

# The Vincentian

2021 SPRING NEWSLETTER

## Kenya Region Grows

**Since establishing its Kenya region in 1981, Vincentian priests and brothers have ministered to thousands of the country's neediest people. It is possible thanks to generous assistance from friends and donors around the world.**

You have journeyed with us in training thousands of Kenyan diocesan priests, serving the sacramental needs of the poor, reaching out to the sick and needy, and preaching missions. You have helped build a carpentry training school. And you have empowered the mission entrusted to us by our founder, St. Vincent de Paul.

In 2020, Covid-19 led to even higher unemployment throughout the country's impoverished communities. More families are facing hunger, a shortage of healthcare, the resurgence of once-controlled diseases, and new forms of violence against women and refugees.

Father Tom Esselman C.M., came to Kenya in 2007 as a formator and seminary educator at DePaul Centre, the Vincentian seminary in Nairobi. "Amid these growing needs, it is edifying to witness the growth of our charism there: the vitality and talents of young Vincentians being put to the service of the poor. Every Tuesday our parish priests and brothers meet with neighbors in their homes. They encounter the poor, the sick, and the elderly, reaching out to them and caring for their needs in the spirit of St. Vincent.

"And we have just named the first Kenyan native, Fr. Edwin, Mugwe, C.M., as the new regional superior. It inspires me and gives me great hope."

In addition to its current 36 Vincentian priests and two brothers, the Province is supporting 28 men

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### Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Kinyako

are an elderly couple now enjoying the fruits of their kitchen garden thanks to your support for the Vincentians' Giathugu Agribusiness Project. Also called "Undugu (brotherhood) Farm," the program is improving the lives

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# Recommitting Ourselves to You ...



Dear Friends,

On January 25, the Church celebrated the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul.

That date also marked the anniversary of the founding of the Congregation of the Mission.

We celebrated amidst new beginnings – here in the U.S. with a new President and a new Regional Superior in Kenya. For the Vincentians, it was an important moment to reflect prayerfully on who we are, how we're answering our call to be missionary disciples, and what the future holds.

Given the hardships of 2020, it was a moment to **ask Almighty God for the grace to be changed and renewed** in our mission to fulfill the spiritual and material want of the poor we serve.

Hope and optimism abound across our Province!

Along its road to becoming a Vice Province, the Kenya Region elected the first native Regional Superior, Fr. Edwin Mugwe, C.M. We pledge our prayers and support for Fr. Edwin and owe a great debt of gratitude to Fr. Gary Mueller, C.M. for his years of caring leadership and service to the Kenyan people.

There is likewise great optimism here at home, particularly with the stateside Provincial Office move to Forest Park Avenue near St. Louis University planned for this spring. Relocating opens a new chapter in the history of the Province. From the heart of St. Louis City, the Vincentians will nurture new relationships and mission partnerships, especially with Aquinas Institute, restoring our renewed presence in the Archdiocese of St. Louis for the communities we serve.

We're also at work on new strategies for vocation recruitment and formation to ensure a vibrant future for the Congregation.

Amidst these changes for the Vincentians, and those that may be happening in your own family life or career in 2021, let us remind ourselves daily – it is our interior renewal, our journey toward Christ, that means most of all. I pray that each of us remains open to conversion and renewed hope and optimism as together we continue our overarching mission to serve those in greatest need, whenever and wherever we meet them.

Sincerely in Vincent DePaul,

*Patrick McDevitt*

Reverend Patrick McDevitt, C.M.  
Provincial Superior

"Our journey  
toward Christ  
means most  
of all."

## Kenya Region Grows

(continued from cover)

in formation at DePaul Centre – the seminary in Nairobi.

In the near future, the Western Province's Kenya "region" will graduate to a "vice-province" – the final stage of maturation on its way to being named a full-fledged province within the international community.

**The Vincentians' work – and the Kenyans' needs – continue.** "Too many families remain in desperate straits," Fr. Tom says. "We are grateful to our donors for enabling us to support neighbors in the Kibera slums with food and medical supplies to see them through. That support has a ripple effect, with people sharing what little they have left so their neighbors can have something to eat. Even if they've never heard of Vincent de Paul, his spirit is alive and working in Kenya. And it is our donors who help make this happen. The great ministry in Kenya will bear fruit for many years to come."



## Your Generosity Supports Vincentians and Devotion to Mary

For nearly 200 years, the Vincentians and Daughters of Charity have been entrusted with perpetuating devotion to our Blessed Mother under her title "Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal." Gifts from generous donors support our priests and brothers involved in the Association of the Miraculous Medal (AMM) in Perryville, Missouri.

Currently, **Father Kevin McCracken, C.M.**, serves as AMM's spiritual director. Father Kevin leads prayers and Masses benefiting members' spiritual needs throughout the year. Members often share their witness to God's goodness following Mary's intercession ...

