Life is a Journey

Frank Congata looks back on a lifetime with the Vincentians

"One Vincentian professor told me that life is a journey and that journey is directly related to our salvation history," said Frank Cognata. "He said there will be different parts of growth in that journey, which really impacted me."

Frank retired in May after more than 20 years working in development and planned giving for the Congregation of the Mission Western Province, though his history with the Vincentians goes back much further.

A native of North St. Louis County and one of five siblings, Frank attended cardinal Glennon College and Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis, both of which were run by the Vincentians as educators and administrators.

"That was my first connection with them, as professors and spiritual advisors," he said.

Over time, they became more like family, especially after Frank's father passed away when he was 18 and his mother moved out of St. Louis the following year.

"The Vincentians always made sure I had a home," he said, "even in the summer when the other seminarians went home. They were also present for my father's funeral."

When he made the decision to move on from the seminary, the Vincentians were very supportive and, he says, have been with him ever since. He moved into the field of philanthropy, in which he has been helping nonprofits for the past 50 years. The Western Province established a Development Office 21 years ago and invited Frank to help set it up; he has been working with Teresa Manna, Chief Development and Communications Officer, that entire time.

"The office was created under the provincial leadership of Fr. Jim Swift, C.M., who happened to be one of my professors," Frank said. "It was an honor to be invited to help start up a new development ministry."

Most recently, he has been working in the area of planned giving, helping people interested in including the Vincentians in their estate plans, which he has done himself.

> *"This has allowed me to reconnect with those confreres who were so very important to me," he said. "It's also my commitment to make sure the Vincentians are a part of my legacy."*

Frank looks at retirement as another piece of that life journey, and this part of the journey will be about enjoying his family, in particular his 5-month-old granddaughter, Violeta. That is not to say he is leaving the Vincentians behind.

"Overall, I have been with the Vincentians for 50 years," he said. "Although I am officially retiring from my position, I am committed in the mission as a partner for the rest of my life."

As Planned Giving Counsel, Frank Cognata (second from left) worked closely with Teresa Manna (left), Chief Development and Communications Officer, Josh McIntire, Manager of Annual Gifts, and Lisa Randazzo, Associate Director of Development.



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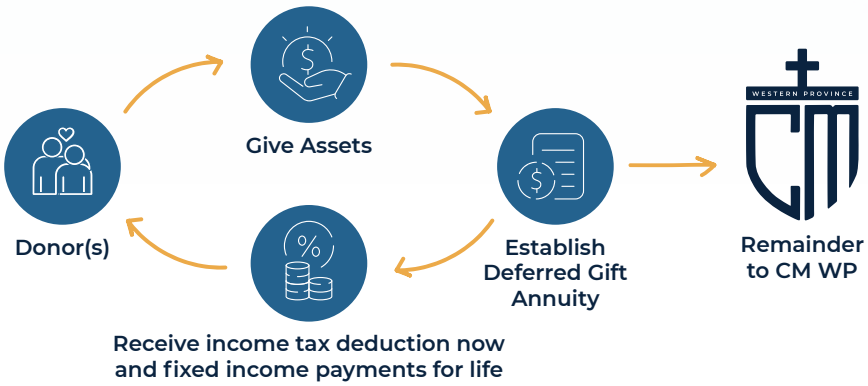

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