing psalms and Gregorian chant-style is popular." Accompanied by an organ, the singing is solemn. Sake decanters hold the water and wine to be consecrated, and the rite of peace consists of bowing to each other, though some members of the congregation shake hands after bowing. At Communion time, Father Riha distributes the sacred host

in the middle aisle while two eucharistic ministers stand on the side aisles offering the chalice with the precious blood.

Parishioner Ken-ichi Matsuoka, 79, provides context on the local Catholic community. He was baptized in an earlier version of the same church 51 years ago. There are around 300 Catholics in the parish, he says, although fewer than 200 attend church. "Japan's aging population and [negative] growth rate are taking a toll," he says. "Different eras have different ways of thinking. The youth are in a bind today. Their work is difficult and we have



At a typical Sunday liturgy in Higashi (East) Muroran parish, most of the congregation is elderly and women wear lace veils as they solemnly worship in Japanese style.

a constant shortage of youth. We must reflect on: What are the young people looking for? What is it that motivates them, that helps them look toward the future with hope? Isn't this the hope and love we can find in Jesus? How do we get this across to the younger generations?"

Father Riha says that the major changes of Vatican II took place around the time he arrived in Japan in 1968, and Maryknoll missionaries helped the congregation here to transition by providing study groups. As was the case around the world, the shift away from Latin Mass meant greater variations among congregations within Japan. While in Muroran the Mass is traditionally Japanese and solemn, in churches in other regions of the country with large migrant worker populations—coming from countries like Peru, Brazil, Kenya and the Philippines—the Mass is likely to include drums, guitars and big hugs.

Mass ends with a blessing for all the men who are fathers. Then it's

time for the Mongolian barbecue feast in the community room. The whole congregation, sitting at half a dozen tables, enjoys the grilled meat, rice wrapped in seaweed, vegetables and green tea. Father Riha gets up and mingles with members of his community afterwards. On this Father's Day it is clear he is a father figure to his community, which shows great love and respect for him. He says he has no intention of retiring any time soon and hopes to stay here as long as possible.

Recalling the warm greetings he received here after 30 years away, he expresses great joy in the way parishioners treat him as one of their own. "There were ... quite a few who said, 'Welcome home, Father!' I don't think there is anything better one can say about the people and the city called Muroran." ✠

