

# The Vincentian

2021 WINTER NEWSLETTER

## Spreading the Mission

### Young People Living the Vincentian Charism

While the recruitment and formation of new Vincentian priests and brothers is a vital work today, so is the mission of encouraging young people to take up the work of serving the poor.

Today, youth volunteer groups like the Colorado Vincentian Volunteers and the Vincentian Marian Youth—SEMO are leaving a lasting impression by developing new and creative ways of serving the poor in the Vincentian tradition.

Fr. Derek Swanson, C.M., vocation director for the Province, has seen this youthful creativity first-hand. Fr. Derek recently joined the latest cohort of Colorado Vincentian Volunteers as they began their year of service this past August. He helped orient the new group of volunteers and has returned to celebrate the Eucharist and offer spiritual guidance this year.

The Colorado Vincentian Volunteers (CVV), located in Denver, is a yearlong volunteer program where young adults age 22-30 live in intentional community, serve those on the margins through a variety of nonprofit organizations, and reflect on how they are transformed through this experience from the perspective of the Vincentian charism. The program is directed by Haley Todd, herself a former volunteer. CVV was founded in 1993 by Bill and Mary Frances Jaster in collaboration with the Vincentians of the Western Province, who continue to sponsor the program.

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The 2021-22 class and staff of the  
Colorado Vincentian Volunteers



# Advent: A Time of Renaissance



The last couple of years have been unprecedented in our lives with the pandemic, social and racial unrest, economic uncertainties, and challenges to our mental and spiritual well-being. The struggles of our recent past and present make us yearn for more peaceful and tranquil times. As we enter into the Advent and Christmas seasons, the Church invites us to open ourselves to the grace of rebirth, renewal, and transformation—a time of liturgical renaissance.

The distinguishing attributes of a redeemed people are faith, hope, and love in the midst of darkness, uncertainty, and despair. A renaissance spirit surges and teems with an abundance of God's goodness and beauty. The radiance of God is most vividly seen and experienced in contrast to the blindness of darkness. We have no need to fear the darkness. The light of Christ overcomes the darkness and transforms everything to renewed life.

Advent is a time of preparation to ready the soil of our spirit for the renaissance to come in the person of Jesus Christ. Let this holy season of Advent plow the hard and rocky soil of our souls. It is time to brush aside the old and the lifeless elements of these past years. As Christians, we are people of renaissance—a people of rebirth.

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for the renaissance to come in the person of Jesus Christ.**

Pope Francis is calling the universal Church to synodality—the journey of listening and discernment for the sake of leading us to renewed commitment as missionary disciples. The Holy Father is urging us to be a Renaissance Church for serving the hopes, dreams, and needs of our time and for future generations. The Advent and Christmas season is the ideal moment of grace for us to embrace this sacred call to be reborn in the life and spirit of our Messiah.

The Western Province of the Congregation of the Mission is now intentionally and actively entering into a time of renaissance with our Vincentian charism and mission. We are responding to the call of synodality with prayer, dialogue, and discernment regarding our apostolic mission in the future. In the past year, we have clearly identified our apostolic priorities of 1) mission effectiveness, 2) lifelong formation, and 3) the establishment of the vice province of Kenya. We are now entering into deeper conversations with one another and our partners and collaborators with actions for accomplishing our provincial priorities. It is our goal to have discerned a five-year Apostolic Plan by the summer of 2022. I ask for your prayers as the province strives for a Renaissance of our Vincentian charism and mission.

You can be assured of my prayers for an Advent and Christmas renaissance for you and your family.

Sincerely in Christ Jesus,

Fr. Patrick McDevitt, C.M.  
Provincial, Congregation of the Mission Western Province





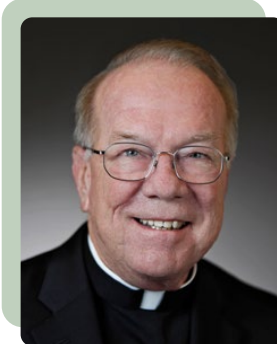
## Bro. Mark Elder, C.M., Near End of Mural Project

Bro. Mark Elder, C.M., who has taught art at DePaul University in Chicago for 28 years, is near the final stages of his six-year public art project, “The Story of the Little School Under the ‘L.’” A visual history of DePaul’s 125-year history, the project consists of a series of murals on the support columns of the parking area under the train tracks.

Bro. Mark now has completed 21 of the 25 pieces, all of which have been produced in the mural class that he teaches. This year, the completed pillars celebrate DePaul’s military veterans, the Daughters of Charity, and diversity. The dedication for these and other pillars will be in the spring of 2022.



