

The Josephite Harvest

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PRIEST OF GOD



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(CNS photo/Paul Haring)

“Thanks be to God, throughout the history of the church it has always been clear that a person’s perfection is measured not by the information or knowledge they possess, but by the depth of their charity.”

– Pope Francis, in “Gaudete et Exultate” (“Rejoice and Be Glad”)

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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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FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL



Very Rev. Michael Thompson,
SSJ,
Superior General

Josephite Harvest

PUBLISHER

Josephite Fathers & Brothers
Father Michael L. Thompson, SSJ
Superior General

EDITORIAL TEAM

Donald M. Fest, SSJ
Francis M. Hull, SSJ

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Advertising Media Plus (AMPs)
www.ampsinc.net

MISSION/HARVEST

OFFICE

1-844-249-5730
harvest@josephite.com

WEBSITE

www.josephites.org

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to:
The Josephite Harvest
911 W. Lake Avenue, Suite B
Baltimore, MD 21210
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Dear Friend of the Josephites:

As we begin our celebration of summer, this issue of *The Josephite Harvest* gives us ample insights into the past and the future.

In 2018 the Josephites are celebrating 125 years of ministry in the United States. Our parishes are planning local celebrations. Nationally, we will host a weekend celebration in Baltimore, where the Josephites first started their ministry.

Father Roderick Coates, SSJ, is heading up the anniversary committee. He has extended a “save the date” invitation for those who can celebrate with us Friday, Nov. 16 to Sunday, Nov. 18 in Baltimore. All of the festivities are not finalized but we will be celebrating Mass with Baltimore Archbishop William Lori as lead celebrant at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A banquet will follow. Also, a tour of locations important to the early years of the Josephites is planned. I hope you can join us.

I always look forward to the Jubilarian Mass at St. Joseph Seminary in Washington in early May. This year, we celebrated the jubilees of eight Josephites. Those recognized are: For 50 years, Bishop John Ricard; Father Joseph Rodney; Father James Fallon; Father John McBrearty; and Father Joseph Doyle. For 40 years, Father Thomas Frank. And, for 25 years, Father Michael Saah-Buckman and Father Henry Davis. All combined, these Josephites have provided 340 years of ministry in the African-American community.

Also in May, we gathered to celebrate the ordination of Father Kingsley Chukwudiebube Ogbuji, SSJ. Several of his family members from Nigeria joined us and the liturgy at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Washington was a wonderful celebration of the sacrament of Holy Orders. I hope that you are praying each day that more men will be open to the call to priestly service.

In this issue of *The Harvest*, we continue our 125th anniversary series looking at how Josephites provided religious, academic and technical education opportunities at our parishes, schools and special outlets. With the help of St. Katharine Drexel and others, the Josephites expand our ministry across the United States, often under difficult circumstances and racism. We also led the way in promoting African-American vocations for priests, brothers and deacons.

And the work of education goes on. Don’t miss the story about how the Josephite school in Baton Rouge is teaching non-violence to elementary students.

Yes, we look back to celebrate the past and look forward to plan for the future. Along the way, we remember that the work is ours to do and it is the Lord who gives the harvest. I pray that your summer will be abundant with blessings.

Very Rev. Michael Thompson, SSJ
Superior General and Publisher

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Very Rev. Michael Thompson, SSJ". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Very Rev. Michael Thompson, SSJ
Superior General and Publisher

Josephites welcome new priest in joyous liturgy



Father Kingsley Chukwudiebube Ogbuji, SSJ, beams following his ordination to the priesthood May 19 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Washington, D.C. (Kevin J. Parks/Special to the Harvest)

BY KEVIN J. PARKS

On the morning he was to be ordained a Josephite priest at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Washington, D.C., May 19, Kingsley Chukwudiebube Ogbuji spent time alone in quiet prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

As a child in his native Nigeria, his late father, Peter Ogbuji, instilled in his son the importance of prayer, insisting that “without prayer, you cannot do much.”

Now, on the day that would begin a priestly ministry focused on celebrating the sacraments, leading others in prayer and serving the people of God, Kingsley Ogbuji heeded his father’s advice with special intensity.

“I asked (the Blessed Virgin Mary) not only to make today a wonderful day,” the future priest said, “but also the rest of my life on this journey – and that God will give me the grace, power and courage to witness him.”

The serene moment contrasted with a joyous scene inside the church only moments later during an ordination liturgy marked not only by solemn ritual, but unfettered joy.