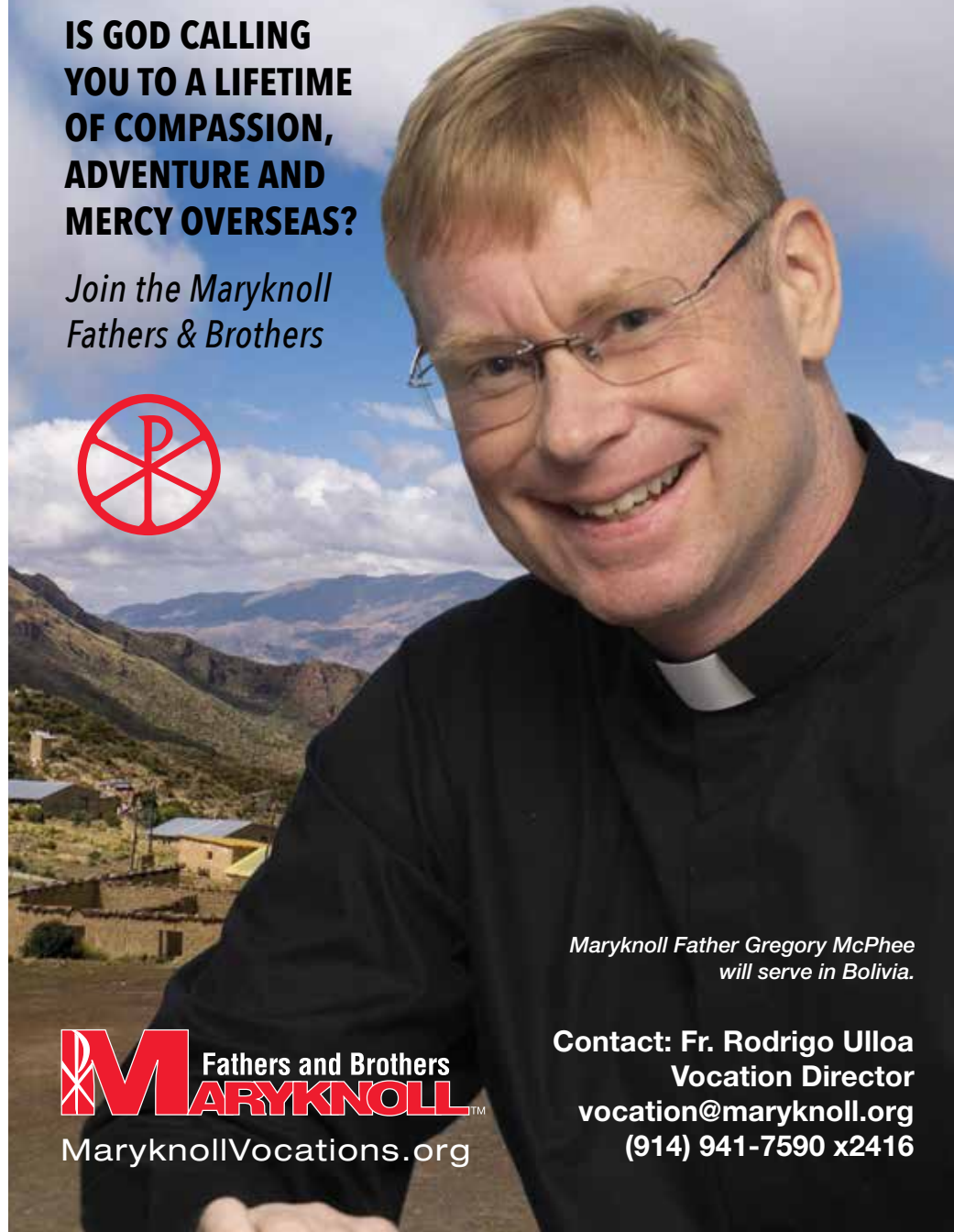
Sean Sprague, a freelance photographer and writer living in Wales, U.K., is a frequent contributor to Maryknoll magazine.

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

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# We'll get far by walking together!

By Brenda Noriega



## A young minister highlights the participation of youth in the Catholic Church

When I read the final document of the “Synod of Bishops on Youth, the Faith and Vocational Discernment” in 2018, I was particularly interested in the following paragraph:

“The Synod asks that the active participation of the young become effective and ordinary in places of co-responsibility in the particular Churches and in the organs of the Episcopal Conferences and the universal Church. It also asks that the activity of the Office for the Young in the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life be strengthened, not least through the constitution of an organ to represent the young at an international level.” (paragraph 123)

“The young people were heard!” I thought. But I felt a little skeptical and noted: “Maybe one day... at best in 100 years.”

We young people sometimes see things moving slowly in the Church. We are disappointed when we see no action in response to our concerns. But God has ways to revive our hearts.

The Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment took place from Oct. 3 to 28, 2018, in Rome. But preparations for the Synod began two years earlier, when Pope Francis announced the theme for this 15th general assembly of bishops.

From the beginning, the Holy Father communicated his desire for young people to be part of the synod process. As a result, the Synod on Young People was organized so the voices of the young were



The 20 members of the first Youth Advisory Body, including Brenda Noriega (top row, third from left), represent young people from around the world. (Courtesy of Brenda Noriega)





At the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment in 2018, Pope Francis meets Yadira Vieyra, a delegate from Chicago. (CNS/Vatican Media)

very present before, during and after the Synod.

Young people worldwide contributed their life testimonies, challenges, and social realities and dreams through online questionnaires and international meetings before the Synod. During the Synod, young people from different countries participated as auditors and, at times, were invited to express what they carry in their hearts.

During World Youth Day in Panama in January 2019, the Holy Father continued listening to young people's concerns and dreams. I had the privilege of being one of 10 young people who had lunch with Pope Francis at the end of World Youth Day. My life was transformed, and my flame reignited.

