

The Vincentian

2022 SPRING NEWSLETTER



Growing Step by Step

Fr. Ray Van Dorpe, C.M.

In 1816, a small band of Italian Vincentians left on a missionary journey to start a seminary on the sparsely inhabited land of eastern Missouri. From those humble beginnings in Perryville, the Vincentians grew in numbers and spread out across the United States, founding seminaries, preaching missions, and administering the sacraments.

In 1980, a small band of American Vincentians left on a missionary journey to start a seminary on the sparsely inhabited land of northern Kenya. From those humble beginnings in the town of Maralal, the Vincentians grew in numbers and spread out across Kenya, teaching in seminaries, preaching missions, and administering the sacraments. History was repeating itself.

In 2014, the Vincentians in Kenya took an important step forward, moving from the status of being a mission of the Western Province to becoming a “region” – a recognition that the work of the priests and brothers would continue to grow.

This past November, the Vincentians in Kenya, led by their regional superior, Father Edwin Mugwe, C.M., and Provincial Superior Father Patrick McDevitt, C.M., took yet another step forward and petitioned the superior general to elevate the Vincentians in Kenya to the status of “vice-province.” As of this writing, the confreres are waiting to hear the final decision.

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Dear Friends,

Tumshukuru Mungu! (In Kiswahili, “Let us give thanks to God!”)
In the midst of these difficult wintery days in the United States and the continued challenges of the global pandemic, we see signs of NEW BEGINNINGS. The new Provincial Office and new partnerships have imbued a new beginning for the mission of the Western Province. *Tumshukuru Mungu!*

There is great joy with many new beginnings in the Region of Kenya. Earlier this year, three of our seminarians took vows. The DePaul Woodworking Program in Nairobi graduated another class of skilled artisans. Moreover, there is much anticipation for the establishment of the new Vice Province of Kenya. *Tumshukuru Mungu!*

As we make the Lenten journey toward Easter, we anticipate with hope New Beginnings for ourselves, our families and communities, and for our world. *Tumshukuru Mungu!*

Sincerely in St. Vincent de Paul,

Patrick McDevitt

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



Seminarians Alex Odie Otieno, C.M., Anthony Kioko Muthoka, C.M., and Allan Kamugisha, C.M., took their vows during a mass on Jan. 15 at DePaul Center in Nairobi. (See story on page 4)

Archbishop Blesses New Provincial Office at Dedication

On Dec. 4, 2021, St. Louis Archbishop Mitchell Rozanski celebrated a Rite of Blessing for the new Provincial Office in Midtown St. Louis.



Fr. Patrick McDevitt, C.M., addresses the audience.

A dedication followed with speakers that included Fr. Patrick McDevitt, C.M., Provincial Superior of the Western Province; Fr. Mark Wedig, O.P., President of Aquinas Institute of Theology; Sr. Catherine Norris, D.C., Visitatrix for the

Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise; Fr. Steve Grozio, C.M., Superior of the Eastern Province; Don Fulford, President and CEO of the Association of the Miraculous Medal; and Dr. A. Gabriel Esteban, President of DePaul University.



Dr. Gabriel Esteban



Sr. Catherine Norris, D.C.

“Thank you for returning to your roots,” Sr. Catherine stated in her remarks. “The Vincentians have remembered and rediscovered where they came from. They came from the city, here in St. Louis, not too far down the road at the Old Cathedral. That’s where it all began, and you’re back.”

The province office moved to its current location in the summer after 25 years in the western suburbs of St. Louis.



St. Louis Archbishop Mitchell Rozanski celebrated a Rite of Blessing for the office.

Three Take Vows in Kenyan Ceremony

Vincentian seminarians Alex Odie Otieno, C.M., Allan Kamugisha, C.M., and Anthony Kioko Muthoka, C.M., took vows at a ceremony on Jan. 15, 2022, to commit themselves to the Congregation of the Mission. The ceremony took place at DePaul Centre in Nairobi, Kenya, and was presided over by Regional Superior Rev. Fr. Edwin Mugwe, C.M., and assisted by the Rector of DePaul Seminary, Rev. Ignatius Mukanzi, C.M.

