220 years of service
Josephites celebrate this year’s Jubilarians

What is a missionary? Page 16

Knights of Peter Claver celebrate 102 years Page 22
Protecting Creation

Today too, amid so much darkness, we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others. To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope; it is to let a shaft of light break through the heavy clouds; it is to bring the warmth of hope!

— Pope Francis
The Josephites are pro-life, standing for safeguarding the right to life of every human being; pro-family, promoting the dignity and sanctity of marriage; pro-chastity, upholding the virtue all are called to embody in their state of life.

The mission of The Josephite Harvest is to assist and promote the evangelizing ministry of the Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart. It is the voice of the Society to summon both men and means to our work and to establish enduring bonds with our benefactors. It shall encourage devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to our Patron St. Joseph, and to the Patron Saints of our Society. It shall foster racial and cultural understanding and reconciliation. It shall make known the achievements of African Americans that reflect the influence of the Catholic faith. It shall recognize the labors of clergy and lay persons who work for the evangelization of African Americans.

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Dear Friends of the Josephites,

Much inspiration awaits you in this issue of The Harvest. As you read this summer publication, you will find a missionary theme is threaded through many of the articles. I invite you to reflect on what it means to be a missionary today.

Josephites are missionaries following in the footsteps of our patron St. Joseph, who has been called the very first missionary. Since the 1870s, Josephite priests and brothers have been sharing the Good News among the African American community.

In early May, Josephites gathered at St. Joseph seminary in Washington to celebrate with four brother priests who were marking their anniversaries. Father John Filippelli, Father Frank Hull and Father Charles Moffatt were honored for 60 years of priestly service. Father Robert Zawacki was recognized for 40 years of ministry. Collectively, these four have provided 220 years of missionary service as Josephites. Each of them has grand stories to tell about their days of building up the church in parishes across the country. I was blessed to be the main celebrant at the Mass of Thanksgiving.

In two of the standard features of the magazine – the Pastor Profile and the Bishop Profile – the articles on Josephite Father Rodney Armstrong and Bishop Robert Muench are testaments to the on-going missionary activity today.

In this issue, we also learn about the upcoming meetings of the National Black Catholic Congress, which gathers every five years, and the Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver, which meets annually. These groups are missionaries nationally and in dioceses and parishes. It is so inspiring to see these groups working as missionaries in this time and this place.

Yes, we are a missionary church. Father Joseph Doyle, SSJ, director of our novices, discusses what it means to be a missionary today. Our parishes, schools and organizations remind us that being mission-minded is as relevant today as it was in bygone eras.

May you enjoy some respite from your labors during this summer season so that you can be refreshed and refueled for the journey ahead.

Very Rev. Michael L. Thompson, SSJ
Superior General
‘Thank you St. Joseph for leading us to the Josephites’

Four priests honored for 220 years of ministry

BY JOHN POWERS

A jubilant congregation of Josephites and friends gathered in the chapel at St. Joseph Seminary on May 2 to celebrate the lifetime of ministry provided by four Josephite priests.

Father John Filippelli, Father Frank Hull and Father Charles Moffatt were honored by 60 years of priestly service. Father Robert Zawacki was recognized for 40 years of ministry.

Superior General Father Michael Thompson, SSJ, principal celebrant at the jubilee Mass, noted that the four had collectively offered 220 years of ministry in the African American community.

“We offer you our warmest love for your service and dedication,” he said at the conclusion of the Mass.

He said that stories of their early ministry in rural areas of the south, missionary territory for Josephites, were overwhelming. “But God gave you the grace to do saintly and extraordinary things. Now we take up the mantle and continue in the missionary spirit that you have shown throughout your years of priestly service.”

Father Filippelli, a former superior general, offered the homily, which recounted Josephite history and challenges that racism posed both inside and
“THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK IN THE CHURCH TODAY IS FULFILLING AN OBLIGATION TO AFRICAN AMERICANS.”
outside the church.

Speaking from a wheelchair, Father Filippelli preached about the virtues of St. Joseph. “It was Joseph who taught Jesus to speak and to work. Listening to Jesus is like listening to Joseph.”

He described an effort by Pope John XXIII who, at the Second Vatican Council, aimed to increase awareness of St. Joseph as patron of the church. But when the saintly pope died as the Council began, the St. Joseph campaign was stalled. “It took 50 more years before St. Joseph’s name was added to the Eucharistic prayer,” he said.

Describing the role of St. Joseph as the “first missionary,” Father Filippelli recalled how the founder of the Josephites, Cardinal Vaughn, was instructed to start his missionary work. “He was told to go to the United States and to respond to the needs of the recently emancipated people there. And we give thanks for the good work that they did.”

He said that after World War II, there were a quarter of a million African American Catholics mostly due to the work of the Josephites. “Why didn’t we have more,” he asked. “Because we didn’t understand racism.”

Father Filippelli indicated that there was racism inside the church as well as in society. “The greatest challenge is to continue the missionary work among the African American community. The most important work in the church today is fulfilling an obligation to African Americans.”

Reflecting on his life as a Josephite, Father Filippelli said, “Each and every Josephite who has given a permanent commitment has received the gifts of joy and peace that come from serving in the African American community. This permanent commitment is a special gift from God. We all can stay thank you to St. Joseph for leading us to the Josephites and the African American community.”

