



## They Left Their Hearts

### *Centennial of China Mission Celebrated in Perryville*

On Sept. 23, 2023, the Congregation of the Mission Western Province celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the China mission by the American provinces following World War I. The provinces answered a call by Pope Benedict XV to conduct foreign missions around the world, sending priests, seminarians, and Daughters of Charity to serve as missionaries in China.

The celebration, held at St. Mary's of the Barrens in Perryville, MO, started with a Mass at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. Fr. Hugh O'Donnell, C.M., preached at the Mass, having served as Provincial of the Province of China (in Taiwan) for seven years, starting in 1993. He had been captivated by China in his younger years and jumped at the chance to go when approached by the Superior General.

"It was one of the greatest graces and gifts of my life," he said during a homily in which he relayed stories from his time in Taiwan and prior to that, when the Vincentians were serving on the Chinese mainland.

During his homily, Fr. O'Donnell noted that the missionaries to China may have returned home, but they left their hearts there.

The Mass was followed by a solemn graveside service, led by Fr. Jim Osendorf, C.M., at the Vincentian cemetery, where several of the China missionaries are interred. The main celebrant of the Mass was Fr. Ferdinand Labitag, C.M., Visitor for the Province of China, who came to Perryville for the event.

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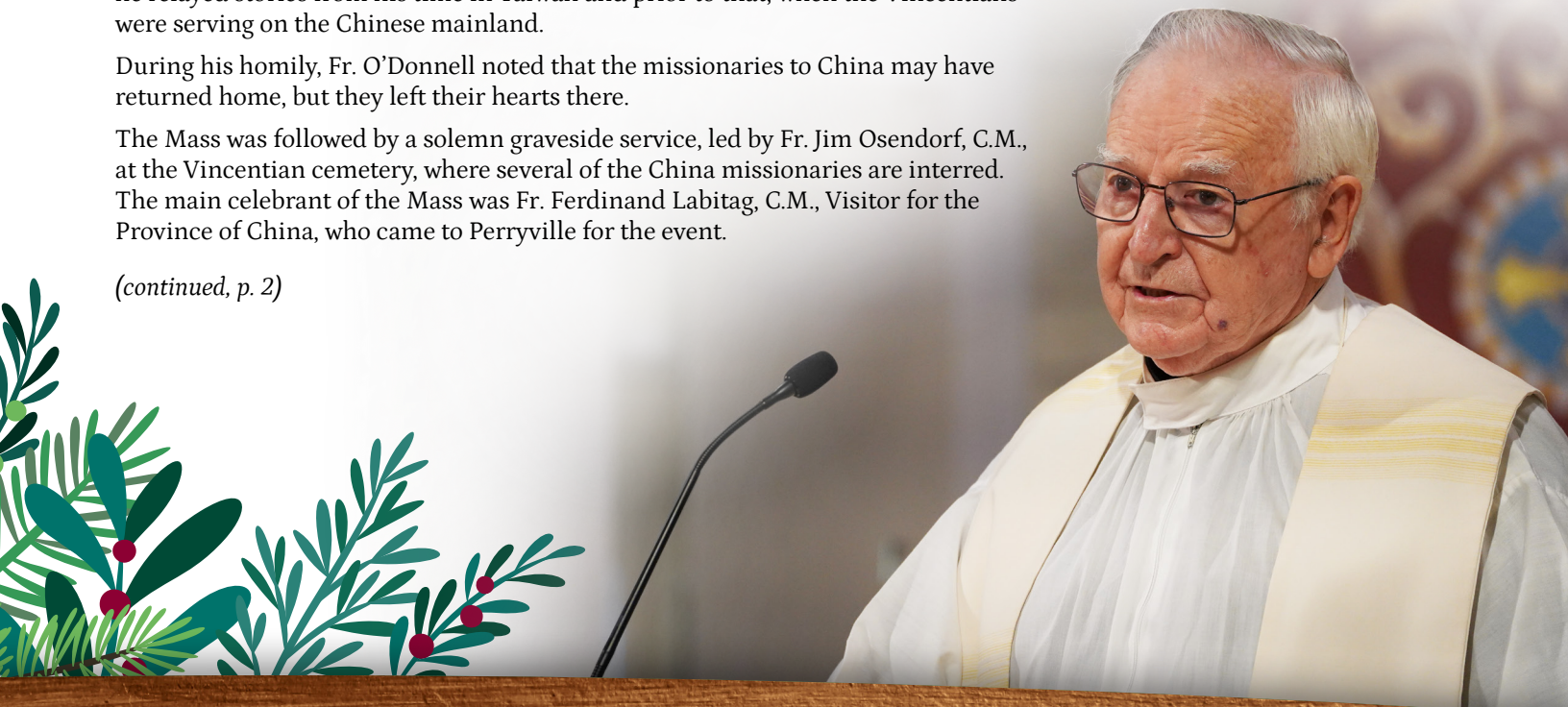
### Winter 2023 →