Two months later, Pope Francis released the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (Christ Is Alive), the

beautiful letter he wrote for young people and all who walk with us. But the Holy Father's desire to engage young people did not conclude there. He called for a post-synodal international forum. Thus, at the end of June 2019, about 250 young people from all over the world arrived in Rome to discuss ways in which *Christus Vivit* had been received in their realities. I was one of two representatives of the United States.

At the end of the forum, we were told that paragraph 123 of the Synod on Young People's final document would become a reality. You can imagine the joy among us that day. Here was the Holy Spirit blowing like at Pentecost, renewing the Church and inviting us to be part of the forward march.

On Nov. 24, 2019, the first International Youth Advisory Body (IYAB) was officially announced to

the world, the first of its kind in the history of the Church! I was among 20 young people from different parts of the world chosen to continue the dialogue and consultation with the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family, and Life. This Vatican office is responsible "for the promotion of the life and apostolate of the lay faithful, for the pastoral care of the family and its mission according to God's plan and for the protection and support of human life."

Since the formation of IYAB, I've learned that the same Spirit who moved in Jeremiah and Samuel in biblical times continues moving and speaking today through Sofia, Makoto, Émile and the rest of my colleagues. My 19 brothers and sisters are each bestowed with gifts, charisms and experiences that en-

rich dialogue and shape my own ministerial perspective.

Being part of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers' family as an educator and mission promoter has enriched my participation in this advisory body. Through Maryknoll, I have learned about a diverse global reality and ministry on the peripheries. I have learned that one pastoral response is not the solution for all. My brothers' and sisters' promotion is always more important than my own. That is part of being a missionary disciple.

Listening to the Maryknoll missionaries about the circumstances in some countries in great need has helped me be mindful during IYAB meetings of the African proverb, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go accompanied." ✠



Brenda Noriega (yellow shirt) joins other young people sharing their hopes and dreams for the active participation of youth in the Church. (Courtesy of Brenda Noriega)



# Lifting spirits, RESTORING LIFE IN BOLIVIA

By Giovana Soria

*Maryknoll lay missionary accompanies sick and disabled people in the city of Cochabamba*

**M**aryknoll Lay Missioner John O'Donoghue pushes Francisco Ayala's wheelchair and brings him to a small rehabilitation space at a center in Cochabamba, Bolivia, where the missionary helps Ayala and other patients do physical therapy exercises.

Ayala, 32, was struck by a hit-and-run driver while crossing the road near his home in the city of Montero two and a half years ago. The accident left him with injuries to his head and legs. He can't walk, his speech is limited and he suffered brain damage.

After the accident, Ayala spent time in a hospital. Then Joseph Loney, director of the Maryknoll Lay Missioners in Cochabamba, arranged to have him transported to Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity home, where O'Donoghue has been serving for the past four years. This home was established by the Missionaries of Charity in collaboration with a local parish 12 years ago, and is staffed by four Missionaries of Charity. The sisters provide daily meals, shelter, medicine and care for up to 20 men who suffer from illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, tu-

berculosis and respiratory problems or, like Ayala, are disabled.

O'Donoghue, 67, received training in physiotherapy for three months to learn how to work with disabled patients. "The patients asked me to help them walk, because it is bad to be in a wheelchair every day," says the missionary. "They become obese, which is bad for their heart, and it is depressing to be in a wheelchair."

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, O'Donoghue was able to physically touch and exercise Ayala's legs, arms and head, but now he has to change his routine. "I tell him at a distance what exercises to do," says the missionary. "At the moment Francisco can't use the parallel bars to try and walk, although we have tried." However, O'Donoghue adds, Ayala has shown progress. He is capable of lifting weights and his arms are getting stronger. O'Donoghue also tries to engage Ayala in simple conversation every day and have him draw pictures to keep his mind sharp.

In addition to helping the men with their exercises, the missionary begins each morning cleaning the dining room, sweeping, dusting, washing dishes and emptying the



*Lay Missioner John O'Donoghue brings Francisco Ayala to the dining room area to have lunch. (John O'Donoghue/Bolivia)*





*O'Donoghue consoles Calixto Cejo, an elderly patient who has a hearing problem and is blind in one eye, at the center in Cochabamba, Bolivia. (Nile Sprague/Bolivia)*

trash. He helps the sisters prepare and serve lunch for the patients and helps to keep patients' minds active by playing games and watching TV and DVDs with them.