A celebratory luncheon was held at the seminary at the conclusion of Mass.
60 YEARS

Father Charles P. Moffatt

Father Charles P. Moffatt is a native of Detroit, Michigan in 1926 and is a product of Nativity parish school and St. Anthony High. After serving three years in the U.S. Army in World War II, including a tour in Germany, he graduated from the University of Detroit and then entered Josephite training, beginning with the novitiate, the theology course at St. Joseph’s Seminary in Washington and priestly ordination at the National Shrine in 1957.

He was assigned first to St. Francis Xavier parish in Baltimore and two years later to Our Mother of Mercy in Beaumont, Texas. After two years, he was sent to Epiphany parish in New Orleans. Two years later he received his first pastorate at St. Philip parish, also in the Crescent City.

Then followed a series of pastorates at St. Benedict the Moor, Detroit; St. Raymond, New Orleans; Most Pure Heart of Mary, Mobile; and St Luke, Washington; immediately prior to which had served four years as vocation director.

His final assignment was at St. Francis Assisi parish, Breaux Bridge, LA, in residence and as area pastoral substitute.

At the age of 90, Father Moffatt is retired at St. Joseph Manor, Baltimore, reminiscing on his 60 years of priestly service.

Father John L. M. Filippelli

Father John L. M. Filippelli is a New Yorker, born in Manhattan in 1930. He graduated from Power Memorial High School, also in Manhattan and from there entered the Josephite minor seminary in 1948.

Ordained to the priesthood in 1957 at the National Shrine of Mary Immaculate Conception in Washington, he spent a year at Catholic University before being assigned to the staff of the Josephite college in Newburgh, N.Y. In his 14 years of teaching there, Father Filippelli was also active in service to the local Hispanic and African-American communities. His first pastoral assignment was to St. Pius V parish in Baltimore where he was also elected Area Director. In 1979 he was elected Superior General, a post that extended to 1987 when he was appointed pastor of Baltimore’s St. Francis Xavier parish.

Father Filippelli became rector of St. Joseph Seminary in Washington in 1996, seven years later he became spiritual director to the students and also novice director for two years.

Health reasons saw him retired at St. Joseph Manor in Baltimore in 2014 where he happily celebrates the 60th year of his priesthood.
60 YEARS

Father Frank M. Hull

Father Frank M. Hull was born in Philadelphia in 1923 and is a graduate of St. Thomas More High School there. He served with the Army Air Corps during World War II and in 1948 began his Josephite preparation at Epiphany Apostolic College, Newburgh, NY.

He was ordained in Washington in 1957 and after a year at Catholic University, was assigned to the staff of St. Augustine High School in New Orleans. Two years later, he joined the staff of Epiphany College. In 1963, he was appointed editor of The Josephite Harvest, a position he would hold for 14 years with his regular assignments. He served as rector of St. Augustine High School for five years until his first pastoral position at Our Lady Star of the Sea parish in Houston. After four years, he held two eight-year pastorates at two New Orleans parishes – St. Raymond’s and St. David’s. He returned to Washington and served at St. St. Benedict the Moor and St. Vincent de Paul parishes. He then completed a ten-year term as pastor of St. Joseph parish in Alexandria, VA.

Father Hull celebrates his 60th year as a priest while serving in the Josephite archives at its new location in St. Joseph’s Seminary, Washington, DC, and serving on the editorial committee of The Josephite Harvest.

40 YEARS

Father Robert P. Zawacki

Father Robert P. Zawacki was born in Brooklyn, NY, in 1944, attended St. Patrick parish school, Bishop Laughlin High School and is a graduate of Brooklyn College. He entered the Josephite novitiate in 1971, continued through St. Joseph Seminary in Washington, and was ordained in the Josephite church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help there in 1977.

His first parish assignment was as an assistant at St. Joseph Church in Wilmington, DE, followed by similar service for nine years in parishes in Baltimore and Washington. He was made pastor of St. John the Baptist Parish in Montgomery, AL, in 1986, at St. Joseph, Welch, LA, in 1989 and later at Holy Family Church, Natchez in 1997.

He spent six years as chaplain at Texas State Prison in Huntsville and then as supply man for southern parishes for four years and as parochial vicar for two years each at St. Raymond’s, New Orleans and Our Mother of Mercy, Beaumont, TX.

Since 2014, Father has been retired at St. Joseph Manor, Baltimore, where he celebrates his 40th priestly year.
Crystal Morris is a busy woman. The 55-year-old West Baltimore resident makes sure her neighborhood church is always open for those who seek Jesus.

Nestled near the corner of Bloom Street and North Freemont Avenue, sandwiched between an elementary school and a catchall grocery, she answers God’s phone calls and doorbells, researches baptismal records, and even washes and irons his altar linens.

“This church has been a beacon of hope for a lot of people in our community,” she said at St. Peter Claver Church’s rectory. “We have people coming in and out of here asking for help with rent, gas, electricity – they come here for food and clothing.”

Poverty is no joke in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood. Door after door, window after window, homes are boarded up.

In 2015, residents took to these same streets near the African-American church to feud with police after 25-year-old Freddie Gray died in their custody.

“Some people are not grounded and rooted in Christ,” the mother of three adult children said about social injustices. “I tell my two daughters to keep praying. Pray because God can do anything but fail.”

Prayer and song, Morris makes sure her devotion is heard during Mass as a choir member.

“She loves herself some Smokie Norful!” her youngest daughter Cierra, 20, said about her mom’s appreciation for the Grammy-winning gospel singer. “She sings all around the house like 24/7.”

“She thinks she’s Whitney Houston!” Candace, her eldest daughter, 23, said jokingly.