Dear Father,

*My brother suffers with alcoholism. I gave him a Miraculous Medal to wear, which he did put on. One week later, my brother decided it was time to go to rehab. He is currently a few weeks into his recovery journey and everything is looking up for him. I truly believe our Lady is helping my brother. Glory be to God Almighty.*



Reverend Edwin I. Mugwe, C.M., Regional Superior

Born February 11, 1985, Father Edwin has been confirmed as the first Kenyan to serve as Regional Superior. He was raised in the highlands of the Aberdares in Nyandarua County, Kenya. Father Edwin entered the Vincentian formation program at DePaul Centre in 2007 and was ordained May 28, 2016. Prior to his installation in late January, Father Edwin served as pastor of St. Vincent's Parish, Giathugu in the Archdiocese of Nyeri.

As he assumes this important leadership role for the burgeoning Region, please pray for Father Edwin, his fellow Vincentian priests and brothers, and God's people being served through them.



# Vincentians Reflect on Mission

## Building Tomorrow's Church

Fr. Derek Swanson, C.M.,  
vocation director, writes:

***A common misconception about Catholic vocations in the U.S. is that there are none.***

In fact, monthly I receive five to six inquiries into the Vincentian community from men 18-45 years of age seeking to go where they believe God may be calling them. Did you know that the biggest factor in someone considering ordained or religious life is simply being asked by others to think about becoming a priest, brother, or sister?

Currently I am journeying with eight men who are discerning a call to the Congregation of the Mission, Western Province (Vincentians). All were asked by someone to consider being a priest or brother.

In San Antonio, **Fr. Kevin Fausz, C.M.** is in contact with two men who are seriously considering joining the Vincentians. They see in Fr. Kevin a good example of how Vincentians treat all people with dignity as they accompany communities of color at Holy Redeemer, St. Michael's, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic parishes.

Through DePaul University and a local parish in Chicago, another young man is in close contact with **Fr. Jeremy Dixon, C.M.** and **Fr. Chris Robinson, C.M.** about being called to serve Christ in others as a Vincentian.

Building up God's kingdom on earth is up to all of us. Know someone who may have qualities of being a good priest, brother, or sister? Ask them to consider if God is calling them to ordained or religious life, perhaps as a Vincentian or Daughter/Sister of Charity. Together, we can sustain the Church on earth and further the mission of St. Vincent de Paul.



## Pastors Share Challenges of Navigating the Storm

Fr. Anthony J. Dosen, C.M.,  
Mission Office, writes:

Recently, Vincentian pastors across Western Province parishes met virtually to discuss their common struggles with the pandemic's impact on their congregations.

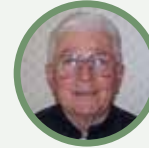
While their parishes vary greatly in size, geography, socioeconomic and cultural makeup, numerous hardships seemed to ring true with nearly all. One pastor spoke of the difficulties of having to be the "mask police" and the social distancing supervisor. Another talked of the heart-wrenching responsibility to tell families that funeral attendance for their loved ones was strictly limited.

Beyond these situational concerns, the pastors wondered about parishioners' spiritual well-being. How were they managing when unable to receive the Eucharist? How would we rebuild that close sense of parish family after the crisis subsided? One pastor was especially concerned, given that all public services remained shut down and there is no internet service in his rural area to keep in touch with parishioners. Others ask, how many will simply stop coming to Mass?

Please pray for our pastors and their parishioners. May our "captains" steer their ship ably amidst the storms that toss their vibrant Catholic parishes to and fro. May their "passengers" remain strong and faithful, clinging to Jesus as their unending life preserver in these very trying times.



# In Remembrance



**Father Walter J. Reisinger, C.M.**  
*February 4, 1929 – November 14, 2020*

Fr. Walter (Wally) Reisinger, C.M. was born in St. Louis, the second of three children of Nicholas and Reabel Reisinger. His Catholic upbringing during the Great Depression influenced his life's work to serve others. Following attendance at Catholic grade and high schools, he entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1946 and was ordained in St. Louis on May 29, 1959 by Bishop Leo Byrne.

Fr. Wally's early ministry was in teaching, including serving as a math and science professor at St. Mary of the Barrens Seminary. From 1972-2013, Fr. Wally served as an associate, then pastor, at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Perryville and as pastor at St. Theresa Church in Dixon, MO. He loved fishing and beautifying the seminary grounds. In earlier years, Fr. Wally could be seen collecting black walnuts there, which he would sell and give the money to the poor.

Fr. Wally spent his final years as an Apostle of Prayer, interceding for the Congregation's mission and benefactors. At every turn, his life echoed the prophet Isaiah's words: "Here I am. Send me."

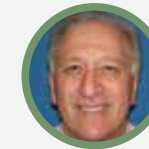


**Father R. Stafford Poole, C.M.**  
*March 6, 1930 - November 1, 2020*

Fr. Richard Stafford Poole, C.M. was born in North Hollywood to Joseph Poole and Beatrice Smith. Stafford entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1947 and was ordained to the priesthood on May 27, 1956. In 1961, Fr. Stafford earned a (Ph.D.) in U.S. and Mexican History.