The majority of the residents, O'Donoghue says, have been abandoned. "The sisters and myself are the only family they have and that is why many get depressed," he says. "We try to spend time with them, have time for prayer and bring them some hope."

O'Donoghue sees his job as a ministry of accompanying the men by being present, listening and talking to them. "I try to keep their spirits up, helping them with their daily tasks and keeping my eyes on them," he says. "It is kind of a one on one with the patients. I actually enjoy working here despite the

fact that people get depressed. We laugh and have a lot of fun."

Edgar Medina, 33, who had partial paralysis, was a patient with whom O'Donoghue worked. "John is a good person, kind and generous. He doesn't feel for himself but feels for others," said Medina, who left the home after five years when he decided he could live independently. "I believe God has sent him to support us."

O'Donoghue recalls meeting Mother Teresa when he served for six months in one of her houses in Calcutta 26 years ago. "I remember Mother Teresa as a small woman, but with a tremendous amount of energy," he says. "In her 80s, she was very active. Even though she had arthritis and a pacemaker, she would conduct meetings, give orders and



*The missionary walks around the home to check on the patients. Here he is talking and joking with Justo in the outside washing area at the center. (Nile Sprague/Bolivia)*





Sister Adelbert (left) and another Missionaries of Charity sister share a time of prayer and reflection in their small private chapel at the center. (Nile Sprague/Bolivia)

organize events. Now, ironically, I ended up working with Missionaries of Charity in Bolivia.”

Sister Adelbert, director of the home, is grateful to have the support of the missionary. “He has a way of welcoming and making people feel good,” she says. “For me, the men who come here are like Jesus on Calvary, and we want them to find and see God’s love here.”

O’Donoghue emigrated from Ireland to the United States when he was 18 years old. He has a bachelor of science degree in accounting from Bentley College in Waltham, Massachusetts, and a post-graduate degree from Cambridge University, England, in development studies, focusing on the social, economic and political development of the Global South. He worked in the business world as an accountant for 10 years.

“I felt like I needed to do something more spiritual and it stayed with me for a while,” he says. “I wanted to deepen my spirituali-

ty and explore my faith.” Before joining the Maryknoll Lay Missioners 14 years ago, he worked with non-profit organizations in India, Sri Lanka, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria and Sudan.

As a Maryknoll lay missionary, O’Donoghue served in East Timor, where he administered a program making specialized shoes, hand-powered tricycles and wheelchairs for the disabled. Then he worked in Kenya with groups on income-generating projects.

In his current ministry, he says, “I really thank God, our Lord, that I am able to help in some small way. I feel part of a family and get along well with the sisters and the patients.”

Seeing people who are sick or disabled makes him appreciate his own blessings. “It makes me realize how lucky I am to walk and have good health,” he says. “I love to get the men out of the wheelchairs, on the walker or using crutches because they have life again.” ✠



Maryknoll Lay Missioner **Juan Gomez** teaching a computer class in Tacopaya, Bolivia. (Photo: Nile Sprague)

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# Seeking Sustainability in East Africa

By Lynn F. Monahan, photos by Sean Sprague

*A Maryknoll priest works to build up a sprawling rural parish in Tanzania*

A mission parish in the Shinyanga Diocese of Tanzania is a ministry of challenges and blessings for Maryknoll Father Hung M. Dinh, whose life of service to the poor has taken him from his native Vietnam to the vast savannahs of East Africa.

As pastor of Ndoleleji Catholic Church, Father Dinh today lives out the calling he first heard as an “underground seminarian” studying in secret for the priesthood in Communist Vietnam and serving there as a catechist in a rural parish, ministering to “the poorest people who had only one meal a day.”



*Maryknoll Fathers (l. to r.) Edward Schoellmann, Hung Dinh and John Lange concelebrate Mass in Ndoleleji Catholic Church in Tanzania.*





*Maryknoll Father Hung Dinh, center, and Father John Lange help a family in Ndoleleji parish remove dried corn kernels from their cobs in Shinyanga Diocese in Tanzania.*

“My purpose is to strengthen the Christian life here,” says Father Dinh of his ministry in Ndoleleji. “It’s a mission parish and has many outstations.” The parish consists of three pastoral centers that each encompasses eight or nine outstations, or chapels, with two to five Small Christian Communities associated with each outstation. Father Dinh goes to each center once a month and will say Masses at three different, widely spaced outstations on any given Sunday. “That takes all day,” he says.