Church life and church employment have been a blessing for the Morris family. Crystal told CNS that she thanks God for her time on earth because she, too, has lost friends and family to drug and alcohol addiction, and violence.

“It takes a village,” Morris said when asked about raising kids under these circumstances. “The older women in the parish always had an eye out (for their children) and the kids did not like that. Sometimes they would get a little puffy and give you a look, but they stayed respectful.”

“I think it’s a good thing that mom works at the church,” Candace said. “We can tell it’s a big part of her, and it feels good.”
‘I am a product of a Josephite parish’

BY ARIANA CASSARD

Father Rodney Armstrong’s Catholic education has always been rooted in the Josephite society. “I became a Josephite because I am a product of a Josephite parish,” said Father Armstrong, who was baptized and confirmed in Corpus Christi church in New Orleans. He has always been a Josephite parishioner and credits his vocation to this deep involvement.

Beyond his rich Josephite history, the Josephite mission was what called Father Armstrong to the priesthood. “It was the only community of priests and brothers that worked exclusively in the African-American Catholic community,” Father Armstrong told The Harvest.

This unique charism placed the Josephites at the top of a young Armstrong’s vocational considerations.

As a summer seminarian, Father Armstrong learned more about the role of a Josephite priest while serving in a series of Texas parishes. After his ordination in 1991, his first assignment was as an associate pastor in Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Washington, D.C.

Throughout his experience as a Josephite, each assignment has delivered different joys and challenges. He faced his greatest challenge during his assignment at Holy Family church in McNair, Texas.

The parish was in need of a new facility to better serve its parishioners and community members. Father Armstrong was tasked with creating a new parish center. Although it was difficult to get the project off the ground from conception to completion, the outcome cemented this project in his mind as a victory.

“It was a game-changer for the parish,” said Father Armstrong. “It made all the difference in the life of the parish.” With additional classrooms, office space, a commercial-sized dining room and kitchen, the completion of this parish center aided and encouraged Father Armstrong in his ministry at Holy Family.

After reflecting on this logistical triumph, Father Armstrong told The Harvest that his greatest joy in his vocation has been serving people. “Working in the parish is what I call ‘being in the trenches’ because that is where the basic work of the church is done.”

Throughout his 26 years of service, he has had the privilege of forming relationships with parishioners from different parishes across the country, each of which he has cherished.

“In many of those situations you are embraced and you become part of the people’s lives, and sometimes part of their families,” said Father Armstrong.

Father Armstrong now serves as the pastor at Our Lady Star of the Sea in Houston, Texas, which included for the first three years a part-time chaplaincy at Texas Southern University Catholic Newman Center.

Father Armstrong celebrated the 25th anniversary of his ordination in 2016.
How does the Diocese of Baton Rouge include religious communities into its mission?

We are commissioned from the Gospel of Matthew to go forth and make disciples of all nations, all peoples, to baptize and teach them in the ways of Christ. The diversity of charisms present in the various religious communities in our diocese allows us to fulfill our mission statement more effectively by evangelizing and ministering to the vast diversity of gifts, talents and needs of the uncatechized and the faithful alike. The Josephites are one of 11 religious orders active in our diocese, and their interracial, intercultural mission to serve the black community is essential to helping us live out our mission of serving one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge is home to two Josephite parishes. How would you describe the value of the Josephites’ service to the work of the Church?

For more than a century the Josephites have been true pioneers in evangelization and catechesis in Louisiana. Though there remain only two Josephite parishes today, there once were nine active parishes and additional missions in the area.

It was Josephites who took charge of the Black Missions along Bayou Lafourche in 1911 when the Augustinians left. Five years later St. Francis Xavier church was established here in Baton Rouge, the first African-American Catholic church in our city and a place of vibrant faith. Under Josephite leadership, St. Francis Xavier grew, extending its reach and service by opening missions in Plaquemine and Scotlandville.

The Josephites at St. Francis Xavier also built and established the first parochial school in the Diocese of Baton Rouge in 1920. By 1982, it was the largest of all Josephite parochial schools in the nation with over 600 students! St. Francis Xavier was also the site of the ordination of three new Josephite priests in 1968, one of whom was later named the auxiliary bishop of Baltimore.

In addition, the Josephites were active in nearby New Roads, La., opening St. Augustine church in a rented storefront in 1922 and establishing a mission in Mix, La.

And we can’t forget that the Josephites brought a more visible presence to Southern University’s campus in the late 1960s when Father Rawlin B. Enette, SSJ, began celebrating Masses in a courtroom of the law building. Under his leadership, the Josephites constructed and staffed a Newman Center, later renamed the Martin Luther King, Jr. Catholic Center, for the school’s 1,500 or so Catholic students. The Josephites built a strong Catholic community at Southern until the Jesuits took over in 1984.

There were many firsts in our diocese for which the Josephites deserve credit, and our faith community continues to be enriched by their labors of love.
What personal experience do you have with Josephites?

One example is recent. Last summer the people of our city witnessed back-to-back tragedies when police shot a civilian and then just days later three police officers were shot in the line of duty. In the aftermath of that painful and turbulent time, we formed a Commission on Racial Harmony, and Father Edward Chiffriller, a Josephite, is among its 13 members. Father Ed brings so much wisdom and insight to the commission from his years of service in an order focused on the African-American community, as well as such reverence for our shared goal of living together as brothers and sisters in Christ, regardless of skin color.

Louisiana has also experienced a number of natural disasters, most recently the flooding this past fall. What unique challenges or opportunities do such events present to the diocese?