“We thank the Lord of the Harvest for adding three more laborers into his vineyard,” Fr. Mugwe said.

Alex Odie Otieno, C.M.

Alex Odie was born on May 12, 1993. Alex is the third of six children in his family, and his parents are Johnson Odada Njara and Gladys Achieng. Alex was baptized at St. Philip’s Mukomari parish in the Diocese of Kakamega in western Kenya.

As a seminarian in the Congregation of the Mission, he is attending Tangaza University College.

Alex’s acquaintances know him as a hardworking student. He wants to use his talents in teaching and formation work in diocesan seminaries and as a clinical officer. His hobbies are soccer and the preservation of the environment.

Allan Kamugisha, C.M.

Allan was born on Jan. 5, 1988, and is one of two children in his family. Allan’s parents are Katushabe Levi and the late Kasemire Oliver. Allan was baptized at Bujumbura Cathedral parish in Hoima Diocese in Uganda.

He is currently studying at Tangaza University College and is committed to his academics.

He wants to use his talents in teaching and doing formation work in diocesan seminaries. His hobbies are soccer and music.

Anthony Kioko Muthoka, C.M.

Anthony Kioko was born on July 20, 1990, and is the fifth of eight children in his family. His parents are Michael Muthoka and Maria Goretti Wayua. Anthony was baptized at Mbitini parish, in the Diocese of Machakos in eastern Kenya.

Like Alex and Allan, he is in his III Theology class at Tangaza University College and works hard in his classes.

Anthony wants to use his talents in preaching popular missions and formation work in the diocesan seminary. His hobbies are music and gardening.



(from left) Alex Odie Otieno, C.M., Anthony Kioko Muthoka, C.M., Fr. Edwin Mugwe, C.M., and Allan Kamugisha, C.M.



Donor Spotlight:

Friend of the Vincentians Lauds Congregation's Care for the Poor


Serving the poor and homeless has always been important to St. Louisan Jim Kistner. So, when he began a search for a new home parish, one of the churches he visited for Mass was St. Catherine Labouré, a Vincentian-run parish in South St. Louis County. Jim recalls that “it just felt like home. It doesn’t often happen to me where God sort of hits me in the face with what he wants me to do — but with this, I just knew. This is where I belong.”

Jim grew up fifth of seven kids in North St. Louis. “I really don’t know how my parents did it — keeping food on the table, sending everybody to Catholic schools. They always taught us that we were given a lot and that we need to give back.”

Jim first learned of the Vincentian priests and brothers from the Daughters of Charity who taught him in grade school. He recalls lessons about the life of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac; the first one founded the Congregation of the Mission and the latter founded the Daughters of Charity.

“I’m inspired by Vincent’s life,” Jim says. “His being born in poverty ... then seeking a more elite life via the

priesthood ... only to be kidnapped ... promising God if he was released he would devote his life to the poor. In keeping that promise, St. Vincent de Paul is an inspiration for all of us.”



“Whether it’s in St. Louis or Kenya, so many kids just need a fighting chance.”

Jim said he contributes to the Congregation of the Mission because he sees them carrying on that mission day in and day out. “I see the homeless being fed and the poor being educated. Whether it’s here in St. Louis or in Kenya, so many kids just need a fighting chance. They’re in an uphill battle. We need to do a better job of sharing what we have with ones who don’t. The Vincentians do that. They are feeding kids, building schools for children in various parts of the world.”

He added that the struggles aren’t always material or financial. “People go through losses of all kinds — divorce, losing a job, emotional strain, the death of someone close to them. I see the Vincentians serving their spiritual needs, as well. Like they do, I try to see the face of Christ in every person in need.”

A Lenten Reflection

Fr. Ray Van Dorpe, C.M.



Let me say right off the bat that I have never liked the season of Lent. I've been a priest for almost 40 years, and I should know better. Yet I still dread the buzzkill of Ash Wednesday.

It's not the traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that I mind so much. The traditional practices of Lent

have helped Christians prepare for Easter for close to two millennia, so I'm okay with taking up these things in a special way this time of year.

About fasting: don't for a minute think I'm going to tell you NOT to give up something during Lent. I'm sure there's a bad habit or two sitting in your pocket right now that you can give up for the duration, if not longer. I've got about an even dozen I can pick from.