That focus was to be his life's work, as he contributed greatly to the body of knowledge on the history of Catholicism in Latin America and the U.S.

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**Brother John Mangogna, C.M.**  
*January 20, 1946 – November 12, 2020*

Brother John Mangogna, C.M. was born in St. Louis, one of seven children of Costenzio Mangogna and Santa Sima. During his early education in Catholic schools, John discerned a vocation to the Vincentians, entering the novitiate in early 1967 and making final vows on September 27, 1972.

Brother John's early years in the community were a time of discovering his unique apostolate in the community. In time, a farm apostolate on the grounds of St. Mary of the Barrens took shape. This proved to be a 48-year ministry to tend to God's creation and its creatures, to provide food for the local community, and to protect the earth for future generations. When after decades the farm operation downsized, Brother John helped transition the land as a haven for monarch butterflies.

Despite contending with various infirmities throughout recent years, Brother John continued to serve wherever he was needed around the Vincentian grounds and house. In the fall of 2020, he received with grace and peace a diagnosis of cancer, succumbing to its effects after a few short months.

Please use the enclosed envelope if you would like to make a donation in honor or memory of a Vincentian priest or brother, living or deceased.



HEALING, FRATERNITY, RENEWAL:  
Our Life of Love

St. Vincent said, “Our vocation is to go all over the world; and do what? To set people’s hearts on fire, to do what the Son of God did. He came to set the world on fire in order to inflame it with His love.”

Father Patrick McDevitt, C.M., Provincial Superior of the Western Province, has called our priests and brothers to **healing, fraternity** and **renewal**. These themes echo key messages of our Holy Father’s papacy – Pope Francis’s call is of course not just for religious men and women, but for all people.

Healing

Let us root our daily encounters in healing and mercy. Let us accompany others on their pilgrimages of life that we can grow together.

Francis says, “I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else.”

*How do we heal others’ wounds with the salve of God’s loving mercy?*

Fraternity

Vincent called us to live together as brothers; Jesus called us all to a common fellowship. How do we see that the common good is more important than my interests?

Francis says, “Solidarity is more than acts of generosity, important as they are; it is the call to embrace the reality that we are bound by bonds of reciprocity. On this solid foundation we can build a better, different, human future.”

*What are our dreams for a better future together?*

Renewal

We are called to be open to the new possibilities that the Spirit is opening for us. Renewal, along with healing and fraternity, is not simply internal. It focuses on the other, so that my neighbor may grow as I grow.

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Who’s Writing:  
Father Lennoxie  
Lusabe, C.M.

*Participative Structures in the AMECEA*

Author **Fr. Lennoxie N. Lusabe, C.M.** teaches and researches in the area of canon law in the Department of Canon Law, Tangaza University College, and in the Institute of Canon Law, Catholic University of Eastern Africa. His teaching and research interests also include Christian ethics and civil law.

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of 850 families who received training in sustainable farming techniques to provide food for residents of two very poor Kenyan villages. The cultivated ground supports 625 coffee trees, 435 mango trees, and a host of fresh produce plantings.

The couple received a supply of seedlings and the education they needed to nurture plantings and realize a yield. Since the first signs of the earliest life-giving buds, neighbors have visited the couple to seek advice on beginning their own kitchen gardens.



“

I’ve witnessed the Vincentian work ethic for many decades.

I admire their “can do” spirit and their ability to “get the job done.” From the priests’ and brothers’ inner-city work with the poor (and the poor in spirit) to their uplifting efforts in the slums of Kenya, I continue to support them to the best of my ability, so they can continue their selfless work! I am grateful for all they do.”

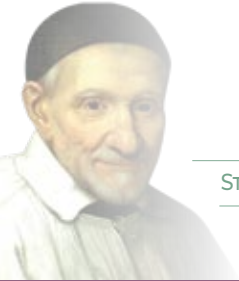
*Peg McBride has a tradition of supporting the Congregation of the Mission Western Province.*





CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION  
WESTERN PROVINCE

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ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

## 2021 SPRING 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](http://vincentian.org).



## THE 2021 CHARITABLE CARES ACT Charitable Deduction Extension

There has been an extension and an increase of the universal charitable deduction for cash gifts in calendar year 2021. **The new deduction is \$300 for single filers and \$600 for married couples filing jointly.** This is available to taxpayers who take the standard deduction. This tax incentive is available for cash gifts to qualified charities (but not to supporting organizations or donor advised funds).

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Included in his research and writing ministry were 14 books, 23 publications in Anthologies and Encyclopedias, 62 journal articles, as well as some unpublished studies on Vincentian themes and numerous book reviews.

Fr. Stafford was also a much-beloved teacher, dean, and a wise and witty seminary rector. He spent his leisure time making and repairing clocks.

During his retirement, Fr. Stafford encouraged other confreres to take up the critical history of the Vincentians. He pursued academic research until his health no longer made that possible.

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Francis says: “An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast.”

*How do we renew ourselves? How do we renew our church? How do we renew our world?*