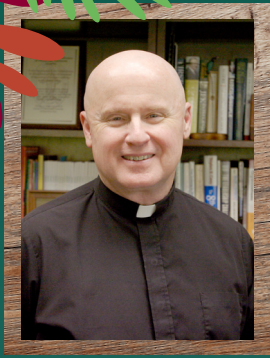
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*“Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.”*

— Melody Beatte

Dear Friends,

The Advent and Christmas season brings with it many memories, feelings, hopes, dreams, and desires. **We all experience the anticipation of HOPE and a world free from division and violence.** The openness to HOPE brings with it a spirit of GRATITUDE. Advent and Christmas are all about HOPE and waiting for a world made new with the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

You will see in this issue of *The Vincentian* that there is much hope with our rich missionary history in China, the new works at St. Vincent/St. Pius V St. Louis, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the new academic wing at DePaul College Prep Chicago, and much more.

The Congregation of the Mission Western Province has a proud history and a more promising future. We are hopeful and grateful to all our friends who support us and pray for us. Thank you for your support for the mission through the Annual Appeal.

As our world is at war in Ukraine, Gaza, and Israel, let our prayers during this holy season be one of HOPE for peace and GRATITUDE for the powerful and saving actions of Emmanuel, God-with-us.

Sincerely yours in St. Vincent de Paul,

*Patrick McDevitt*

Fr. Patrick McDevitt, C.M.  
Provincial Superior

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At a luncheon following the service, video greetings were played by current Superior General Fr. Tomaž Mavrič, C.M., and former Superior General Fr. Robert Maloney, C.M. Both said the China mission serves as a reminder of the Vincentians’ continuing call to go where they are needed, anywhere in the world. The videos can be viewed by scanning the QR codes below.

Fr. Tomaž Mavrič, C.M.



Fr. Robert Maloney, C.M.





# Faith, Vincentian Friendships Fuel The Future of the Congregation

Bill deHaas grew up attending the Vincentian-run Most Precious Blood Catholic Church in Denver, where he was taught by the Daughters of Charity. In the late '60s, Bill moved back to his home state of Texas after eighth grade and attended St. Vincent de Paul Seminary High School in Beaumont.

Bill decided to enter St. Mary's, novitiate in Santa Barbara, CA. He found himself a member of the Vincentians' largest novitiate class in the world that year and later entered St. Mary's of the Barrens Seminary College in Perryville, MO.

"We had great formation directors with Reverends Bill Bogel and Otto Schneebeck guiding us," he recalls. "And the Very Reverend Lou Franz led us to think about the future — about developing the whole human person."

After a fulfilling time in seminary, he graduated with three advanced degrees and was ordained in the summer of 1978 a Vincentian priest at Holy Trinity Church in Dallas.

Those early years were filled with learning and serving and growing closer to God. As he neared a decade of ministry, Bill began discerning a profound interior change. "On my tenth anniversary of ordination, I made the decision to leave the Vincentians and return to Dallas, where my family lived."

Not long after, he reconnected with Mary Rushmore, a parishioner whom he'd met a few years earlier. Mary was living in Chicago working on a master's degree in nursing.

The couple married the following year.

Back home in Dallas, Bill and Mary settled in and worked to raise their two children. Bill's career focused on managing behavioral health services for large corporations. Mary, a native New Yorker and lifelong active Catholic, embarked on her 44-year career in nursing that included roles in critical care, administration, and medical research.

