

The Vincentian

2020 WINTER NEWSLETTER

Vincentian Family Honors Its Closest Partners in Mission

Since its founding, the Congregation of the Mission has worked closely with lay friends and benefactors, many of whom who share to an extraordinary degree in the Vincentian spirit and works.

Carole Woodson



Robert Janis



Jean Lenti-Ponsetto



The Western Province grants **formal affiliation** with the Congregation to honor men and women who live out the community's charism and mission. These "longstanding laborers in the Vincentian vineyard" are nominated locally, with approval extended by the Congregation's Superior General in Rome. Affiliates are afforded spiritual benefits offered by Vincentian priests and brothers around the world.

Provincial Fr. Patrick McDevitt, C.M. writes in gratitude of their "living witness of the values St. Vincent espoused in his life," saying the honor "brings with it a deeper spiritual communion with Christ, Vincent, and the confreres of the Congregation."

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“Never Forget Our Mission”

Fr. Tom Stehlik, C.M. shares this story of hope from St. Joseph's Church and Rebuild Center in New Orleans ...

"Early in the pandemic, homeless people in New Orleans were invited to stay at two hotels. They were ...

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We Hunger and Await with Hope



Dear Friends,

My warmest greetings to you during this wonderful season of Advent as we wait with hope the coming of Christmas!

What a year it's been, with a deadly pandemic, unprecedented natural disasters, and social and political upheaval not seen in decades. People are calling 2020 "surreal," "strange," and "unbelievable." Things feel unnatural and uncertain. We miss our old lives ... gathering together without masks, hugging our loved ones, shopping and traveling freely, and visiting our precious elderly family members in person — not waving through a window.

The pandemic has awakened our hunger for what is real, meaningful, and eternal. **The gift of hope springs from our hunger.** We become open enough to anticipate the coming of the Savior who feeds us — heals us — liberates us. From there, we grow in appreciation and joy.

Without the edge of hunger, we tend to lose our sense of hope and expectation for a deeper and more abundant life. Advent calls us to listen, to be in touch with our own hungers, as well as the cries of our brothers and sisters who live with chronic hunger. St. Vincent de Paul's heart was awakened to Christ in the pain and hungers of the poor.

The Vincentians of the Western Province are working hard to listen and respond to the hungers of the poor. Our pastors are feeding people and responding to their basic human needs during this pandemic. We are finding more effective ways to be present to them, seeing the person of Christ in each neighbor served. *You, dear friend, are with us in each of these encounters.*

Advent and Christmas 2020 are a promised moment of grace. Let us not forfeit the opportunity by closing our hearts to the hunger! May our deepest yearnings rather lead us to something more real, meaningful, and eternal. May we open ourselves to Christ without reserve, deepening our communion with our brothers and sisters who are poor.

Lord God, fill our hunger and emptiness; heal our wounds and pain.

Happy Advent and Merry Christmas!

Patrick J. McDevitt, C.M.
Provincial Superior

ADVENT REFLECTION

While We Are Waiting ...



Very Rev. Kevin P. Fausz, C.M., V.U.
Pastor: Holy Redeemer, Our Lady of Perpetual Help,
and St. Michael Catholic Churches, San Antonio

"Several months ago, I found myself singing an Advent song to myself! Here at Holy Redeemer (an African American Parish in San Antonio) it is a song we sing often during this season, but not in June. "While We are Waiting, Come" is a mere three short verses with a simple refrain:

Verse 1: While we are waiting come
Verse 2: With power and glory come
Verse 3: Come Savior, quickly come
Refrain: Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel,
while we are waiting come.

Why would I be singing this song?

I think the time we are in (which started during Lent) has seemed like an extended period of waiting! Our daily lives have been turned upside down. How we gathered as a parish community

ended. We were at home waiting..... and in the parish waiting! I felt like I was on retreat and had time to pray and meditate. **It was like a time of Advent waiting!**

The song brought me peace. It kept my eyes and thoughts on Jesus, our Emmanuel. It was he who would get us through. And that continues! It was comforting for me in a time of separation from parishioners, those in need, the homebound. And it brings me great comfort now.

I think ALL of us need to cry out, each in our own way ... *"While we are waiting, come! Come, bring healing, Come, bring comfort, Come to your people in their time of need. Come Savior Come!"*

Vincentian Family Honors Its Closest Partners in Mission

(continued from cover)

Recently approved affiliates include two DePaul University staff members, **Robert Janis** and **Jean Lenti-Ponsetto**; and

Carole Woodson, a 50-year employee at St. Mary's of the Barrens in Perryville, Missouri.