“I have a schedule,” the 54-year-old missionary says. “I not only say Mass but I visit the families for mar-

ital problems and for their spiritual life.” He adds that he also visits the sick and attends meetings with the members of the Small Christian Communities on his monthly circuit.

In a sprawling rural parish of 27 villages spread over almost 1,400 square miles, where only 5% of the people are Catholic, one of Father Dinh’s priorities is training catechists. “The priest won’t be able to manage it alone,” he says. “I have to get catechists.”

To do that, he sends catechist candidates for a year of training in Mwanza, the country’s second-largest city, located two and a half hours northwest on the shore of

Lake Victoria. In addition, he holds ongoing catechist seminars every Friday at one of the three centers in the parish, and on the fourth Friday does a seminar for all the catechists.

With 32 catechists in the parish, Father Hung depends heavily on his chief catechist, Faustine Mihumo, to help manage the organization. The two men are about the same age, and the missionary says he relies on catechist Mihumo, who acts as his representative when the priest is away. Maryknoll Father John Lange also serves at the parish and contributes his advice and counsel, but at age 90, he has to limit his outreach.

While Father Dinh draws on funds from the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers for the catechists’ training,

he relies on financial help from his family and friends in the Vietnamese community back home in the Diocese of Orange in California to help the catechists’ families while the catechists study. “The catechists go to study for a whole year and when they return, they have nothing because they didn’t cultivate (crops),” he says, noting that as many as a dozen catechists may be studying in Mwanza at a time. “The whole year they are studying there they don’t have income.”

In addition to helping the families of catechist trainees, Father Dinh maintains crops of corn, green beans, peanuts and rice to feed parishioners during meetings and events, and to help the neediest.



*Father Dinh greets a local man at the medical clinic he helps support in Ndoleleji parish.*



Father Dinh blesses an ailing woman while making rounds with a clinical officer at the Ndoleleji medical clinic and dispensary that treats about 40 patients a week.

To get the catechists to where they need to go to do their ministries, the missionary buys good used bicycles from Japan for \$50 each. The cost is shared: the catechist pays a third, the people pay a third and Father Dinh contributes a third.

Father Dinh is very willing to reach into his own resources to help

the people of his parish, but he is conscious that the work needs to be sustainable given the fact that the next pastor will likely be a local priest.

Ensuring sustainability is particularly important for the parish medical post and dispensary, he says. The clinic receives about 40 patients a

week, most of whom suffer from malaria, which is endemic to the area, as well as typhoid and other infections. It employs 14 people, including a clinical officer (equivalent to a medical technician), five nurses, two part-time laboratory technicians and a midwife, as well as cleaning staff, a driver and a security guard.

"I try to use minimal funds to subsidize the dispensary so when I go away, they'll be able to manage it for themselves," Father Dinh says. "If you put in a lot of subsidy and you leave, it collapses. I am building it up slowly so it can continue to be managed on its own."

While the clinic is run as a non-profit venture, it does charge patients fees for services, medicine and lab tests. For illnesses and injuries beyond the expertise of the clinical officer and nurses, patients are sent to area hospitals. The clinic maintains a driver and ambulance to take patients to the nearest hospital, which is 12 miles away, or to a larger hospital that is more than 40 miles away.

Father Dinh says the parish has been spared from the COVID-19 pandemic. "In our place, Ndoleleji clinic, there are no cases of patients affected by COVID-19," Father Dinh says. "We have been blessed, really."

His parishioners are very mindful of God in their lives, the priest says, noting they often use the Swahili phrase *mungu yupo*, meaning God is present. "That God is everywhere," he says, "and if they achieve something, they recognize God's help."

Father Dinh's experience of minis-

try in Ndoleleji began while he was a seminarian doing his overseas training in Tanzania from 2005 to 2007. While assigned to assist a Maryknoll pastor at a parish in Mwanza, seminarian Dinh would spend one week every other month working with Maryknoll Father Daniel Ohmann among the indigenous Watatulu who live near the Ndoleleji area. In 2009, the year after his ordination, Father Dinh returned to the Shinyanga Diocese and served with a local priest in Ndoleleji before becoming pastor in 2012.