In the 1990s, Bill and Mary began to deepen their ties with the Vincentians when former Provincial Fr. Jim Swift, C.M., contacted Bill to assist in organizing events for former Vincentians. In addition, "I taught Fr. Pat McDevitt, the current provincial, in college," Bill says. "He began to include Mary and me in specific requests and projects going on around the province."



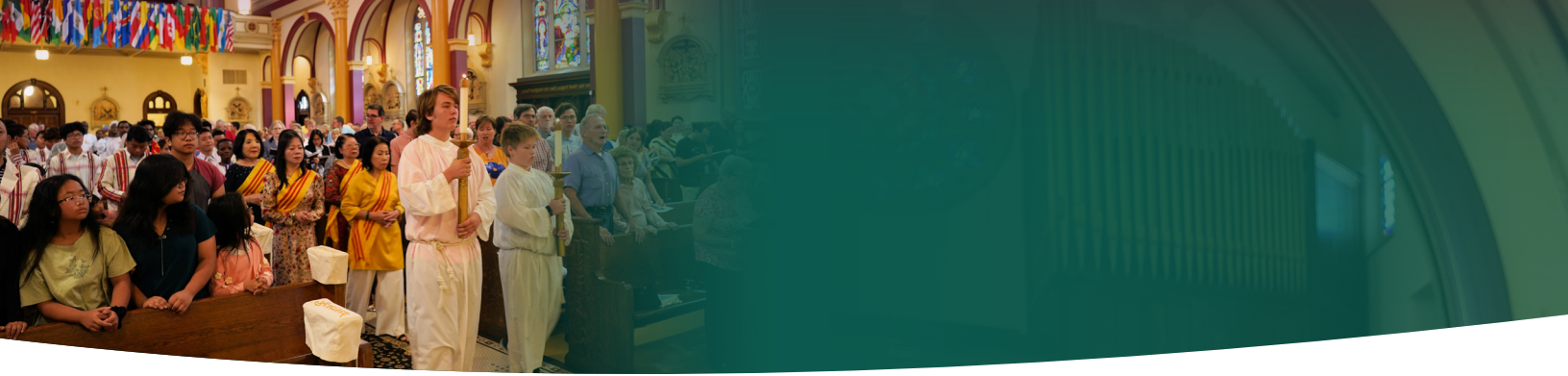
Mary and Bill have begun making financial gifts to support specific C.M. ministries.

"We have been blessed with a comfortable life in retirement, and we are eager to support what we see of new beginnings and a renewed spirit taking shape in the province," Bill says.

"I see the new provincial office at Aquinas Institute ... the new Vincentian Mission House for formation ... engaging senior priests in ministry teams ... focusing on retirement needs and continuing education ... These things remind me of the robust revitalization that took place for the Vincentians in the mid-19th century as the superior general basically re-founded the CM community around the world."

Mary adds: "We certainly feel the joy and gratitude coming back. The priests call us and visit us. Father Pat officiated our daughter's wedding at Holy Trinity, taking his own time to travel and do that. No matter which church you belong to, there's no better feeling than growing closer to those who are receiving your offerings by their words and deeds of appreciation."

*Today, Bill remains active as a lector and helps lead a group studying racism within the Catholic Church. He serves as treasurer and as a board member of Dalla Area Interfaith, a non-partisan, multi-ethnic group of Dallas-area nonprofits that seeks to improve the lives of people across Dallas. Mary stays busy supporting Bill in various parish ministries and also volunteers at Baylor Cancer Center.*



## I Had to Say ‘Yes’

*Cheryl Archibald Embraces Role as Parish Life Coordinator for St. Vincent/St. Pius V*



Cheryl Archibald dedicated 31 years to the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA) in St. Louis before heeding what she considers God’s invitation to something different.

“I was doing practicum studies when the executive director asked if I was interested in going to Aquinas,” Cheryl said. “I had no idea what Aquinas was, but I said

‘yes.’ That seems to be the story of my life, saying ‘yes’ to the unknowns.”

Enrolling at Aquinas Institute of Theology in Midtown St. Louis, she pursued a theology degree, embracing the unknowns that shaped her life.

After graduation, she ventured into a pastoral associate position at St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in North St. Louis, which she held for five years. In 2018, she was invited to be Parish Life Coordinator at the parish and served in that role until 2023.