In one of the rural parts of our diocese, there sits a damaged house spray-painted with the message, “flooded with hope.” I don’t know that individual’s story or circumstance, but I do share that sentiment.

I’ve heard story after story about how the flooding last fall allowed people to minister to each other in extraordinary ways, how we looked beyond a single structure as “church” and came together as the body of Christ to serve one another. Losing our homes, our loved ones, or our livelihoods suddenly, as often happens in a natural disaster, is a true test of faith and brings us to our knees.

We’re accustomed to hurricanes in our area, but we were unprepared for flash flooding on such a massive scale. In parts of the diocese, 90 percent of homes flooded. Four churches in our diocese sustained considerable damage, so not only were some people homeless; they were left without church homes, too. It was heartening to see people work together and reach out to help a neighbor.

One of our churches scrambled to make sandwiches to feed hundreds of motorists stranded on a nearby interstate for 24 hours. A local businessman turned a film studio into a temporary shelter for thousands, fed through donations that came in a steady, unorchestrated line.

Churches in parts of the city that did not flood “adopted” churches that did, providing hot meals for recovery workers and donating clothing and household items. People across the diocese took refugees in to live with them for weeks and even months as they rebuilt their homes and their lives. And donations poured in from across the United States and around the world, along with prayers.

The sharing and outpouring of love truly overflowed all normal boundaries, and we were filled with the hope of a resurrection. Though our churches and schools have reopened, sadly there is still some recovery work to be done. Catholic Charities of Baton Rouge continues to assist individuals working to reclaim their homes or resettle elsewhere.

Looking ahead, what is next for the diocese?

We have endured a very difficult year. All around us are signs of growth and renewal, and we’re truly grateful. We just dedicated a new church building last month, St. George Catholic Church, which seats 1,200, and this week at the Easter vigil we’ll welcome 500 candidates into full membership. We’ve learned in a painful but powerful way that neither disasters nor divisions can keep us from our rich and fruitful heritage as sons and daughters of Christ.

"LAST SUMMER THE PEOPLE OF OUR CITY WITNESSED BACK-TO-BACK TRAGEDIES."
Successful parishes need a dedicated staff. At St. Luke Church in Washington, D.C., two men were recently honored for more than four decades of service to the parish community.

John Quarles joined the staff at St. Luke Church over 40 years ago. As director of St. Luke’s Community Center, Mr. Quarles showed up every day to care for the hall and the programs that take place there.

St. Luke’s Community Center is the social arm of the parish. It is home to a number of community programs, such as youth basketball, social activities, Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous meetings, and CSOSA, a program run by the U.S. Justice Department to re-integrate those returning home from incarceration. Mr. Quarles cared for each of these activities.

“He lifts up his Catholic faith and understands the meaning of service,” said Josephite Father Cornelius Ejigou, pastor of St. Luke Church and personal friend to Mr. Quarles.

When Father Cornelius entered the priesthood at St. Luke, Mr. Quarles was one of the first men he met. The other was Eugene Russell.

Mr. Russell is described as a quiet, dedicated man who has devoted his life to doing the background work at St. Luke.

Mr. Russell began working in maintenance at St. Luke 23 years ago, as an assistant to the maintenance supervisor. By the time of his retirement, he had been promoted to maintenance engineer.

His duties included ensuring the church is properly taken care of both on the inside and outside, as well as welcoming groups at the church for parties and meetings. Father Cornelius praised Mr. Russell’s dedication to the church,
saying he cared for it as he would his own home.

Mr. Russell told The Harvest that in his retirement, he misses the parishioners the most. “I love interacting with the parishioners of the church. It was very helpful for me with my job,” he said.

The legacy of these two men was celebrated with a retirement party in the church hall in January. Over 300 parishioners, friends and family members gathered for a Mass of Thanksgiving, followed by a luncheon in St. Luke Center. Each retiree was awarded a plaque in appreciation of their years of service.

Both Mr. Quarles and Mr. Russell will be remembered for the impact they had on St. Luke Church. “These men loved St. Luke with all their heart, and I think that’s the genesis of all their sacrifice,” said the pastor.

While they have retired from their duties, Father Cornelius said he would not miss these men, because he will still see them at Mass every Sunday.
When we think of “foreign missions” we think of priests and religious men and women traveling thousands of miles to preach the Gospel “to all the nations.”

Such was the dream of Father Herbert Vaughan who opened St. Joseph’s College of the Sacred Heart at Mill Hill, London, England on March 19, 1866 to begin training men for the foreign missions. His plan was to send his first missionary priests to Africa, Asia and other “pagan lands.”

After many painful negotiations with the Holy See about the assignments for the four recently ordained priests, Pope Pius IX, upon the advice of Archbishop Martin John Spalding of Baltimore, agreed to send them to the United States to “evangelize Negroes.”

Father Vaughan departed for America with his four “apostolic missionaries” on Nov. 17, 1871 and arrived in Baltimore on Dec. 5, 1871. They were known as St. Joseph’s Society of the Foreign Missions, consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Some knew them as Josephite-Mill Hill missionaries who were trained in England and served in the African-American communities of Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina and elsewhere.

By 1893, the American Josephites separated themselves from the English Mill Hill Missionaries but both communities remained missionaries in foreign lands. It was not until 1908 that the Holy See decided to drop the United States from the list of “mission territories” which depended on clergy, religious and donations from Europe to build up the Body of Christ, the Church, spiritually and materially in our country.