Here's the thing that bugs me about Lent: it's that it constantly reminds me of *my* death. Not death in general, but my death. Yes, I know for a fact that I'm going to die (and so are you), but do I have to be regularly reminded about it for six long weeks? It feels as if Lent takes a necessary but unpleasant truth and sticks it in my face. Really? Is that necessary?

The short answer is yes. Stepping back a little, I admit I need to be reminded that I very definitely am going to die, and the sooner I get used to the idea – well, actually the reality – the sooner Lent will stop feeling so pushy. Also, there's a nagging suspicion in the back of my head that says the more I feel comfortable with death, the more I'll feel comfortable with heaven. Lent doesn't prepare us for Good Friday; it's Easter Sunday. Death doesn't have the final say. Jesus is risen! Once I focus more on that truth, I can say, "Come on, Lent; do your thing!" Or as St. Paul said much more eloquently, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor 15:55)

This year I took a deep breath before Ash Wednesday and prepared myself for another go-round with Lent. But somehow this year Lent doesn't seem quite so bad. Perhaps I'm finally wising up to the inevitability of Lent reminding me of my death once again. Or maybe these past two years of the pandemic have seemed like one long Lenten journey. We've done a lot of "giving up" of what used to be taken for granted, and many of us have grown accustomed to facing the realities of suffering and death. This year may be a turning point in the way I think about Lent. What about you?

In Memoriam

We remember the priests and brothers we lost in the last year: Fr. Nicholas Kaloki, C.M.; Bro. Tony Wiedemer, C.M.; and Fr. Paul Otto Schneebeck, C.M. A beautiful video tribute created by Fr. Ron Hoye, C.M., of Catholic Teamworks, is available on our website, www.vincentian.org, under "Videos."



The Western Province Has a New Website

The Congregation of the Mission Western Province has created a new website at our familiar web address, www.vincentian.org, with a clean new look designed to better tell its stories, allow for easier contact with provincial office personnel, and better navigation to the information you want.

A section with reflections, videos, and articles from our confreres has also been added. Along with the new website is a new provincial Facebook page designed to keep you informed about what is going on throughout the province. **To follow us, search for “Congregation of the Mission Western Province” on Facebook or click “Follow us on Facebook” at the bottom of the page at www.vincentian.org.**



See the face of Jesus Be the face of Jesus

The Congregation of the Mission Western Province's annual Kenya Appeal starts in March 2022 and will help our Kenyan Vincentian parishes and outstations provide much-needed school supplies to children in the Folkland slum; playground equipment to our nursery school in Indagalasia; clean water, food, and medical assistance to Nairobi's most destitute; tuition assistance and education and formation for our Vincentian seminarians; and much more.

“Together, we can demonstrate our love for the most vulnerable in our world by responding with compassion and generosity,” said Fr. Patrick McDevitt, C.M., Provincial Superior. “When we help the less fortunate, we do the work we have been called to do by our Savior, Jesus Christ.”

To contribute to the appeal, click the “Donate” button at www.vincentian.org and direct your contribution to “Kenya Mission.”



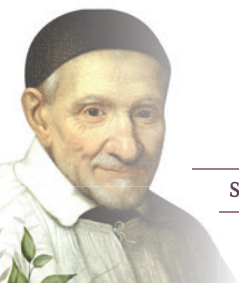


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ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

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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.

(continued from cover)

What is a vice-province? A vice-province is a territorial division of the Congregation of the Mission that has earned a greater degree of autonomy with regard to personnel assignments and the development of apostolic works, while still having close ties with the original mother province for resources and guidance.

Our friends who have given generously for the Vincentians in Kenya can be rightfully proud of how they helped the Vincentians in Kenya **increase their numbers and ministries**. May this collaboration continue as the Lord blesses our work in eastern Africa!

DePaul Woodworking Graduates Another Class

DePaul Woodworking at DePaul Centre in Nairobi, Kenya, graduated another class in December. The program, which is run by Bro. James Donlevy, C.M., helps students earn a government-certified certificate in carpentry, which they can use to start businesses or gain employment to support their families while completing woodworking projects for customers.

