

## Fall 2022 ➔

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### Donor Spotlight

## Vincentians Inspire Couple to Carry on the Mission

Though she didn't know it at the time, Vie Thorgren's first introduction to the Congregation of the Mission was on the night before her First Communion. In a dream, a man showed her to a bridge between some big, fancy houses and a rundown shack. She and the man stood on the bridge.

"It was so vivid," she recalls. "I got a sense that this was my life calling — to be a bridge between those who have and others who don't. When I woke up, I remembered it clearly, and I said, 'OK, God, I'll do that.'"

Vie never swayed from that commitment. All through school she studied the lives of people who had given themselves to the service of the poor.

Vie met Rick in high school, and the two married before their senior year in college. Rick enlisted in the Air Force and was sent to Korea for 13 months.

"Vie wasn't going to sit home and wait for me," Rick said. "She somehow landed a teaching position 30 miles from where I was stationed, working alongside Presbyterian missionaries."

The couple and their two young daughters later settled in Denver, and around 1980 they began attending Most Precious Blood parish, which was founded by Vincentian priests.

"I didn't know what C.M. meant after the priest names," Vie recalls,

*(continued, p. 4)*



➔ **Vie and Rick Thorgren** are affiliates of the Congregation of the Mission and founding board members for the Colorado Vincentian Volunteers. They remain active in ministries that unite diverse members of the community for spiritual transformation and social justice, serving God's people on the margins of society, including the community-based nonprofit Restoring Connections in Denver, of which Vie is Executive Director. The couple are loving parents to two daughters and grateful, adoring grandparents of four.



## Dear Friends,

As I reflect upon the changes and development in the Western Province, I am filled with gratitude and optimism for our future mission. We have been engaged in a dynamic process of Apostolic Planning to determine how best to serve the Church and society. In two short years, we have seen the fruits of the Apostolic Planning, i.e., the completion of the decades-long process to establish the Vice Province of Kenya, the revitalization of our seminarian vocation recruitment

and formation programs, and the development of new strategies for communication and outreach, among others. There are many other hopeful signs of change, renewal, and growth throughout the Province.

As we look to the coming year of Apostolic Planning, we will DREAM about what action steps to take to better serve the mission as we move into the future. These actions steps will be supported by training and educating ourselves and our mission partners for accomplishing our goals.

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**“ The spirit of renewal and growth in the Province  
could not be possible without your support and prayers. ”**

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The spirit of renewal and growth in the Province could not be possible without your support and prayers. You help us each and every day to be our best selves as men of prayer and missionaries of love and service. On behalf of the entire Western Province, thank you for everything you are for us and all that you do for us. Be assured of our continued prayers for you and your family.

Sincerely in Christ Jesus,

*Patrick McDevitt*

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



*Fr. Patrick McDevitt, C.M., with Pope Francis  
at the recent Congregation of the Mission  
General Assembly.*



## New Affiliates for the Congregation of the Mission

In early July, Fr. Tomaž Mavrič, C.M., Superior General for the Congregation of the Mission, approved four individuals as Affiliates of the Congregation of the Mission. The designation of Affiliate is a very special one in the Congregation, denoting a person with exceptional and enduring commitment to the charism of St. Vincent de Paul.

The new affiliates are Jim and Mary Cele Doyle of Chicago, IL; Elia Meyers of Dallas, TX; and Benny Ruiz of Dallas, TX. All four have for decades exhibited devotion to the Congregation of the Mission and the Vincentian charism.

“They have witnessed the Vincentian spirit, values, identity, and mission for many years by their faith, love for the church, and devoted service to others, especially the poor and most abandoned of God’s people,” said Fr. Patrick McDevitt, C.M., Provincial Superior of the Congregation of the Mission Western Province.