As part of the ancient ordination rite, Father Ogbuji made promises of service, prayer and obedience to his

diocesan bishop and Josephite superior. He prostrated himself near the sanctuary while those in the congregation chanted the Litany of the Saints.

Bishop John Ricard, SSJ, the ordaining prelate, laid his hands on Father Ogbuji’s head – conferring the gift of the Holy Spirit. One by one, his brother Josephites did the same as many in the packed church snapped photos.

“May he be a worthy co-worker with us,” Bishop Ricard said, “so that by his preaching and through the grace of the Holy Spirit the words of the Gospel may bear fruit in human hearts and reach even to the ends of the earth.”

Father Donald Fest, SSJ, vested Father Ogbuji in the stole and chasuble of a priest before Bishop Ricard anointed Father Ogbuji’s hands and presented him a chalice and paten.

The Nigerian Catholic Community Choir from St. Jerome Parish in Hyattsville sang traditional Nigerian hymns in the Igbo language, while the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Choir led the congregation in song.

Nigerian Americans, dressed in traditional clothing with brilliant hues of purple, blue, yellow and green, were among a congregation whose members

clapped, waved arms in prayer and sometimes shouted, “Amen!”

Members of the Knights and Auxiliary of St. Peter Claver, as well as members of the Knights of Columbus also attended.

In his homily, Bishop Ricard told Father Ogbuji the fire of the Holy Spirit had been set in the 31-year-old priest’s heart, mind, soul and bones.

“People are going to be dependent on you,” the bishop said. “Don’t let that fire go out.”

Sitting next to Father Ogbuji in the front pew during Mass was his mother, Chioma Ogbuji, two sisters and other family members, who traveled two days from Umuahia, Nigeria, to attend. They had not seen each other in person for seven years.

A mother’s unmistakable pride showed through Mrs. Ogbuji’s smile all during Mass.

“The Lord has done it,” said Mrs. Ogbuji, an elementary school teacher. “I am grateful to God who made this possible.”

At the close of Mass, Bishop Ricard knelt before Father Ogbuji for a blessing, followed immediately by the new priest’s mother.

After the ordination, Father Michael Thompson, SSJ, Josephite superior general, welcomed Father Ogbuji as the Baltimore-based religious community’s newest priest.

“We’ll always be there for you,” he said.

Father Ogbuji said his family has been supportive of his religious vocation. He is the third of four children, and his parents gave their eldest male child a middle name meaning “God is glorious.”

A friend introduced Father Ogbuji to the Josephites. As he studied the community’s history and mission to the African-American community, Father Ogbuji saw similarities between the history of African-American segregation and abandonment and the people of Israel during their exile in Egypt.

“A Josephite for me is like Moses who works for the spiritual liberation and justice of an oppressed people,” said Father Ogbuji, who studied at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C., and holds two bachelor’s degrees in philosophy from the Pontifical Urban University in Rome and Imo State University in Nigeria. He completed his master’s of divinity and master’s of arts in theology.

After his ordination, Father Ogbuji said his priesthood was made possible by the spirit of the living God.

“I’ll continue to pray to be faithful to the ministry the he has given to me,” he said.

George P. Matysek Jr. contributed to this article.



Top: Father Donald Fest., SSJ, lays hands on Father Kingsley ChukwudiebubeOgbuji, SSJ, during the new priest’s May 19 ordination Mass in Washington; Bishop John Ricard presents a chalice to Father Ogbuji. (Kevin J. Parks/Special to the Harvest)

Facing page, left to right: Father Michael Thompson, SSJ, congratulates Father Ogbuji; Father Ogbuji prostrates himself in the sanctuary; Chioma Ogbuji, Father Ogbuji’s mother, smiles at her son; Members of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Choir sing. (Kevin J. Parks/Special to the Harvest)



340 Years

Josephite priests mark milestones in ministry



Jubilarians pose with the Josephite superior general. From left are Father Joseph Rodney, SSJ; Father James Fallon, SSJ; Father Michael Saah-Buckman, SSJ; Father John McBrearty, SSJ; Father Joseph Doyle, SSJ; Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ; Father Henry Davis, SSJ, Father Michael Thompson, SSJ, (Josephite superior general), Father Roderick Coates, SSJ, Vicar General and Father Thomas Frank, SSJ. (Karen Osborne/Special to the Harvest).

BY KAREN OSBORNE

Morning sunlight streamed into the chapel at St. Joseph's Seminary in Washington, D.C., May 1 as a packed congregation gathered to sing, pray and celebrate Mass in honor of the eight Josephite priests celebrating their jubilee years.

Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ, Father Joseph Doyle, SSJ; Father James Fallon, SSJ, Father John McBrearty, SSJ, and Father Joseph Rodney, SSJ, celebrated 50 years.

Father Thomas Frank, SSJ, marked his 40th jubilee, while Father Henry Davis, SSJ, and Father Michael Saah-Buckman, SSJ, each celebrated 25 years.

Together, the jubilarians have given more than 340 years of joyful presence and committed service to African-American Catholics across the country, working for peace during the Civil Rights movement and thereafter, laboring to rebuild communities after Hurricane Katrina, and bringing the Good News of Christ to parishes, "hospitals, jails, schools – where people are waiting to receive the Word all these years," according to Father Doyle, who served as homilist.

"These men have paved the way through the struggle of difficult times in our community, our government, in justice, peace, against racism," said Father

Michael L. Thompson, SSJ, superior general. "They ministered, doing the work of God, to people who were downtrodden, during those periods of time when it was most necessary to care for the flock, because that's what Christ told them: to be disciples, following the instructions of Christ to go teach all nations."

Bishop Ricard, rector of the seminary, celebrated the Mass on the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. He told the congregation that each jubilarian "celebrates with a profound sense of thanksgiving and wonder."

Father Doyle, the seminary's spiritual director, echoed that statement.

"It's beyond imagining," Father Doyle said, "Just being in that seminary chapel – never in my wildest dreams did I expect to be there 50 years later to celebrate a golden jubilee. By the grace of God, there we were, our class of 1968."

Father Doyle first heard the call to the priesthood in elementary school, where he read stories about the Josephites in *The Harvest*. The decision to enter the society came after seeing the example of a courageous Jesuit sociology professor advocate for civil rights "when it wasn't popular," standing his ground despite upsetting benefactors of his college, he said.



From left, Father Henry Davis, SSJ; Father Thomas Frank, SSJ; Father John McBrearty, SSJ; and Father James Fallon, SSJ, exchange the sign of peace at their jubilarian Mass at St. Joseph Seminary in Washington, D.C., May 1. (Karen Osborne/Special to the Harvest)



Father Joseph Doyle, SSJ, delivers the homily at the jubilarian Mass for Josephites May 1 at St. Joseph Seminary in Washington, D.C. (Karen Osborne/Special to the Harvest)

Fifty years later, Father Doyle considers time spent in the communities and schools in which he served among his most rewarding, alongside meeting St. John Paul II, celebrating Mass in Czestochowa, Poland, and co-founding the Woman's Life Center crisis pregnancy center in New Orleans.

"The best part about serving the African-American community is the spirituality," he said, "their deep faith, their approach to suffering – not just physical, or through poverty, but emotional suffering through prejudice and discrimination."

Father Frank, pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Washington, D.C., felt "uplifted" by marking his 40th jubilee in the company of family and friends.

Like Father Doyle, Father Frank's journey began as an altar server in his home parish and developed into a vocation through the example of a courageous priest – his uncle, a Josephite, who would tell stories about the "joy of his ministry and his priesthood" while home for the holidays, he said.

Spending a year as a seminarian at St. Raymond

Help on the priestly journey

BY KAREN OSBORNE

When eight Josephite priests gathered at St. Joseph's Seminary to celebrate their jubilees, homilist Father Joseph Doyle, SSJ, wanted to make sure another aspect of the Josephite story was also highlighted.

Each vocation, he said, is a personal story about how God reached into the hearts and lives of each priest present. Yet the community that brought the men to the chapel – the friends, relatives and parishioners who have offered "tremendous support" – is also key, he said.

The priest credited the attendees with starting ongoing ministries, sending care packages while the jubilarians were in seminary, helping with money and manpower after Josephite parishes and schools in Louisiana were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, or sending letters of support during tough times.

"You kept in touch with us out of love, and we are grateful," Father Doyle said. "We didn't get where we are today without the people who are sitting in this chapel. You really came to our rescue."

During the Mass, the priests held a moment of silence for Father Wilbur Atwood, SSJ, who died in April in advance of his 60th jubilee.

Father Doyle exhorted the congregation to continue to pray for the jubilarians – and for Josephites everywhere.

"Since our work is primarily spiritual, what will help us the most will be spiritual," Father Doyle said.



Josephites exchange a fist bump during the May 1 jubilarian Mass at St. Joseph Seminary in Washington, D.C. (Karen Osborne/Special to the Harvest)

Parish in New Orleans “sealed the deal,” Father Frank said.