## Fr. Michael Joyce, C.M., Receives Canon Law Award



Fr. Michael Joyce, C.M., recently received the Canon Law Society of America’s Role of Law Award at its convention in San Diego in early October.

The distinguished award is given to “an individual considered to be outstanding in the field of canonical science.” The Board selects a person “who demonstrates a pastoral attitude and a commitment to research and study; who participates in the development of law; who is willing to respond to needs or practical assistance; who facilitates dialogue and the interchange of ideas within the Society and with other groups.”

Fr. Joyce spoke on the theme of synodality in his acceptance remarks.

“It requires ‘full, active, and conscious participation’ in the mission of the Church and an attitude of co-responsibility among all the baptized,” he said.

Currently based in St. Louis, Fr. Joyce has a doctorate in canon law from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He serves as prosecuting attorney for the Archdiocese of St. Louis and the Diocese of Springfield/Cape Girardeau. He also serves as a canonical consultant for both dioceses.



# ‘What did I do to deserve all that I have?’

## One man’s life-changing mission trip leads to gratitude, generosity

When 26-year-old Brendan Manna was invited to make a mission trip to Kenya in 2018, he hesitated.

“I told my friend Matt I wasn’t too interested,” he recalls. “When Matt said he’d go in my place, I thought that might make me look bad. We both went!”

The friends joined a group in a two-week trip that Brendan says changed him for the better.

“I realized the day-to-day stuff I worry about in my life is nothing compared with what they deal with. I used to get mad if my computer was running slow. But the people there, they don’t know where their next meal is coming from. And yet, they’re incredibly happy — ten times happier than any person I know living in the U.S.!”

Brendan remembers George, their day-to-day Kenyan guide. George worked odd jobs seemingly nonstop to support his family.

“He was the nicest, happiest human being you could ever meet,” Brendan says. “You wouldn’t think anything in his life was difficult.”

It made him wonder, “*What did I do to deserve all that I have?*”

Brendan is grateful for his new perspective on things. He also learned a great deal about the Vincentians.

“The priests and brothers and seminarians in Kenya — they are very engaged in the lives of families,” he says. “It’s like they’re friends — very close with the community — and they worked right alongside us in the homes and schools.”

Following his return home, Brendan began a yearly tradition of directing a gift for the Vincentians’ mission in Kenya. “It’s the absolute least I can do ... and I’ll give forever, as long as the mission stays intact. I saw firsthand what they need, and I know how my gifts help.”

“What happened to me in Kenya will stay with me forever,” Brendan says.



“

## Our service in Kenya included building a wooden dwelling for a family living in a mud hut with dirt floors.

We also painted and spruced up two schools run by the Congregation of the Mission. Seeing that nursery school, even though it was very modest, everything was structured. The kids wore uniforms and sat at desks and got meals. Later, we went with one little girl to meet her family in the Kibera slum, and that was eye-opening. Six people lived in a hut about as big as my living room. We walked through thick mud and garbage and dirty water to get there. Four people had to sleep in one bed; two others slept on a rug on the floor. There was one light bulb, but no other power. We asked what happened if it rains at night. We learned the kids on the floor then stand up. They sleep standing up.”

—Brendan Manna



(continued from cover)

In any given year, the program invites up to 20 participants. In 2019, CVV celebrated its 25th anniversary and today has over 370 alumni.

"A lot of the CVV alumni continue to do work with the most vulnerable after leaving the program," Fr. Swanson said. "I find this pretty inspiring."

The Vincentian Marian Youth is an international organization, and its Southeast Missouri chapter was founded in 2003 by Shirley Klump and Cathy Peirick in Ste. Genevieve, Mo. When it began, the organization had seven students in one location; it has since expanded to local parishes and now has 45 students in junior high and high school who meet weekly for mass and service events. Executive Director Mike Giasi calls that "putting faith into action." Fr. Ron Hoye, C.M., was the group's first ordained advisor. More recently, Fr. Rich Wehrmeyer, C.M., served in that role.

"VMY centers on the Vincentian charism of ministering to people in need," Giasi said.

"We do quarterly service projects and an annual mission trip, Operation Overhaul. This year, it was to Cedar Rapids, where we did roofing, siding, trash pick-up, and yard work."

The group operates a thrift shop, Laboure Exchange, in Ste. Genevieve, which helps fund its activities, and it operates a voucher program for families in need for clothing, furniture, housing, and other items. Last year, the program helped more than 400 voucher recipients.