“**We are grateful** for this wonderful recognition and know that we are joining an elite group of friends of the Vincentian community. We have been inspired by the Vincentian Mission and the work of the Vincentian communities. We have also known many great Vincentians over the years, many of them, such as Tom Grace, Tom Croak, John Richardson, Brother Leo Keigher, and Pat McDevitt, have become close friends with our family. I had the wonderful opportunity to work at DePaul University for 30 years. We were fortunate that all of our children attended DePaul and have been influenced by the University’s Vincentian and Catholic Mission and values.” – *James and Mary Cele Doyle*



“**This appointment is a blessing** and a humbling honor. It is a joyful and affirming experience of belonging to my spiritual family of 30-plus years. The Vincentians and the Vincentian spirituality have been a source of direction, guidance, and God presence in my life through the care and love of the poor in body, mind, and soul.” – *Elia Meyers*



“**The CM Affiliation makes me feel humble** and proud of working with so many wonderful Vincentian family members over the years. All the fathers, brothers, Daughters of Charity, and Society of St. Vincent de Paul members formed me to live in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul. I am grateful for this honor!” – *Benny Ruiz*



## 40 Years of Priestly Ministry

On June 11, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the priestly ordination of Fr. Anthony Dosen, C.M., Fr. Miles Heinen, C.M., Fr. Gerard Kelly, C.M., Fr. Kevin McCracken, C.M., Fr. Bin Van Nguyen, C.M., and Fr. Raymond Van Dorpe, C.M., at St. Mary's of the Barrens in Perryville. The jubilarians expressed their gratitude to all those who have supported them during their four decades of priestly ministry. To support the education and formation of the next generation of Vincentian priests and brothers, visit [www.vincentian.org](http://www.vincentian.org) and click "Give Now" in the top right corner.



(continued from cover)

"but we got involved and a couple years later I was offered a position as director of spiritual formation at the Denver Vincentian seminary, St. Thomas. Visiting Father Mike Joyce on my first day I noticed on the wall behind his desk an image of a man — *the same man who'd shown me that bridge in my dream!*"

Father Mike told Vie the picture was of the founder of the Congregation of the Mission, St. Vincent de Paul, solving the mystery of her childhood dream. The Thorgrens deepened their ties with the Vincentians.

Rick recalls the positive impact of Father Donald Berkbighler on his spirituality.

"He was a very down-to-earth guy; his whole focus was on love. At the time, I was sort of struggling with going and not going to church. Fr. Don just really had a big impact on my life. Through his gentle persuasion, I attended a

Marriage Encounter weekend with Vie, and we ended up becoming a presenting couple."

The Thorgrens' financial support for the Congregation rests in their desire to participate closely in the Gospel mission they see the priests and brothers carrying out.

"In particular," Vie says, "they care for those who are *most* neglected and *most* in need. It's so exciting to also see and support what is happening in Kenya now, and because there are no Vincentian priests left in Denver, contributing keeps us more closely connected to the Province.

"It says a lot about the deep roots the Vincentians planted here at Most Precious Blood that, so many years after their departure, there's such a vibrancy in both charity and justice ministries — hands-on, direct relationships with people in poverty and also in creating systemic change."



## **‘M’ is for Mission**

### ***Fr. Gilbert Walker, C.M., to Head Popular Mission Team***

With some frequency, Vincentian priests and brothers are asked what the initials “C.M.” stand for. The humorous reply is usually “constantly moving,” but of course the real answer is “Congregation of the Mission.” This leads people to think that this refers to foreign or overseas missions. But as our donors and friends have learned, the “M” refers to parish or “popular” missions. This was the work that St. Vincent de Paul and five other priests started in the early 17th century as an effort to evangelize the poor rural people of France.

In the Western Province, there have been many models of this mission work. In the past century, there were the “Motor Missions,” where Vincentians would preach in town squares deep in the Bible Belt South. Other missions were attached to the Miraculous Medal devotion.

In 1974, Provincial Fr. Cecil Parres, C.M., assigned Frs. Carl Schulte, C.M., and Frank Crowley, C.M., to start the Vincentian Parish Mission Center. For almost 50 years, other confreres, such as Frs. Bob and Dick Gielow, C.M., have given thousands of parish missions across the U.S. and Canada. Other confreres have had similar success giving missions in connection with their own particular evangelization ministries.