“The people there were so warm and hospitable,” he said. “They pulled you in like a magnet.”

Another important time in Father Frank’s priesthood was spent at St. Veronica in Baltimore, where he worked to develop affordable housing, advocated for equal distribution of funds in public schools and for better community policing. He also worked in Marriage Encounter, a ministry in which he still participates.

Father Fallon looks back on many “moments of deep satisfaction” spent working with people as a parish priest, and continues to exhort Catholics to recommit to fighting injustice and “redefine our commitment to the African-American community,” to supporting family life and fighting prejudice, he said.

During his 50th jubilee year, he has found an opportunity to “look seriously at the call and the special friendship of Christ as the source of priesthood,” and hopes younger priests can do the same.

“Before you start doing anything – projects, anything – make sure your prayer life is strong,” he said. “That’s the foundation. Holiness is not some sanctimonious front. Holiness is a genuine love that you have for Christ and a response for his love for you.”

The jubilee was a day of celebration, said Father Davis, who ministers at St. Augustine High School in New Orleans. The next day, however, would be “back to work” for all of the priests. That, he said with a smile, was the point.

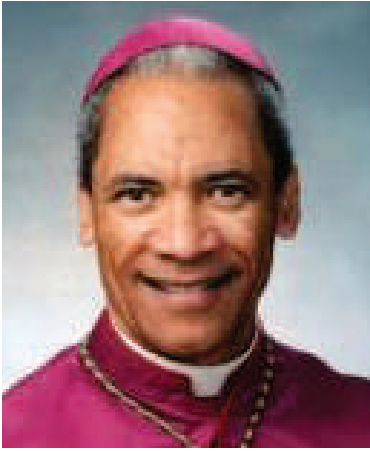


Father Michael Saah-Buckman, SSJ; Father Henry Davis, SSJ; Father Thomas Frank, SSJ; Father Joseph Rodney, SSJ; Father John McBrearty, SSJ; Father James Fallon, SSJ; and Father Joseph Doyle, SSJ, are seated together at their jubilarian Mass May 1 at St. Joseph Seminary in Washington, D.C. (Karen Osborne/Special to the Harvest)



Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ, congratulates his fellow jubilarians during a May 1 Mass at St. Joseph Seminary in Washington, D.C. (Karen Osborne/Special to the Harvest)

Meet the Jubilarians



Bishop John Houston Ricard, SSJ – 50 Years

Bishop Ricard was born in New Roads, La., on Feb. 29, 1940, and attended Josephite, St. Francis Xavier Parochial and High Schools in Baton Rouge, La. After graduation in 1958, he entered Epiphany College in Newburgh, N.Y., to begin studies for the Josephite priesthood which continued through novitiate and St. Joseph Seminary until priestly ordination in St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge by Bishop Robert Tracy on May 25, 1968.

Father Ricard's first assignment was as an assistant at St. Peter Claver parish in New Orleans while studying for a master's degree at Tulane University. In 1972 he was made pastor of Holy Comforter/St. Cyprian parish in Washington for five years while also studying at Catholic University as a Ph.D. candidate. During that time, he was elected Josephite Consultor General and served for two years.

In 1980, Father Ricard was named pastor at Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish in Washington. While in this role, he was appointed auxiliary bishop of Baltimore and ordained on July 2, 1984, taking up residence at the Josephite parish rectory of St. Francis Xavier in the city.

Bishop Ricard was chairman of the board of Baltimore-based Catholic Relief Services from 1996 to 2001. In 1997, he was appointed Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee, Fla., and served until impaired health caused his retirement on March 11, 2011.

In November of 2011, Bishop Ricard was appointed rector of the Josephite St. Joseph Seminary in Washington, where he serves today and is celebrating his 50th year as a priest, of which 34 years were as bishop.



Father Joseph Matfeldt Doyle, SSJ – 50 Years

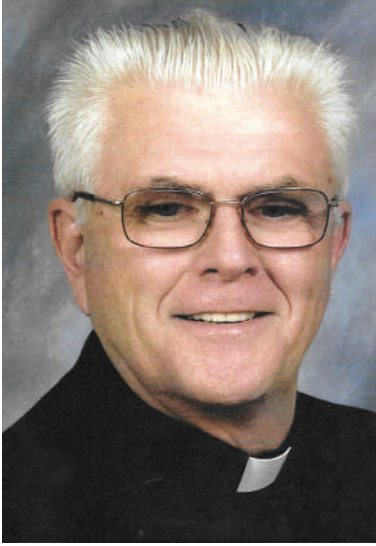
Father Doyle is a native Baltimorean, born on Nov. 18, 1938. After attending Loyola and Wheeling Colleges, he entered the Josephite minor seminary in Newburgh, New York, to begin studies for the priesthood in 1961.