"If we can help students be closer to Christ, grow in faith, and live like St. Vincent, St. Catherine Laboure, and St. Louise de Marillac," Giasi said, "we can inspire the future of the Vincentian charism."

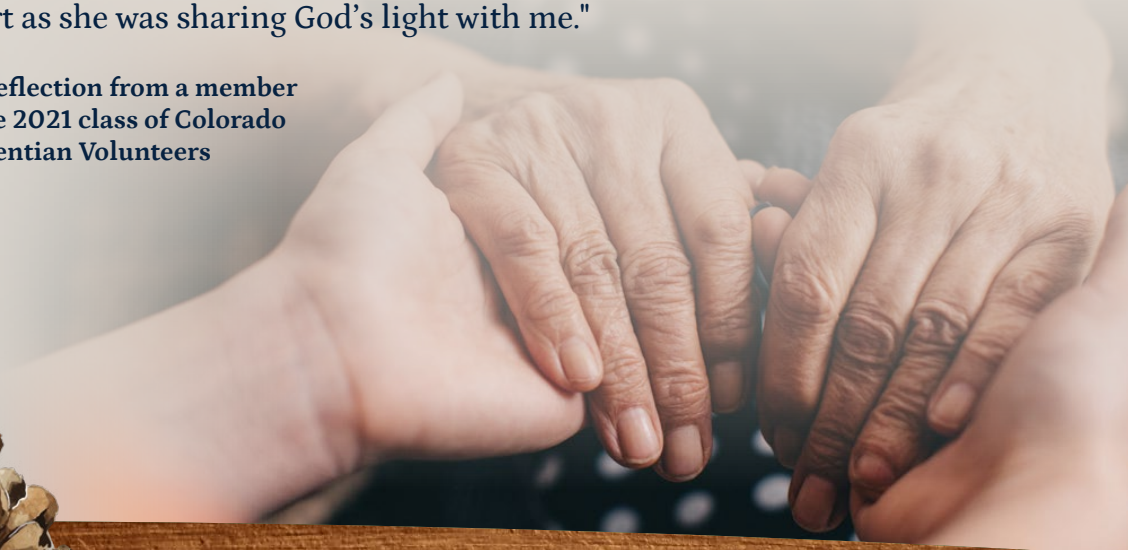
For more information about the Colorado Vincentian Volunteers, visit [www.covivo.org](http://www.covivo.org), and for more information about the VMY-SEMO, visit [www.vmysemo.org](http://www.vmysemo.org).



**For the first time in my life I asked someone if I could pray for them,**

an elderly woman who was fleeing an abusive relationship, thinking I would do it in my evening prayers. She bowed her head ready to pray. I was surprised, and began to pray for her out loud. When I finished, she began to pray in gratitude for all the amazing women she had met and had shared their light with her, including me. In that moment I felt God's presence so strongly in my heart as she was sharing God's light with me."

—A reflection from a member  
of the 2021 class of Colorado  
Vincentian Volunteers





## Mass of Remembrance Held on All Souls' Day

On a sunny and cool Tuesday, Nov. 2, All Souls' Day, the Congregation of the Mission celebrated a Mass of Remembrance at the Apostles of Charity Residence in Perryville, MO, for eight priests and brothers who died during the portion of the Covid-19 pandemic when in-person services were not possible.



Celebrated by Rev. Patrick McDevitt, C.M., Provincial Superior of the Western Province, the mass memorialized Rev. John Francis Clark, C.M.; Rev. Thomas A. Grace, C.M.; Rev. Robert J. Jones, C.M.; Rev. Nicholas Kaloki, C.M.; Bro. John J. Mangogna, C.M.; Rev. R. Stafford Poole, C.M.; Rev. Walter L. Reisinger, C.M.; and Rev. Daniel R. Schulte, C.M.

Family members of the men were invited to participate in person, and the service was also streamed live on the St. Mary's of the Barrens Facebook page, where it is available for viewing. After the mass in the chapel, a brief ceremony was held in the St. Mary's of the Barrens cemetery, followed by a luncheon.



## An Advent Reflection



Advent means “coming,” or “presence” among us. Unlike the arrival of the king or the emperor to a province in the past, it means for us Catholics two things: the coming of the Lord incarnate and His glorious return at the end of time. Our paradoxical Catholic faith, full of hope in the suffering Christ on the cross, reveals the real presence of Jesus among us while we anticipate His final coming.

Yes, 5G internet connects us 24/7 with the world; yet it leaves our relationships opaque at best. COVID forced us to prioritize our time and relations, hopefully, to God, first of all. In Advent we keep preparing together for our encounter with Jesus with hope-filled anticipation—hope because we leap for joy at His coming, and anticipation because God fulfills his promise, whether we live in the Midwest, Alaska, Kenya, Italy, or even Bolivia!