Fr. Pat McDevitt, C.M., Provincial of the Western Province, recently appointed Fr. Gilbert Walker, C.M., as the new Executive Director of the Vincentian Popular Mission Team. In announcing this appointment, Fr. McDevitt noted that the province’s apostolic planning process has identified the need for new models and the formation of new mission teams. The success that the province has had over the years will be the starting point to evolve new models that will be successful well into the rest of this century.

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“We are open to new models, which include multi-cultural and multi-lingual missions, with missionaries who will work both full- and part-time.”

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Fr. Gilbert Walker is originally from Mississippi and was ordained in 1987. In addition to pastoral work in the United States, he spent 6 years in the Dominican Republic and 17 years in Cuba. Now back in the States, he is looking forward to this new adventure. He says, “I see this as an opportunity to form a team of missionaries that includes confreres, religious, and laity. Rethinking what popular missions might look like, we are open to new models, which include multi-cultural and multi-lingual missions, with missionaries who will work both full- and part-time.”

Let us pray for the success of this venture, always remembering that the popular missions are the original work of the Congregation of the MISSION!



# A Reflection on the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul

Fr. Ray Van Dorpe, C.M



The feast day for St. Vincent de Paul, the founder of the Congregation of the Mission, is celebrated Sept. 27. For this occasion, Fr. Ray Van Dorpe, C.M., offers the following reflection.

One of the most often-quoted lines from St. Vincent de Paul is, “Love is inventive to infinity.” It is frequently cited when members of the Vincentian family engage in new ways to address poverty, to meet new challenges in pastoral ministry, or to improve the work in which they are involved.

The quote itself comes from an “Exhortation to a Dying Brother” that Vincent gave in 1645. In this, Vincent described the Eucharist as a demonstration of the infinite inventiveness of love that Jesus had for his followers. He noted that Jesus foresaw the possibility that, over time, the enthusiasm of his disciples might lessen, or they might even forget his affection for them. Therefore, Vincent suggests, Jesus “...wanted to avoid this danger by instituting the most august sacrament, in which he is as truly and substantially present as he is in heaven above.” (CCD:XI:131)

According to Vincent, Jesus’ creativity is rooted in his love and the best example of that divine creativity is found in the sacrament of the Eucharist. It is from this sacrament where we find the highest expression of God’s love and the spiritual nourishment that we need to continue our work of serving the poor.

In Vincent’s time there were many who thought that the Eucharist was almost unapproachable (the heresy of Jansenism). However, Vincent took the opposite approach. He believed that frequently communion, when received with a healthy spiritual disposition, would lead the Missioners, Daughters of Charity, and really anyone to better serve the poor, as well as foster a deeper community life.

The present Constitutions of the Congregation has enshrined this very Vincentian value: “Our life should be directed towards the daily celebration of the Lord’s Supper as towards its summit, for from the Eucharist, as from a living source, flows the power of our apostolic activity and fraternal communion.” (C.45 §1)

So, the next time we hear that for a Vincentian “love is inventive to infinity,” we are saying that no pastoral project or service on behalf of the poor will be truly Vincentian unless it flows from the love of God, from which all true inventiveness originates and which is sustained continually by the Eucharist, the most inventive gift Jesus gave to us, his disciples.

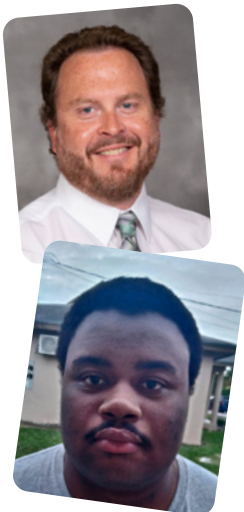
## Two Join Discernment Program

Two men have been accepted into the full-time Vocation Discernment Program for the Congregation of the Mission Western Province from September until November 2022 under the direction of Fr. Rich Wehrmeyer, C.M., Director of Formation. The program will provide an introduction to the community and prepare them to enter the initiate program starting in January 2023. Also, during this period, the discernment candidates will finish the formation application process.

**Mark Buehrle** (41 years old) is originally from St. Vincent Parish in Cape Girardeau. Mark served with the Gateway Vincentian Volunteers and has recently taught religion and humanities at Vianney High School in St. Louis.