The Parish Life Coordinator is a relatively new role in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. She leads the operations and organizational dimensions of parish life and serves in partnership with the Pastor. Together, they see to the spiritual, formational, liturgical, pastoral, and sacramental needs of parishioners. Cheryl was the first lay person and the second woman in the St. Louis Archdiocese to serve in this role.

With the All Things New reorganization earlier this year, St. Vincent de Paul Parish in St. Louis was paired with St. Pius V; the two parishes now share a pastor, Fr. Rich Wehrmeyer, C.M., and staff. Celeste Mueller, who was serving as interim PLC, contacted Cheryl, whom she knew from the Aquinas Institute, to see if she would be interested in the position.

“St. Vincent/St. Pius appealed to me because of the diversity of the community, and the outreach to the poor is phenomenal,” she said. “The Vincentians live up to their name here. The constant giving and interacting with the guests warms my heart.”

As of this writing, Cheryl had been in the job only a couple weeks but said she is “having fun.”

“I find, especially women, excited there is a woman in a church leadership role,” she said. “And the position allows me to share the gifts I have been given. I know beyond a doubt, God has invited me into these positions. I had to say ‘yes.’”





## Challenges, Obstacles, and Successes

*Kevin Kuehl serves immigrant and refugee population in new role*

Though Kevin Kuehl started his job as Immigrant and Refugee Coordinator at St. Vincent de Paul/St. Pius V parishes in St. Louis this past August, his desk is filled with work that seems to tell a different story.

The immigrant and refugee ministry is the collective effort of six parishes in St. Louis, including St. Vincent de Paul and St. Pius V. A board that formed from those parishes decided in the past year to hire a director.

Kevin, who studied with the Jesuits from 2017 to 2021, had done two years of formation at Our Lady of Guadalupe in St. Louis, including a couple months at the border at El Paso, TX. Prior to that, he worked as a missionary in Honduras, so he has experience working on both sides of the border.

"I think we have an opportunity to do something a little different, to make people feel welcome and help them with healing and reconciliation," he said. "They have been through so much."

He has been getting to know the people he is serving, making home visits, which can lead to connecting them to services at St. Vincent's, St. Pius, and elsewhere. He has encountered people who have fled war, persecution, and unlivable conditions. He feels privileged to share their stories.

"I keep coming back to the word 'community,'" he said. "I think it would be beautiful to see us as a church empowering immigrants to assist one another as well, to grow in community with one another with a sense of family and belonging."

## Full Circle

*Fr. Rich Wehrmeyer serves as pastor for St. Vincent/St. Pius V in St. Louis*

Fr. Rich Wehrmeyer, C.M., started his ordained ministry 33 years ago as a transitional deacon at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in St. Louis. He returned there earlier this year as pastor of the parish and of St. Pius V, which was paired with St. Vincent's in the All Things New reorganization not long before.

Fr. Rich said that formational time as a deacon, preaching for the first time, was critical to shaping who he would become as a priest, learning through trial and error what to say and not to say.

"What really helped me was that the people here made me feel very at-home and actually let me into their homes for meals and family gatherings," Fr. Rich said. "It established a certain comfort level with parishioners in my parochial ministry. I attribute that to St. Vincent's people."

Fr. Rich says the parish today has changed in that the high-rise low-income housing projects it used to serve are now gone, though he said the number of people in need of assistance is still great. In a recent 11-day period, the parish



served 1,250 meals to guests of the Meals Program. It operates a wealth of other services for the poor, including clothing, housing, laundry, and much more.

Sharing duties with Parish Life Coordinator Cheryl Archibald, also new to the job, he can focus on opportunities for evangelization and collaboration between the two parishes as a single faith community.

"That sharing of liturgical experiences and activities is already happening," he said. "We'd like to see that and other ministries continue to develop that way, especially in terms of the Vincentian spirit."





## A Simple Idea

*Ministry has distributed thousands of pocket crosses around the world*



It was a simple idea; take some scraps of wood and craft them into small crosses that people could put in their pockets as a way to remind them of God's presence. Make them small enough to put in your hand, but large enough to be noticed. That was the idea that Jerry Mueller and Tom Norrenberns had 12 years ago. Jerry Mueller was the father of our confrere, Fr. Gary Mueller, C.M.