After completing his theological training at St. Joseph Seminary, he was ordained at Holy Comforter/St. Cyprian Church in Washington by Archbishop Patrick O'Boyle on June 1, 1968.

Holy Family Church in Natchez, Mississippi, was his first assignment as assistant pastor, lasting two years. For the next two years he was Newman chaplain at Tuskegee Institute, Ala. Then he was sent as Newman chaplain and pastor of St. Martin de Porres Church in Prairie View, Texas. From 1976 to 1983, Father Doyle was pastor of Our Mother of Mercy Church in Houston, Texas. He served also

as the Area Director for the Diocese of Dallas while in these two pastorates. The next two years were spent pastoring Holy Cross, a former Josephite parish in Corpus Christi, Texas. Two years followed at St. Peter parish, Houston, while again serving as diocesan dean.

For the next four years (1988-1992) Father Doyle became director of the Josephite House of Studies in New Orleans and also served on the staff of St. Augustine High School. In 1992, he was made the president of St. Augustine High School until 2010, when he became president emeritus until 2014. He then became Josephite novice director and spiritual director of the seminary.



Father James Patrick Fallon, SSJ – 50 Years

Father Fallon is a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., born on Oct. 7, 1940. Following graduation from St. Michael High School and after two years at St. John's University in Brooklyn, he entered the Josephite minor seminary in Newburgh, N.Y., continuing at St. Joseph Seminary in Washington, D.C. There, on June 1, 1968, he was ordained to the priesthood in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Father Fallon was first assigned to St. Paul's University in Ottawa, Canada, for advanced degrees in theology before being made dean of studies at St. Joseph's Seminary Washington in 1972. Two years later, he was on the staff of Epiphany College in Newburgh.

Father Fallon's first pastoral position was as an assistant at Corpus Christ parish in New Orleans. Two years later, he was made pastor of St. Therese Church in Gulfport, Miss. After seven years, he was assigned as pastor at St. Joseph Parish in Tuskegee, Ala. Three years later he was moved to Houston, Texas, as pastor of St. Peter

the Apostle Parish for seven years during which time he also served as an area director for the Diocese of Galveston-Houston.

In 1997, Father Fallon began a four-year pastorate at St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Chastang, Ala., followed by 10 years as pastor of St. Francis Xavier in Breaux Bridge, La. In those years, he was twice elected Josephite Area V Director. For the last two years he has been pastor of Immaculate Conception parish in Lebeau, La., where he is happily celebrating the 50th year of his priesthood.



Father John Joseph McBrearty, SSJ – 50 Years

Father McBrearty, born March 23, 1931, is from Kilkar County, Donegal, Ireland. After studies in Ireland, he came to Chicago and worked for four years. In 1958 he felt called to study for the Josephite priesthood and entered Epiphany College in Newburgh, N.Y., and continued through the novitiate and St. Joseph Seminary. On June 1, 1968, he was ordained by Cardinal Patrick O'Boyle in Holy Comforter/St. Cyprian Church in Washington.

His first two priestly years were spent as an assistant pastor St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Washington. For the next six years, he served as assistant at Epiphany parish in New Orleans. He came back north in 1974 to minister for three years as assistant at Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish in Washington.

Father McBrearty's first assignment as pastor was to Immaculate Conception parish in Lebeau, La. In 1981, he moved to Houston, Texas, to pastor Our Lady Star of the Sea Church. Four years later saw a two-year pastorate at Prince of Peace parish in Mobile, Ala.,

followed by a six-year pastoral ministry at St. Francis of Assisi Church at Breaux Bridge, La. He managed the transmission of St. Joseph Parish in Wilmington, Del., to the Franciscans during his next year as pastor.

The following 16 years saw Father McBrearty as pastor at Sacred Heart, Raywood, Texas, (three years), St. Joseph, Alexandria, Va., (five years) and St. Augustine, New Roads, Louisiana, (eight years). He is presently renovating the 86-year-old church of St. Therese of Lisieux in Gulfport, Miss., where he is enjoying his 87th birthday in the 50th year of his priesthood.