**Niiokai Joshua Smith** (24 years old) is from Nassau, Bahamas. Joshua came to know the Congregation through his relationship with Fr. Kevin Fausz, C.M., in San Antonio.

We welcome them and wish them the best at this exciting time, and we ask for your prayers as they discern.





## Fr. Tomaž Mavrič Elected to Second Term as Superior General

We extend our congratulations, prayers, and well wishes to Fr. Tomaž Mavrič, C.M. (pictured, center, with Fr. Patrick McDevitt, C.M., and Fr. Edwin Mugwe, C.M., Visitors for the Western Province and Vice-Province of Kenya, respectively).

Fr. Mavrič was re-elected to a second six-year term as the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission at the 43rd General Assembly in Rome and is joined by newly selected Assistant Generals Fr. Rafal Kopystynski, C.M., Fr. Nelio Pereira Pita, C.M., Fr. Aaron Gutierrez Nava, C.M., and Fr. Dominique Iyolo, C.M.

The General Assembly was held from June 27 to July 15 with the theme, “Revitalizing our Identity at the Beginning of the 5th Century of the Congregation of the Mission.”

Fr. McDevitt and Fr. Mugwe represented the Western Province and the Vice-Province of Kenya, respectively. Attending as delegates for the Western Province were Fr. Guillermo Campuzano, C.M., and Fr. Gary Mueller, C.M.



## Kenya Named a Vice-Province



*Fr. Edwin Mugwe*

We are pleased to announce that the Region of Kenya in the Congregation of the Mission Western Province has been elevated to the status of vice-province. The change in status was announced by Fr. Tomaž Mavrič, C.M., the Superior General for the Congregation of the Mission, in Rome on May 25, 2022, and Fr. Edwin Mugwe, C.M., who previously served as Regional Superior, was named the first Visitor of the new Vice-Province.

The move comes after much consultation and discussion, including during last summer’s provincial assembly in Los Angeles, after which Fr. Patrick McDevitt, C.M., Provincial Superior for the Western Province, petitioned the Superior General for the change in status.

“We thank God for the founding of the Congregation in Kenya and Uganda and the many ways in which the Vincentian charism has flowered and taken root, leading to the creation of the new Vice-Province,” Fr. Mavrič stated in his decree announcing the new Vice-Province.

The Vincentians of the Western Province established a mission in Kenya in 1981, and the status of that mission was changed to “Region” in 2016 in recognition of its growth. The designation of Vice-Province recognizes the potential for continued growth and affords a greater level of autonomy as a territorial division of the Congregation of the Mission while still maintaining close ties with the “mother province.”

Fr. Edwin will serve a three-year term as Visitor. The first Council of the Vice-Province consists of Fr. Wilfred Atinda, C.M., Fr. Frederick Wandera, C.M., and Bro. Shadrack Ramadhan, C.M.

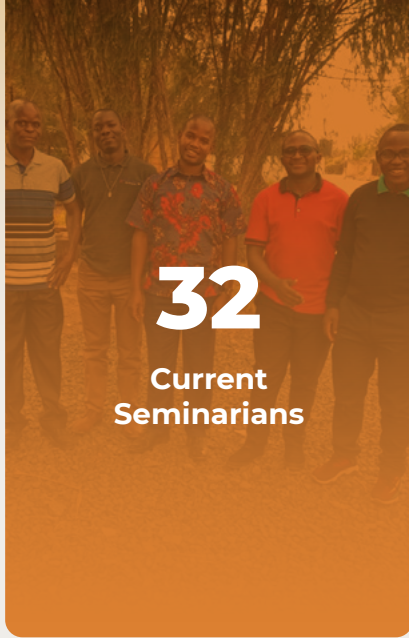






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Senior Confreres  
at the Apostle of  
Charity Residence