To this day, Father Dinh works to maintain some of the projects started by his mentor Father Ohmann, who returned to the States a few years ago after more than 50 years as a missionary in Africa. These include a windmill project that provides clean, reliable water to villages in the semi-arid region and a honey project with 60 beehives that produce "some of the best honey in Tanzania," he says.

The missionary clearly enjoys his busy mission and life with the people of Ndoleleji. He finds similarities between the people he serves now and the Vietnamese with whom he grew up. "Hospitality really matters here," he says, just as in Vietnamese culture. Furthermore, he says, "They respect the elders, similar to Asian culture."

Especially significant for Father Dinh is that the people trust him, even though he's different from them. "They talk to me and seek counsel from me," he says. In turn, he credits the Tanzanians he serves with teaching him "patience and generosity." ✠



## Danger to Water Defenders

By Kathleen Kollman Birch

Shortly after Marcelo Rivera and his colleagues had won a prestigious human rights award in Washington, D.C., in 2009, the teacher in El Salvador abruptly disappeared. Two weeks later Rivera's body was found in a well; he had been tortured and murdered.

Rivera and his colleagues had gained attention for their work as “water defenders,” having spoken out against a large international mining corporation for polluting water sources on which their communities relied. They gave voice to the concerns of thousands of Salvadorans, mostly impoverished and disempowered, who were affected by the destructive practices of the corporation.

Over the course of the following decade, the movement started by this small group of ordinary Salvadoran villagers gradually built a supporting coalition that included international advocacy groups, researchers, lawyers, Salvadoran politicians and leaders in the Catholic Church. Against all odds, after a transnational lawsuit played out in secret tribunals in Washington D.C., and after an arduous campaign in the Salvadoran national legislature, El Salvador in 2017 became the first nation in the world to ban metal mining.

This “David and Goliath story,” documented in the newly released book *The Water Defenders: How Ordinary People Saved a Country from Corporate Greed* by Robin Broad and John Cavanagh, demonstrates the potential of nonviolent campaigns to protect the interests of local communities against corporate powers. It also shows the power of the Catholic Church to be a voice and instrument for justice within such campaigns.

However, the victorious ending of this campaign is an anomaly among countless stories of other water defenders today. In many countries in the world, access to clean water is increasingly scarce due to climate change, mismanagement and pollution. Because of the way trade agreements are structured to favor international corporate interests over local efforts to protect environmental resources and community interests, companies in extractive industries such as mining are often able to pollute natural resources with impunity through the course of their work.

Those who stand against this kind of environmental destruction are increasingly threatened. The year 2019 was the deadliest on record for environmental defenders around the world, with 212 recorded murders. The perpe-



People in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador, protest the privatization of water in 2017 and demand lawmakers provide water access to the poor. (CNS/Jose Cabezas, Reuters)

trators and masterminds behind these murders are almost never discovered or prosecuted, and their victims are most often rural citizens who spoke out to protect community resources.

As residents of the United States and consumers of everyday goods produced through mining—such as cell phones, jewelry, building materials, etc.—we are compelled by the consequences of many mining projects

for impoverished communities to ask complicated, difficult questions: When and where should mining be allowed? Is there a less destructive way to do it? Who should be held responsible for environmental damages that will affect generations? ✦

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

### FAITH IN ACTION:

- Read more about the campaign of the Salvadoran water defenders in *The Water Defenders: How Ordinary People Saved a Country from Corporate Greed*, by Robin Broad and John Cavanagh, available in March 2021: <http://bit.ly/WatDefendElSalv>
- March 22 is World Water Day. Read more about efforts to protect the right to clean water around the world: <https://www.worldwaterday.org/>

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

## *Abundant Graces Flow in Taiwan*

By Yu-Mei Lee

**W**hen I knocked on the Maryknoll Language School door in Taichung, Taiwan, in 1974, I was applying for a job. I had no idea this would be the beginning of a friendship with the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers that continues today.