The Vatican must have realized that the Catholic Church in the United States could now stand on its own feet in terms of financial resources and personnel. At last, we had a growing number of indigenous clergy and seminaries would continue to multiply for the next fifty years or so. Catholic parishes and schools, some staffed by diocesan priests and others by religious communities, grew at an unprecedented rate.

One of the many reasons for this phenomenal growth was that many Catholics were mission-minded. Having benefitted from the good work of missionaries in our own country, it was now the obligation of U.S. Catholics to support their own parishes and schools without neglecting the foreign missions.

For example, in 1918, the Catholic Student Mission Crusade was started by two Society of the Divine Word seminarians in Techny, Illinois for the purpose of supporting missions at home and abroad. By the 1930’s, nearly a half-million members were enrolled in Catholic high schools, colleges and seminaries, including the Josephite seminary in Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, in 1972, the national office of the CSMC closed its doors. Were Catholics, especially young Catholics, losing their sense of mission-mindedness? Or, was it perhaps a new vision of “mission,” presented by Vatican Council II that was not yet fully understood?

The Council document, “Ad Gentes,” explained that, “the specific purpose of missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the Church among those people and groups where she has not yet taken root” (AG, 6). It goes on to say that the “work of
evangelization” remains the personal responsibility of all Catholics who have the obligation to actively support and promote the missions. That is how we become “heralds of the Gospel.”

Having begun as “foreign missionaries,” the Josephites are now “home missionaries,” serving exclusively in the African-American community in the United States.

For the past fifty years or more, the Josephites have worked with other religious communities such as the Paulists and Glenmarys in promoting the ideas and experiences of evangelization based on the teachings of Pope Paul VI’s “Evangelii Nuntiandi” and Pope John Paul II’s “Redemptoris Missio.” Many good, creative initiatives have come out of this collaboration, especially in our parishes. These documents provide the theological foundation for an understanding of evangelization and the “new evangelization.” Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ itself, properly internalized and proclaimed by the way we live, would be a better way to restore a sense of mission-mindedness.

There is nothing wrong with being an “arm chair missionary” whereby we offer our prayers and sacrifices for missionaries. St. Therese of the Child Jesus is a perfect example. She and St. Francis Xavier are patrons of the missions – one contemplative and the other active.

We can support the missions financially following the example of Ven. Pauline Marie Jaricot who, as a young woman, collected a penny a week from the employees in her family’s silk factory in France. She is considered the foundress of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith. Now days, a penny per week doesn’t go very far, so parishioners are asked to be generous in the Mission Sunday collection, the Indian and Negro Mission collection and the collection for the Home Missions.

The concept of mission-mindedness can take many different forms. It is a wonderful thing to see how many affluent Catholic parishes “twin” with poor parishes at home and abroad. The wealthy parishes have reported many blessings as a result of their sacrificial generosity, not the least of which is an increase in vocations from their parishes as a result of young parishioners taking mission trips to countries such as Haiti and Mexico. Some families have visited their “twin” parish as a summer vacation instead of going to the beach or a theme park.

Finally, the tables have turned. Missionaries from Africa, such as the Missionaries of St. Paul, have been coming to the United States to fill the gap left by the serious shortage of American vocations. The Josephites have been relying on vocations from Africa to join our ranks, and after seminary training in Nigeria and Washington, D.C., they are ordained to serve in the African-American community. It appears that once again, the United States is “mission territory.”

Father Joseph Doyle, SSJ, is novice director for the Josephites.
National Black Catholic Congress continues legacy of advocacy and empowerment

BY JESSICA NELSON

The National Black Catholic Congress will hold Congress XII July 6-9 in Orlando, Florida. As many as 3,000 bishops, priests, deacons, members of religious communities and lay people will gather for the four-day conference to connect, interact and celebrate Black Catholicism in the United States.

Participants will hear dynamic national and international speakers and will participate in thought-provoking workshops on issues such as Catholic family life, poverty and racism, vocations, topics geared toward youth and much more.

Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the Archbishop emeritus of Cape Coast, Ghana, will give the keynote address. He will also celebrate the opening Eucharistic Liturgy at the Basilica of the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Universe.

“We look forward to hearing his insightful thoughts on Catholic teaching of social justice and how they apply to recent events in the United States,” said Valerie E. Washington, the executive director of the NBCC.

Father Maurice Emelu, the executive director of Gratia Vobis Ministries, will address the Congress. Dr. Tricia Bent-Goodley, an expert in the field of Social Work, will speak about domestic violence in the Black community. Another keynote speaker is Bryan Stevenson, the president of Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), which provides legal representation to those serving unjust sentences due to discriminatory judicial practices, including juveniles sentenced as adults and serving time in adult facilities.

Bishop Edward Braxton, an authority on the Racial Divide in America and in the Catholic Church, will also address the entire group.

In addition to the general sessions, participants will choose from dozens of workshops in four workshop sessions throughout the week. Congress XII will feature a special track for youth ages 14-17 and possibly an additional track for young adults ages 18-40.

“It is my desire that the Congress XII attendees learn about issues impacting our brothers and sisters,” said Ms. Washington. “I believe our constituents should leave Congress equipped to serve and better the situations of our brothers and
sisters – that is what our Congress theme, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me: act justly, love goodness, and walk humbly with your God’ is all about.”

This theme was based on a Day of Reflection held in dioceses around the country. Through prayer, homilies, small group discussions and other activities, the theme was developed as the focus for Congress XII.