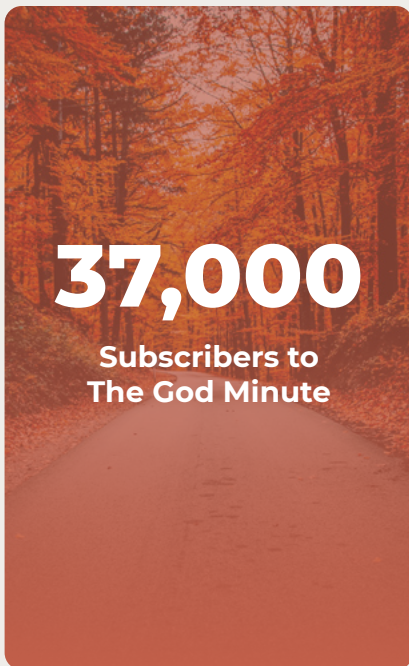
32

Current  
Seminarians



13,600

Families served in  
17 U.S. Vincentian  
parishes



37,000

Subscribers to  
The God Minute



38,400

Families  
receiving Christ's  
loving message  
in U.S. parish  
missions in '21-22



40,000

Individuals served  
in Kenyan parishes  
and apostolates

2021-2022

## Mission Statistics

The generosity of our donors made a great difference in the lives of those that we serve in the U.S. and Kenya, and we thank you.

**Each Vincentian parish in the U.S.** includes components of service to the poor, collectively serving thousands with food, clothing, housing, rent and utility assistance, and more.

**The Vice-Province of Kenya** serves two urban parishes in Nairobi and three in rural areas. With high levels of poverty, the Vice-Province provides a variety of direct services to the poor, as well as agricultural and water projects, job and entrepreneurial training, and the building and renovating of schools.





**Thank you!** Your generosity has been so important in the lives of those in need, not only in the U.S. but in Kenya. We are ever grateful for your prayers and gifts. Our priests and brothers will remember you in prayer.

*Gifts received between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022*

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“

I support the Vincentians because their mission calls for their support of those in need of help no matter the reason that they find themselves in this situation. Some were born into poverty and can't find a way out, while others made bad decisions that put them in a desperate situation. No matter how they arrived there, the Vincentian Mission calls for us to help our 'neighbors in need.' So, I enthusiastically support those that support those in need.

”

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“ I support the Vincentians because of the strong and successful efforts to establish a strong, well-trained native clergy in Kenya. ”

*Sr. Julia Huiskamp, D.C., St. Regis Home, East St. Louis, Illinois*

## WWP Grant Affords Social Justice Lessons

The 2021 recipient of the CM Western Province's Walking with the Poor Grant, the Division of Mission and Ministry at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, TX, reports a successful year of programming aimed at teaching a variety of social justice lessons to freshman students at the university, including teaching the charism of St. Vincent de Paul and its application in the world today.

The 16 students in the program took part in workshops, attended presentations by guest speakers, and took part in forums. At the end of the program, which spanned the academic year, the students attended a closing celebration and Mass at Holy Redeemer Church in San Antonio celebrated by Pastor Fr. Kevin Fausz, C.M. (pictured).

"They learned St. Vincent de Paul always looked at the human person as a whole, spiritual, moral, political, social, cultural being, including also their economic hopes and concerns," said Jackie Walter, of the Division of Mission and Ministry. "St. Vincent de Paul ministered to the poor because Jesus ministered to the poor."



## Supporting the Mission

The Board of the American Council on Gift Annuities voted in May to increase the rate of return assumption on charitable gift annuities from 3.75% to 4.5%, effective July 1. This means if you establish a charitable gift annuity at this time you will realize a higher payout rate. Charitable gift annuities allow a donor to gift cash or other assets and receive a fixed payment for life. Individuals who establish a legacy gift with the Vincentians, such as a charitable gift annuity, are included in the Friends of St. Vincent Book of Life.

For more information on establishing a charitable gift annuity with the Vincentians, contact Frank Cognata, Counsel for Planned Gifts, at 314-344-1184 or [fcognata@vincentian.org](mailto:fcognata@vincentian.org).



There are more ways than ever to support the Congregation of the Mission Western Province, including now by text message. From your mobile phone, scan the QR code (left) or text "Vincent" to 366283 and tap the donation link that appears for an easy-to-use mobile donation portal. As always, we appreciate the support of all our donors, which makes possible the work of our priests and brothers on behalf of the poor.

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

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