"Becoming an affiliate is a blessing," Carole said. "It's humbling to be selected to join people who are so giving and devoted to helping others."

Mission Moments & Vincentian Reflections

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Fr. Derek Swanson, C.M.

Vocations Director

Recently I spoke with a candidate ... he had been swept away in a hurricane last year and survived for a little over a week on his own. It reminded me of how God is truly with us in difficult circumstances, and how perseverance and not giving up are very important, even when we cannot see an end to the present circumstances. I was so impressed with how this man was resilient and how his faith life deepened through this experience.”



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Fr. Jay Jung, C.M.

Pastor: St. Jude Catholic Church in Tuba City and Our Lady of Guadalupe in Kayenta, Arizona

The first two months [of the pandemic] were devastating to the Navajos; our numbers of confirmed deaths were some of the highest within the U.S. Because the Navajo Nation has instituted a 57-hour lockdown curfew every weekend, we are able to celebrate Eucharist just two evenings a week in Tuba City and one weekday evening in Kayenta ... with so many ministries and programs suspended, *our presence is our link to the love of Jesus Christ which we share with our people on the western edge of the Navajo Nation.* Our people realize we have remained with them and not abandoned them as many have done in the past. It is the surest of signs that we're all in this together as one.”



“

Fr. Paul Sisul, C.M.

computer science professor at DePaul University



I'm in my 25th year at DePaul. As you may guess, computer science students come from many countries, especially Asia, the Middle East, and, lately, from Hispanic backgrounds. If nothing else, it makes for an interesting roll call at the beginning of class. It's amazing how many times, when walking the campus (not so much recently thanks to Mr. Covid) I run into former students. And even in my minimal travels, I've happened upon students in various cities throughout the U.S. and beyond, who notice my DePaul hat or sweatshirt. Once three Russian women I passed at a Barnes & Noble recognized me and started up a conversation. I didn't remember their names but I pointed to one and said, "Your last name starts with a 'Z', right?". It was a lucky guess; I was right!"



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Jim Kistner

parishioner, St. Catherine Labouré, St. Louis

What gives me hope is seeing people reach out to each other more ... calling those who are shut-in or the elderly to see if they are okay ... In addition, while these have been tumultuous times, I also see diverse racial groups wanting to have open dialogue regarding racial equality. We just need more of it with mutual respect of each other's backgrounds and opinions so that progress can be made towards eliminating discrimination.”

“

Fr. Milton Ryan, C.M.

pastor of Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Dallas

I've been encouraged by the creative ways our Vincentian pastors have adapted their approaches to ministry during these months of isolation and quarantine. Social media's role as a tool for evangelization has become essential. I hope we can continue regular Zoom gatherings to support, encourage, and learn from one another. I think the more we meet, the better off we will be as individuals, priests, pastors, and confreres.”



Fathers Dick Benson, C.M., Toshio Sato, C.M., and Perry Henry, C.M.

These three priests are leading a province-wide effort to end the scourge of racism. They organized a three-day Conference in October which 80+ priests from around the country attended virtually. [Beyond Racism: A place at the table for everyone](#) generated wonderful energy surrounding the need to move beyond racism and how Vincentians can develop personal and communal strategies to help that happen.

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Sr. Germaine Price, D.C.

volunteer at St. Vincent de Paul Church "Lunch & Meals Window" in St. Louis

One evening a new man arrived after we had finished serving. I fixed him a plate that he took outside. I saw him look at the dinner, then close the box to bow his head and pray. Watching him showing his gratitude and faith in that way really moved me.

“People are grateful ... one man brought wildflowers he picked on his way over ... three gentlemen we serve go around the property picking up trash for us. Another will hand me a few dollars to give to someone who's struggling even more. This level of kindness gives me so much hope and has kept me smiling during this pandemic.”