The Congress Movement continues to build upon the Pastoral Plan from Congress XI that calls us to be “wholly engaged in our faith when we, as followers of Jesus Christ, are wholly engaged in the modern world.” The ten action initiatives continue to impact our communities, our parishes, our thoughts and ultimately our faith lives. As Black Catholics, we have been called into action via the Magisterium and Catholic tradition in the following:
- Domestic Violence
- Prison Ministry
- The Racial Divide
- Leadership
- The Challenges and Opportunities of the Black Family
- Mass Incarceration
- Mental Illness
- The Holy Eucharist

“If we believe in these initiatives, we must call for protection of life at all stages and in all circumstances, evangelization efforts that nurture Black Catholic parishes, and individuals not in our flock, catechesis opportunities to keep us informed about our Universal Church, good jobs, health care – including mental health, and equality in our social and economic conditions, leadership opportunities in our Church for youth and young adults, energetic support for vocations, and strong families where fathers and mothers are present to model the faith for the next generation of believers.,” said Ms. Washington of the major agenda items to be discussed. “We are charged with continuing to implement these actions in our parishes when we return from Congress XII.”

For more information and the most up-to-date events pertaining to Congress XII, visit: www.nbccc.org/congress-xii.html.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Daniel A. Rudd, founder of the National Black Catholic Congress, published the American Catholic Tribune in 1886
- Five National Congresses were held from 1889 – 1894
- Topics of those early congresses included: educating black students, the quality of rental properties, opening economic opportunities for African Americans, labor unions and the slave trade
- After a long hiatus, six additional national congresses have been held, every five years since 1987
- The National Black Catholic Congress’ symbol is the Acacia Tree. Native to Africa, the Acacia Tree, dates back to biblical times and is a symbol of stability and resilience.

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- The National Black Catholic Congress’ symbol is the Acacia Tree. Native to Africa, the Acacia Tree, dates back to biblical times and is a symbol of stability and resilience.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Daniel A. Rudd, founder of the National Black Catholic Congress, published the American Catholic Tribune in 1886
- Five National Congresses were held from 1889 – 1894
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Bishop Ricard expects Congress to develop strategies to meet the needs of African Americans

BY JESSICA NELSON

Bishop John Ricard, SSJ, will join the thousands of African American Catholics coming together for Congress XII as constituents share their faith and work on plans and strategies for evangelizing their brothers and sisters, and all Americans.

Participants will address issues of social justice and poverty, all very much in the mind of Pope Francis.

Dioceses have prepared for the upcoming Congress by reflecting on the current needs of their diocese and region as well as the best ways to develop strategy and plans collectively.

“When we get [to Orlando] we will be able to sharpen the focus of the plan and that strategy and be prepared to discuss it in a more meaningful way,” Bishop Ricard, who has served as President of the National Black Catholic Congress for over 20 years, told The Harvest. National Black Catholic Congresses date back to 1889. After a long hiatus, Bishop Ricard was part of reviving the Congress. “These things do come in circles,” he said. “There was a sense a hundred years ago of a need for Black Catholics to come together for the same purpose and the same reason they are coming together now.”

While there were many reasons for the hiatus, he notes it was a very difficult time because the Church and Society weren’t quite ready yet for addressing the needs of Black Catholics.
The Josephites were the ones principally involved in the interface of the Church and Black Catholics so there was a need to expand that and make it more meaningful, in more meaningful ways,” he said. “That’s kind of what happened back then and we see the same purpose now.”

Major topics at this year’s Congress will include evangelization, Catholic education, parish life and ministry, vocations, social justice and the needs of the poor.

Bishop Ricard said the NBCC is growing and expanding. “As we will see from this assembly, it has support and interest,” he said of Congress XII. “It shows the importance of Black Catholics to coming together, to find a forum where their interests can be reinforced and there can be strategies developed to meet the current needs of African Americans.”

He added that the Congress is an opportunity for Black Catholics to live their faith as they meet the needs of the African American community.

“A SENSE OF HOPE AND FAITH IN EACH OTHER, ACCEPTANCE OF MUTUAL TOLERANCE AND RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER, DIVERSITY IN THE COUNTRY AND THE WORLD.”

Bishop Ricard has great hope for Congress XII. “My greatest hope is that we come together in faith and in love with a sense of purpose, renewal and focus on the needs seen today in America and in our world,” Bishop Ricard said, noting the perilous and uncertain times in which we are currently living. He said he hopes to “add more of a sense of hope and faith in each other, acceptance of mutual tolerance and respect for each other, diversity in the country and the world.”

Bishop Ricard said that given the current division in America and the divisive political campaign that our country just went through, there is opportunity to show unity and purpose we all share.

The bishop said the only way to address the challenges is to meaningfully work together. “The time is now, to revise the original vision which was of course for people to come together, to celebrate their faith and to share their faith with others. We want to recapture that spirit which existed years ago so that we can make a difference ourselves.”
When the assembled Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver gather in Dallas, July 21-26, they will be bringing together the largest organization of African-American Catholics in the world.

The annual event, which marks the 102nd meeting of the national group that was founded by four Josephite priests and three laymen, is an excellent opportunity to network and to share ideas.

According to James K. Ellis, Supreme Knight, “We encourage the members of all Councils and Courts to register and attend the National Convention. The National Convention provides an opportunity for attendees from different states and districts to network with one another and is also a perfect opportunity to share ideas for the programs of our noble objectives.”

The festive and informative convention includes a business meeting, workshops, keynote speakers and an awards dinner.