Friends for many years, these two Catholic laymen often traveled together with their wives. While visiting a shrine gift shop somewhere they ran across a small wooden cross. The two men thought they could make something similar and put them in the back of their parish church for people to take with them. The first batch they made was quickly depleted, and they soon had requests for more. Out of this humble beginning, the "Share His Cross Ministries" was born. Father Gary said of this ministry: "It was a simple idea, but yet so lovely. They did nothing to cultivate this ministry, but people kept giving them wood and asked for crosses in return."

The process of making the crosses is time-consuming, as each cross is made one at a time. The crosses are distributed at no charge; however, tax-deductible donations for wood are accepted to help keep the ministry going.

Both Jerry Mueller and Tom Norrenberns have gone to heaven—Tom in 2014 and Jerry just this past August. However, their sons and grandsons are working to make sure it continues. They still make crosses for anyone who asks for them.



Most of the requests are for one or perhaps a few crosses. But one huge order came in for distribution at a parish mission: over 800 crosses! Another parish requested crosses to be given out on Ash Wednesday with the idea of collecting them

at the end of Lent for burning in the fire at the Easter Vigil. However, many parishioners didn't want to give up their crosses or wanted replacements if they did!

Don Norrenberns, son of the co-founder, Tom Norrenberns, has this to say about his dad's friend, Jerry Mueller: "We never really know exactly how many lives we touch in our lifetime, but in Jerry's case, we do have at least one number. Jerry helped craft 36,885 pocket crosses—crosses that have touched people around the world...Share His Cross Ministries has provided a simple, tangible way to be reminded that we are never alone. A simple wooden cross to remind us that God is always with us!"

If you would like a cross from Share His Cross Ministries, you can contact Don Norrenberns by email: [norrd21@gmail.com](mailto:norrd21@gmail.com).



# Your Gifts Support the Vincentian Mission

St. Louis Development Office Revenue for Fiscal Year 2023 (July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023)

## How Donations Were Allocated

**\$815,128**

Kenya Mission (Education Formation and Direct Service to the Poor)

**\$708,044**

Education Formation in the U.S.

**\$64,124**

International Outreach to the Poor

**\$141,844**

Care for Seniors

**\$2,188,019**

Service to the Poor, Young People, & Evangelization in the U.S.

Number of Gifts in FY23:

**15,569**

Total Amount Donated in FY23:

**\$3,917,159**

**81%** of the Western Province expenses are allocated for mission and ministries,

leaving 19% for administration and fundraising, which is well within the acceptable range for national and international organizations.



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

THE VINCENTIANS  
WESTERN PROVINCE

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ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

## 2023 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](http://vincentian.org) and like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/CMWesternProvince](https://facebook.com/CMWesternProvince).

## DePaul College Prep Celebrates 10 Years with Expansion

In a fitting celebration of its 10-year anniversary, DePaul College Prep in Chicago officially dedicated this fall a new 38,000-square-foot academic wing. The Catholic Vincentian high school is a sponsored work of the Congregation of the Mission Western Province and operates in academic partnership with DePaul University.

The new academic wing adds 19 classrooms, 2 science labs, a 330-seat dining hall, and the Our Lady of Grace statue and garden to the 17-acre campus, which now has 62 modern classrooms, 10 science labs, 2 dining halls, the St. Louise de Marillac chapel, a black box theater, two commons areas, an organic garden and greenhouse, a weight training center, an 1,800-seat multi-sport stadium, and a track. The school currently serves 1,247 students from 60 different zip codes in and around Chicago.

“My life has been impacted by these young men and women, who have a genuine desire to better understand their faith and make a difference in this world,” said Fr. Christopher Robinson, C.M., who serves on the school’s Board of Directors. “DePaul College Prep invites all Vincentian Family groups to engage with their students. The exposure to various Vincentian works will help them more fully understand what it means to live out St. Vincent’s charism. After all, the youth are the future of the Vincentian mission.”



DePaul College Prep serves 1,247 students from Chicago and the surrounding area.



Fr. Chris Robinson, C.M., speaks at the blessing and dedication of DePaul College Prep’s new academic wing.