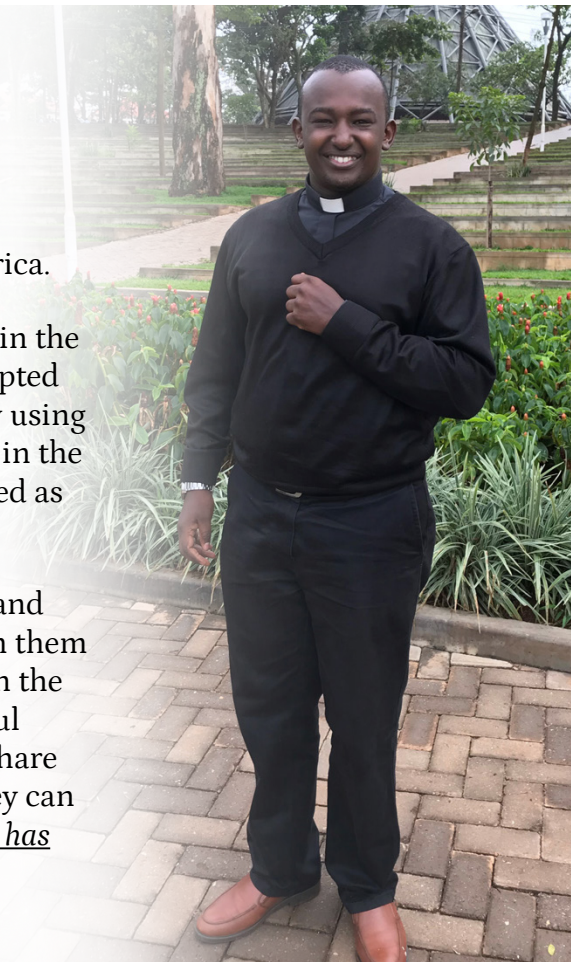


A Story of Hope and Help During Difficult Times

Recently, Fr. Edwin Mugwe, C.M., shared an update from Africa.

“I could never have imagined waking up to empty churches in the rural villages of Kenya. Covid-19’s closure of churches prompted me to devise new ways of reaching out to the poor especially using the media. There has been a toll-free call centre established in the Archdiocese of Nyeri to help people in distress. I was assigned as one of the virtual phone counselors.

I have answered numerous calls from people I haven’t seen and probably will never see in this life. Yet I have connected with them in ways I believe have been helpful. Giving hope to people on the phone and directing them to assistance has been a wonderful experience for me. I am amazed at how poor people would share with me their need for God and ask for guidance on how they can access spiritual and material assistance. The Covid pandemic has taught me to remain open to new ways of evangelization.”



In Remembrance



Reverend John Francis Clark, C.M.

December 24, 1941 – July 30, 2020

The elder of two sons, John Clark was born to John Ignatius Clark and Jeanette Theresa Augustyn on Christmas Eve in 1941 in Berwyn, Illinois. During his sixth-grade year at Holy Innocents school on Chicago’s north side, John began to think about becoming a priest.

He was admitted to the Novitiate at St. Mary’s Seminary in Perryville in the fall of 1960 and was ordained on May 23, 1970. He earned a bachelor’s degree in scholastic philosophy, and masters’ degrees in religious education and speech and communication.

During his 50 years with the Congregation of the Mission, Father John served as a parish priest, professor and spiritual advisor. His ministries called him from Perryville to Chicago ... Dallas ... Denver ... Los Angeles ... and for a brief time to Kenya.

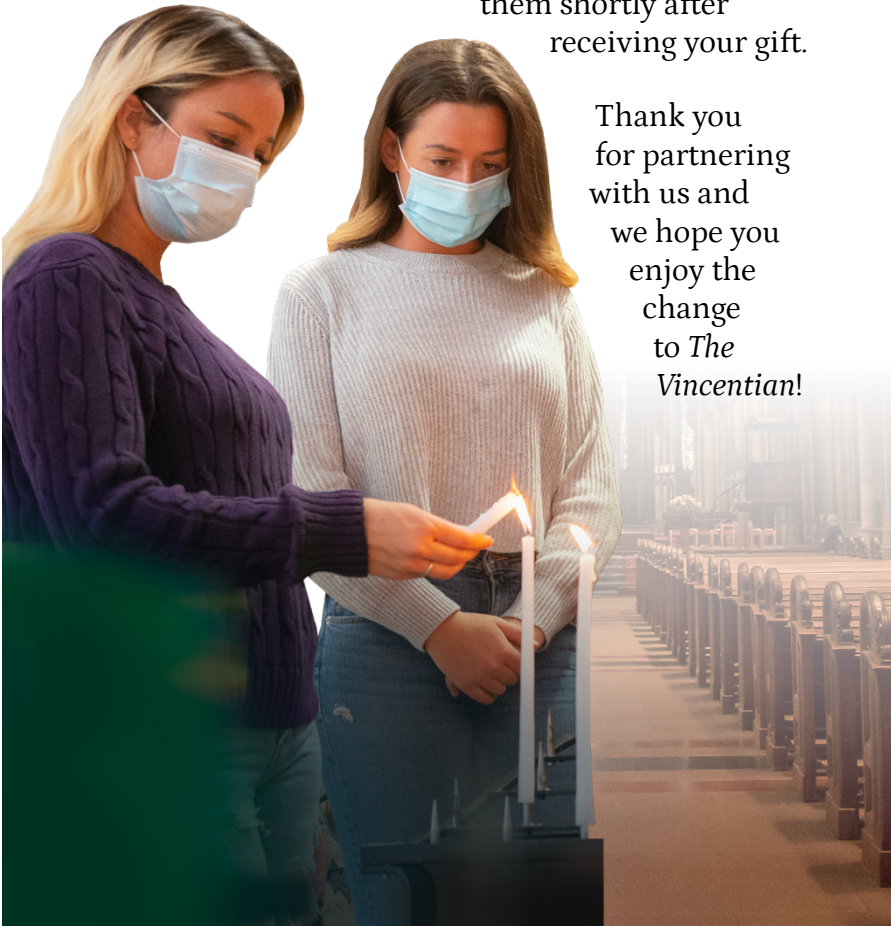
Father John bore chronic illness with grace and joy, always ready to serve others — whenever and wherever he was able.