The event also will have a charitable focus. A fashion show luncheon will benefit Catholic Charities of Dallas and Fort Worth and a “white linen dance” will raise funds for the Earl Harvey Kidney Fund and the Tolton Educational Fund.

Special awards will be presented for the Cartegena Award, given to a Knight for service and achievement. The Good Neighbor Award will be presented to the top three Grand Assemblies that performed the most outstanding deeds for their fellowman and Claverism.
Junior Knights and Daughters engage youth

BY ARIANA CASSARD

When the Knights of Peter Claver gather in Kansas City, MO, for the 22nd Biennial National Convention in July, the Junior Knights and Junior Daughters will have a prominent role.

The convention is an opportunity for Junior members to exchange ideas, receive encouragement and discuss opportunities.

A strong community is created when young people are involved in leadership positions.

The Knights of Peter Claver, the largest African-American Catholic lay organization in the nation, created the Junior Division to encourage strong leadership skills for youth. The Junior Division has the same mission and structure as the Knights, but is comprised entirely of Catholic youth ages seven through 18.

The Junior Knights and Daughters have local and state divisions through which youth can gather to impact their community through events, conferences and community outreach.

This division enables youth to not only be part of a large organization, but to be leaders. Members enter into an election for leadership positions across the local, state and national levels.

Since the 2015 National Convention in Orlando, Junior Supreme Knight Carrington Guillory and Junior Supreme Lady Callia Cox have served in top leadership roles.

Carrington, 15, is a sophomore at St. Louis Catholic High School in Lake Charles, LA. He made history by succeeding his older brother, Creighton Guillory, as Junior Supreme Knight.

“While watching my brother conduct himself around the organization as Junior Supreme Knight, I knew that I could bring my leadership skills to the Junior Division,” said Carrington.

Callia was initiated into the Junior Division in Charleston, SC, where she lived until her family relocated to New Orleans last year. The 18-year-old is a senior at The Academy of Our Lady in New Orleans.

Both Carrington and Callia said they were honored to hold this office over the past two years. Their duties include writing speeches, traveling to local conferences, handling communication and planning for the upcoming Convention. According to Callia, preparations for the 22nd National Convention began over a year and a half ago.

Through their involvement in the Junior Division, Carrington and Callia are able to meet and work alongside Knights of Peter Claver in both the Senior and Junior Divisions.

As Junior Supreme Lady, Callia said that she has been changed by her experience. “This position has given me a voice, it’s taken me out of my comfort zone,” said Callia, who described herself as shy. She now feels she has a business mind and leadership skills that are more developed than most of her peers.

Both officers have been able to use their platform to bring attention to worldwide issues. Callia’s focus has been shining a light on homeless youth. “As kids we know how it feels to be a kid, but don’t know how it feels to be homeless, to have both of those burdens,” Callia told The Harvest.

She chose the Junior Daughters’ charity for this year’s convention, which is “Morning Glory Café,” a volunteer-run café tackling homelessness in Kansas City.

Carrington has focused his service around a housing project in Haiti, hosted by Cross Catholic Outreach. “Each home costs approximately $6,000, providing four rooms on a concrete slab,” said Carrington.

These are youth-led ideas, presented at a national level, with an international impact.

Carrington and Callia will soon pass the torch to a new pair of young leaders, elected at this year’s national convention. They both hope their successors will use their roles to listen to their fellow Juniors and create a pipeline for new ideas.
Celebrate the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus on June 23!

Do you know why the Josephites are called Saint Joseph’s Society of the Sacred Heart?

It’s because, inspired by Saint Joseph, the Josephites have a very special devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

This year the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart is June 23, which is 19 days after Pentecost. The Josephites lead an annual “Sacred Heart of Jesus Novena of Reparation for the Offenses Against Life.” You are invited to join us in this special novena. The Novena begins on June 23, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The Josephites lead this novena with special confidence because a devotion to the Sacred Heart is part of our name: The Society of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart has been ministering in the United States for more than 140 years. Please join us in this unique mission of evangelization.

The Josephites are Pro-Life and Pro-Family. Saint Joseph protected his family when they fled to Egypt as the Holy Innocents were being slaughtered in Nazareth. Today more than ever, we need this protection against the attacks against family life. And you can help!

As you know, there are many attacks against life – abortion, euthanasia, immoral stem cell research — that take place every day. During the month of June, you are invited to join the Josephites in prayer to make reparation for these sins against life. Every life is sacred. Every human life is made in the image and likeness of God. Every human life deserves our respect and protection. With your help, we can build a culture of life.

In June, the Josephites will pray in Reparation for Offenses Against Life. We will pray that the unjust acts against life — “God’s most precious gift” — will stop. You can add your prayer intentions to ours as we make reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by visiting www.josephite.org/prayer-requests.

May good Saint Joseph intercede for you and all your special intentions. You can be assured that we Josephites will be praying through the intercession of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for all your special needs and intentions.

“The heart has always been seen as the ‘center’ or essence a person (‘the heart of the matter,’ ‘you are my heart,’ ‘take it to heart,’ etc.) and the wellspring of our emotional lives and love (‘you break my heart,’ ‘my heart sings,’ etc.) Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is devotion to Jesus Christ Himself, but in the particular ways of meditating on his interior life and on His threelfold love — His divine love, His burning love that fed His human will, and His sensible love that affects His interior life.”