At that time, I was a freshman at Tunghai University in Taichung and heard that the Maryknoll Language School was looking for a Mandarin teacher. When I went for the interview, Father James A. Collignon told me, “We do not need Mandarin teachers, but if you’re interested in teaching Taiwanese, can you learn Taiwanese romanization (Taiwanese written in our Roman script)?”

I said “yes.” After six months of study, I passed the test.

I became a part-time teacher at the Maryknoll Language School until I graduated from college in 1978. That’s when Father John Moran hired me to teach Mandarin and Taiwanese full time.

Over the years I taught many Maryknollers. My long-term student was Father Eugene Murray. From 1997-2000 he would spend four hours every Monday studying the New Catechism of the Catholic Church in Chinese characters.

Father Richard Devoe had a four-wheel-drive jeep and liked to listen

to tapes while driving. I recorded the Sunday Scripture readings in Mandarin for him. Meanwhile I had the chance to read the Scriptures myself.

My second principal at the language school, Father Frank O’Donnell, asked me to translate the Ordinary parts of the Mass from Chinese to Taiwanese. The other teachers could not understand why he would ask me, a non-Catholic, to do this job. Eventually I realized he was giving me a chance to know the Catholic religion better.

I began studying Catholic doctrine with a Taiwanese sister and was baptized. My husband, Zhe-Feng Lin, followed me after studying Catholicism with Father Murray.

It wasn’t just studying doctrine that drew us to the Catholic Church, but the example of the Maryknoll missionaries. They were so kind and dedicated to their mission, and they persevered in learning the difficult Taiwanese language so they could better serve the people.

I remember Father O’Donnell immediately writing down a word the first time he heard it and asking me to help him understand what it meant. He was concerned about hearing-impaired people and learned to communicate with them in sign language.

He also invited five Taiwanese



*Yu-Mei Lee (flowered blouse) sat next to Maryknoll Sister Shu-Chen Wu, a native of Taiwan, in the congregation at the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers’ Centennial Mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City in 2011. (Courtesy of Yu-Mei Lee/U.S.)*

priests to come to the Maryknoll center house to translate the Sunday Mass books from Chinese to Taiwanese. Even now, most of the Taiwanese parishes use these books.

I was pleased when Father Clarence Engler set up the Maryknoll Information Service Center in Taichung and asked me to record the Lectionary with the Sunday Mass readings in Taiwanese and Mandarin for the website.

One of the happiest moments of my life came in 2011 when Father Alfonso Kim, then the Maryknoll Society’s Asia regional superior, invited me to attend the Maryknoll Centennial Mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in

New York City and to read one of the petitions in the Prayer of the Faithful. “Is it really true?” I asked myself. “Am I dreaming?”

I wanted to bring a special gift to Maryknoll. My husband said, “Let me engrave the founders’ names and photos on stones.” The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers put them on display at their center in New York.

The day of the Centennial Mass, I was very nervous to stand before so many people and recite my prayer. But God helped me.

I thank God for giving me the grace I needed that day and for the abundant graces I have received for over 40 years with Maryknoll. ✠



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## Readers' Responses

### CREATION AS SACRAMENT

Thank you for your wonderful publication, which has been a favorite of mine for many years. In the Winter 2021 issue a reader was concerned that Father Joseph R. Veneroso had made a serious error when he spoke of creation in the September/October issue as being the first sacrament.

We are truly blessed in our faith to have access to the seven sacraments that were given to us by our Lord, Jesus Christ. It's correct that "creation" itself is not among those blessings that we acknowledge with holy, formal rituals. However, the act of the existence of anything at all is given to us by God the Father in union with our Lord. Thus, for example, we can speak of the "sacrament" of humor in the same breath as we rejoice over the "sacrament" of creation without disrespecting our beloved seven.

*Peter M. Murray  
Brookfield, Wisconsin*

### AN OBEDIENT SERVANT

The Winter 2021 edition of your *Maryknoll* magazine with the photos and meditative prose on St. Joseph the Carpenter is encouraging during these times. I like to think of St. Joseph as the worker since he works in our hearts and minds to give us courage. We don't know too much about Joseph in Scripture. What is known is that he was summoned to be an obedient servant to God as well as a chaste spouse to Mary and a paternal mentor to Jesus. To be called in that form is quite moving to me. As Joseph did, we must gather all our

fortitude and then work to prepare the way of the Lord.