Memorial and Tribute Donations Now Listed on Website

We are so appreciative of all donations that we receive, including those in memory and honor of your loved ones! Know that anytime you send a gift in honor of a Vincentian, he is notified of your generous gesture.

Because many donors and friends tell us they would like to hear more about the Vincentians and their mission, we have decided to “free up” some space here in *The Vincentian*. We will begin listing tribute donations on our website under the Province News tab. That will allow us to share more inspiring stories, quotes, and insights in these pages.

Remember, if you would like us to acknowledge other individuals/family members of your gift in their honor or memory, simply complete the reverse side of your reply slip. We will notify them shortly after receiving your gift.



Thank you for partnering with us and we hope you enjoy the change to *The Vincentian*!

Andrew Bellisario, C.M. was installed as Archbishop of the newly-merged Anchorage–Juneau Archdiocese on September 17, 2020. May God bless his ministry!



“Never Forget Our Mission”

(continued from cover)



... brought food thanks to grants offered to local restaurants.

For those unable to find shelter in a hotel, food service was available here at St. Joseph’s Rebuild Center. People lined up for breakfast and lunch, and were sent with a sandwich for later.

“Parish Masses had been canceled. But the week after Easter, on Mercy Sunday, homeless neighbors came and lined up, six feet apart, around the whole city block ... almost as if hugging our parish church! They were clinging to the mercy of Jesus. Many people remembered these most vulnerable and donated food and services. It was a sign that St. Vincent would have recognized as a call to *never forget our mission*, and to see Christ in those who are hungry, thirsty, sick and suffering, and all who depend on God for their daily bread.”



CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION
WESTERN PROVINCE

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ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

2020 WINTER NEWSLETTER

Learn more about the Congregation of the Mission Western Province, join us in prayer and offer your support. Visit us online at vincentian.org.

In a spirit of humility, we invite you ...

The priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Mission rely on our “Vincentian family” to fulfill our call to serve. **You can leave a legacy of love** with a future gift to benefit our ministries of prayer, evangelization, priestly formation, and service to the poor. Please call Jeanne Rudolph at (314) 373-8513.

- **Include us in your will or trust.**
Give a specific amount or leave a percentage of your estate.
- **Donate retirement plan assets.**
Designate “Congregation of the Mission Western Province” as a beneficiary.
- **Donate a life insurance policy.**
Donate the policy or name the Congregation of the Mission Western Province as the beneficiary.

Our Vincentians have been busy writing!



Fr. Ron Ramson, C.M. has authored *I, Frederic ...: Ozanam in his own words*.

Fr. Ron has long admired the 19th century layman who founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, noting his “rare combination of intellectual genius, sanctity, and love.” This imaginative “autobiography” delves into Ozanam’s life and family, spirituality, inspirations, and insights.



Provincial Fr. Pat McDevitt, C.M. has co-authored *Anchoring Cultural Change and Organizational Change: Case Study Research Evaluation Project All Hallows College Dublin 1995-2015 (Research on Religion and Education)*.

The book explores the confluence of leadership processes, decisions, and changes affecting the college throughout recent periods of confounding social and financial challenges.