Pope Pius XII of blessed memory writes on this topic in his 1956 encyclical, Haurietis Aquas (On Devotion To The Sacred Heart).
It’s not all about Mary
Finding Joseph in the Basilica

BY DANIEL MEDINGER

Towering above the northeast section of the nation’s capital, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington welcomes more than a million visitors each year.

Pilgrims are in awe of the cultural mosaics and grandeur of this unique “American style” church.

While many chapels encourage devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph is prominently there, too.

In a large apse, east of the main altar, is a gigantic mosaic dedicated to St. Joseph, foster father of Jesus, and patron of the Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart.

Open 365 days a year, the Basilica is “a place of worship, pilgrimage, evangelization and reconciliation.” where “the faithful gather to worship God, give honor to Mary, and are sent to spread God’s Word wherever they go.”

Byzantine-Romanesque in style, its massive, one-of-a-kind superstructure is home to over 70 chapels and oratories that relate to the peoples, cultures and traditions that are the fabric of the Catholic faith and the mosaic of our great nation. The Basilica also houses the largest collection of contemporary ecclesiastical art on earth.

How massive is this church? One of the largest churches in the world, it is 495 feet in length and 240 feet wide. The upper church seats, 6,000 people.

Often referred to as “America’s Catholic church,” the Basilica exemplifies the “catholicity” or universality of the church, while echoing its unity and inclusiveness. The many chapels and oratories personify the cultural diversity of the United States and reverence that virtue, which they have in common, faith.

Among the nationalities represented in the Basilica’s chapels are African, Austrian, Byzantine-Ruthenian, Chinese, Cuban, Czech, Filipino, French, German, Guamanian, Indian, Irish, Italian, Korean, Latin American, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Slovak, Slovenian, and Vietnamese.

Its dominating dome stands over the high altar. It is here that the mosaic of St. Joseph is found.
MAY PROCESSION

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church held its May Procession on May 7. Gloria Moore and Maya Robinson (right) were crowned Senior May Queen and Junior May Queen, respectively. The event was sponsored by the OLPH Blessed Virgin Mary Sodality.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Parishioners from Saint Peter Claver and St. Pius V recently hosted a prayer walk to address the surge of violence in Baltimore city.

The walk focused on "points of light" within the parish community. No Boundaries Coalition coordinated with the parish to visit and pray over these sites. The first "point of light" was the Umar Boxing Center, where prayer walkers heard the story of a young boxer who was recently killed on the streets.

The second stop was the Druid Heights Community Center, a community-based organization that fosters empowerment.

The walk ended at the No Boundaries Coalition, which has a meeting space at the parish.
To celebrate women and all of the wonderful things they do, Our Mother of Mercy Parish in Houston, TX, hosted its Annual Women's Prayer Breakfast on Saturday, March 4. The breakfast is cooked and served by the men of the parish.

The theme this year was "Be not conformed to the things of this world, for this is not your home." The event's speaker was Mrs. Vickie Johnson, wife of Deacon Irving Johnson. Over 100 women were in attendance, with 15 visiting churches, Protestant and Catholic alike.
Back on April 13, we celebrated Holy Thursday. And, if you attended the Mass of the Lord’s Supper that evening, you will remember the Washing of the Feet.

Of all the ceremonies that we do in the Church, I think this is one of the most impressive. But there is a problem. It is celebrated on Holy Thursday – a day we commemorate the institution of the Holy Eucharist and the sacrament of Holy Orders – and the day we have the procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar of Repose, representing Jesus going to the Garden of Gethsemane where he would be arrested.

My concern is we lose a lot of the significance of what Jesus did when he washed the feet of the disciples because there is so much going on. So, I want to highlight two things from that event that are meaningful: the apron and the feet.

First the apron. St. John’s Gospel (13:4) tells us that Jesus took off his outer garments and put on an apron. People put on aprons when they are going to do some work. Sometimes the work can be messy. Often our mothers put them on when they cooked, did the dishes and when they cleaned. Thus, the apron is like the mantle of service. That is why I call the apron a holy thing.

Think of all the people who have put on the apron for you down through the years, to serve you, to help you and to be with you.

The Gospel calls us into service. It calls us to put on the apron to assist not only our family members, but strangers as well. Our final exam before the Lord is listed in St. Matthew’s Gospel, Chapter 25. We are to stand up for those who need our help. Love God – AND love your neighbor as yourself.

Then, there are the feet. Jesus washed the disciples’ feet. As the lowest extremities of the body, the feet bear all the weight.

So many people have aching feet because of their work. My mother was a waitress. She worked evening shifts. We were already in bed when she would come home. I knew her feet were aching because I remember the smell of Ben-gay in the morning.

People who work many hours for little pay – and even have to have another job to make ends meet – have the feet of the poor. Cashiers at the supermarket, delivery people, fast food clerks, mail carriers, to name a few. And, what about the people – men, women and children – who walk hundreds of miles to escape violence, war, discrimination, famine and hatred?

Yes, feet. They are important to us. They are a blessing. They carry our weight, they get us around, and they help us in our work.

Jesus’ sign of washing the feet of the disciples was to teach us how to be of service. That is what it means to be a Christian. Jesus told us that the greatest among you will serve the needs of all (Matt. 23:11). Let’s never allow that lesson to get away from us. We get busy and sometimes we just have to stop and review an important lesson like this every now and then.

Father Donald Fest, SSJ, is pastor of St. Joseph church in Alexandria, Virginia.
Many thanks to all of our Sustaining Partners, who together with loved ones, have been enrolled as Perpetual Members of the Josephites, benefiting them with prayerful daily remembrances by all Josephites.

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