The divinization of our human dignity becomes complete when the Incarnate God fills this gap through our conversion to him. We Vincentians make the new evangelization to the poor authentic and real in every moment as we live this season of Advent waiting. Blessed Advent!

—Fr. Toshio Sato, C.M.  
Bolivia





## Fr. Ron Ramson, C.M., Publishes Book on Mary

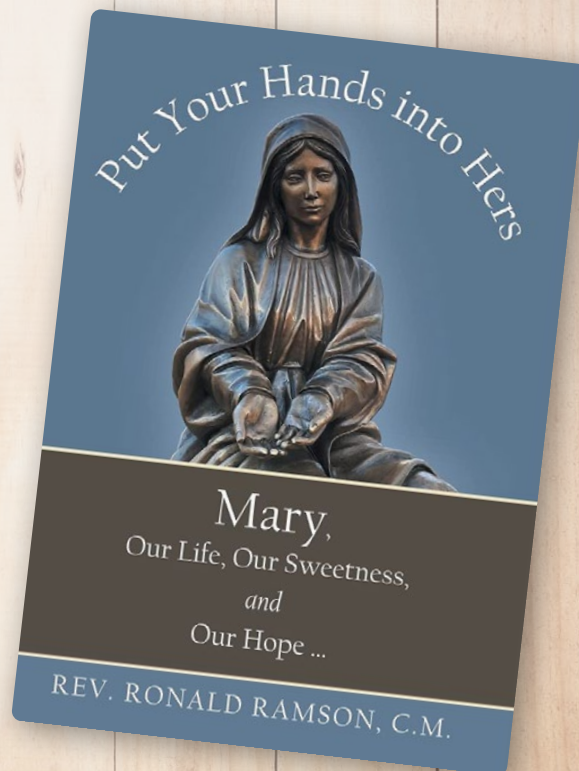


Fr. Ron Ramson, C.M., has released a new book, *Put Your Hands into Hers: Mary, Our Life, Our Sweetness, and Our Hope*. Published through Archway Publishing, the book is Fr. Ron's second this year. The other, *I Frederic*, is an "autobiography" of Blessed

Frederic Ozanam, the 19th century French founder of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Fr. Ron has written four books and co-authored another.

*Put Your Hands into Hers* invites the reader to know Mary, mother of Jesus, as a refuge and source of hope in our lives. The book takes an in-depth look at Mary, including snippets from Fr. Ramson's life, offering interesting, informative, and inspirational insight into the human side of the mother of Jesus.

The book is available in hardback and paperback at various book retailer, including Amazon.com and at the Barnes and Noble website. More information on the book is available at [www.ronaldwramson.com](http://www.ronaldwramson.com).



## New Truck for DePaul Woodworking

Bro. Jim Donlevy, C.M., and the students of DePaul Woodworking pose in the photo at left with the program's newly purchased 2014 Ford Ranger pick-up truck, which was bought with funds raised by our Vincentian parishes. The truck helps facilitate deliveries and other duties for the program.





**CONGREGATION**  
*of the* **MISSION**

THE VINCENTIANS  
WESTERN PROVINCE

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ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

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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).



## Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration

The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 12 is a very appropriate date during Advent to prepare ourselves for the birth of Christ. Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patron of the Americas, north and south.

On Dec. 9 and 12, 1531, the Blessed Mother appeared on Tepeyac Hill in Mexico City to San Juan Diego, an Indian who was baptized by Spanish missionaries. She left behind on his serape her image, signifying for the Americas the coming of the Son of God to the new world. This appearance has since been seen as a sign of hope and expectation and a symbol of liberation throughout the Americas.

At the end of October, I gave a retreat to a community of Hispanic Catholics at Our Lady of Guadalupe Cathedral Parish in Anchorage, Alaska. These immigrants, who went to Alaska to work, carried the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe to the furthest point in North America.

I often ask myself what motivates so many Hispanic people to have an unconditional trust and love for this image that was imprinted in Juan Diego's serape by the Blessed Mother?

I suppose most Hispanics devoted to Our Lady of Guadalupe see the Blessed Mother depicted as a brown Indian woman clothed in all the beautiful colors of the Indian tradition and know that she wanted to identify herself as one of them.

—**Rev. Prudencio Rodriguez de Yurre, C.M.**

Associate Spiritual Director for the Association of the Miraculous Medal  
Los Angeles, CA

[www.vincentian.org](http://www.vincentian.org)