*Mark A. Sleboda  
Redford Township, Michigan*

### REST IN PEACE

I was sorry to see Father Gerard McCrane's name included among those Maryknoll missionaries who died during this past year. I was privileged to know Father Gerry in the fall of 1983 when I spent three months at the Maryknoll Language School, the *Instituto de Idiomas* in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Then the school's director, Father Gerry was a wonderful host and friend, with a language program that included an introduction to the Latin American reality, ably assisted by Maryknoll Sister Barbara Hendricks. I am writing this on the 40th anniversary of the murder in El Salvador of Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford and their companions, Sister Dorothy Kazel and Lay Missioner Jean Donovan. The Church owes much to your community. May they all rest in peace.

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

### ONE-SIDED STORY

As a longtime reader and supporter of *Maryknoll* magazine, but also a nuclear engineer and scientist, I found the article by well-intentioned Sister Kathleen Reiley to be entirely one-sided. Nuclear, in all of its implementations—from commercial electricity generation, to space research, to medicine, to the maintenance of world peace by the U.S. arsenal of

nuclear weapons—has two sides, but only one was told and even that was misleading due to the hysteria associated with radiation.

The facts are that the radiation levels in and around Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, Fukushima and Tokaimura, even right after the accidents, are similar to the naturally occurring radiation levels in many parts of the world today. We scientists have not succeeded in educating society that there is no evidence that these relatively low radiation levels that people worldwide are exposed to from Mother Nature's sources pose any health risks whatsoever.

I have worked and lived here in Los Alamos, New Mexico, for over 50 years and was the chief nuclear scientist on a Department of Energy three-person team sent to Tokaimura directly after the accident. I can attest to the media hysteria and unfortunate scaring of the local populace associated with the low levels of radiation because of the accident. Unfortunately, our educational system and the popular media do not mention the science and data that support my statements herein nor do they report about all the positive sides to the world's uses for nuclear energy today and into the future. Thousands of lives are saved yearly from both pollution-free electricity generation by commercial nuclear power plants and by applications of radiation in medicine.

Yes, there is nuclear waste, but it is relatively small in volume and has

been safely handled for over 70 years and poses minuscule radiation risk to the public.

Sister Reiley "believes" that Japan's 52 nuclear power plants pose an enormous threat to human life. The reality is that the science and the data show just the opposite; they are saving thousands of lives yearly because of pollution reduction alone.

*Thomas McLaughlin  
Los Alamos, New Mexico*

#### WONDERFUL NUN

Think about an article on Sister Dede Byrne. She is a wonderful Catholic nun who truly practices her Catholic faith with the poor. Her life is dedicated to the many who suffer. When Sister Byrne spoke at the Republican National Convention, she said her weapon of choice is the rosary. I pray this isn't too controversial for your beautiful magazine. Thank you, Maryknoll. Honor the Blessed Mother and many blessings will follow.

*Maureen Theresa Krepol  
Media, Pennsylvania*

**Correction:** In a *Missioner Tale* by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Susan Nagele in the Winter 2021 issue, we mistakenly identified the two young men who delivered polio vaccine to a remote area in South Sudan as a Maryknoll lay missioner and a priest from the St. Patrick's Missionary Society. In fact, the two men mentioned were members of the Toposa ethnic group, not the missionaries. Maryknoll regrets the error.

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

Readers' Responses  
P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545-0302  
Our e-mail address is: [mklmag@maryknoll.org](mailto:mklmag@maryknoll.org)



Courtesy of Lawrence Radice/Thailand

## CARING FOR God's Creation

Maryknoll Father Lawrence Radice (left) helps farmers from rural Thailand adapt to climate change conditions, often by using natural methods for pest control and soil conservation. Your gift to the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers will enable Father Radice and other missionaries around the world to help others re-establish their relationship with God's creation.

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*Maryknoll Lay Missioner Melissa Altman (navy blue shirt) and her two children join members of the co-op in El Salvador where she serves for a birthday party. (See story, page 18.)*

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