Father Joseph Conway Rodney, SSJ – 50 Years

Father Rodney was born in Darrow, La., on Feb. 7, 1938, and raised in the Josephite parish of St. Augustine in New Roads, La. At age 20, he entered the Josephite minor seminary and continued through St. Joseph Seminary in Washington. He was ordained a Josephite priest by Bishop Robert Tracy in St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge, La., on May 25, 1968.

Father Rodney's first four priestly years were spent as an assistant pastor at St. Luke Parish in Washington. He then moved to Beaumont, Texas, and Blessed Sacrament Church where he ministered three years as assistant pastor and the following four, beginning in 1975, as pastor. During that time, he also served as the diocesan director of the Black Apostolate and on the diocesan priests' council.

Father Rodney served four years as Newman chaplain at Southern University in Baton Rouge and from 1983 to 1986 as pastor of Holy Comforter/St. Cyprian Parish in Washington. The following year he pastored at St. Lucy/St. Luke parish in Thibodeaux, La., and then another seven as pastor of Prince of Peace Parish in Mobile, Ala. From 1994 to 1998 he was pastor at St. Benedict the Moor Church in Napoleonville, La.

His longest service was his 13 years as pastor of Our Lady of Grace Parish in Reserve, La. He also served as the Josephite Area Director III part of that time.

For the next two years, Father Rodney was in retirement, and, since 2013, has been on pastoral service in the area of his residence at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Baton Rouge where he is celebrating the 50th year of his priesthood.



Father Thomas Robert Frank, SSJ – 40 Years

Father Frank was born far west in Portland, Ore., on Oct. 9, 1953. He attended Central Catholic High School in Portland and graduated from Blanchet High School in Seattle in 1969. He entered the Josephite minor seminary in Newburgh, N.Y., that same year. He continued through the novitiate and St. Joseph Seminary in Washington and was ordained by Josephite Bishop Eugene Marino in the Josephite Church of St. Benedict the Moor in Washington on May 28, 1978.

His first two years of priestly ministry were as an assistant at St. Benedict the Moor Parish in Washington followed by five more as an assistant at Our Mother of Mercy Church in Houston, Texas. He was made pastor in 1985 of St. Peter Claver in Houston, where he served four years and then on to Washington as pastor for three years at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish. Then followed a seven-year assignment as director of the Josephite House of Studies in New Orleans. During these assignments, Father Frank was active in Marriage Encounter, church-based community organizing and

vocation work.

Father Frank was appointed to a four-year position as rector of St. Joseph Seminary in Washington in 2003. Then came a five-year ministry as pastor at St. Brigid parish in Los Angeles, during which time he was elected Consultor General of the Josephites. He continues in that position in Washington, again at Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish since 2011, where he is rounding out a full, 40 years in the priesthood.



Father Henry Julius Davis, SSJ – 25 Years

Father Davis was born in Quantico, Va., on July 2, 1966. His high school training was at St. Augustine and St. John Prep in New Orleans, graduating from the Prep in 1984 and Xavier University in 1989. He began his seminary training at St. Joseph Seminary and was ordained at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore by Cardinal William H. Keeler on May 15, 1993.

Father Davis started his ministry at St. Luke Parish in Washington for a three-year term as pastoral assistant and assistant vocation director for the society. Another three years of pastoral ministry followed at St. Raymond Parish in New Orleans, which included faculty service at St. Augustine High School. Three years of service as administrator of Epiphany Parish in New Orleans followed along with faculty membership at St. Augustine High School. A move in 2006 to Beaumont, Texas, brought him a year's ministry as parochial administrator at Our Mother of Mercy/Blessed Sacrament

Parish. That was followed by a six-year term as pastor, during which he was also elected Josephite Director of Area III.

In 2012, Father Davis was appointed rector of St. Joseph the Worker Formation House in Iperu Remo in Nigeria. Two years later he returned to the States and to Our Mother of Mercy Parish at Church Point, La., as pastor. He was again elected Josephite Director of Area III, but resigned to take up his current positions as pastor of Corpus Christi/Epiphany Church, New Orleans and chief religious officer at St. Augustine High School. He celebrated 25 years of Josephite priestly service this spring.



Father Michael Kwah Saah-Buckman, SSJ – 25 Years

Father Saah-Buckman was born in Acra, Ghana, on June 23, 1955. His early education was at the Catholic elementary school in Ayolon and at St. Teresa Minor Seminary in Amisano Elmina as well as St. Peter Regional Seminary in Pedu, Cape Coast, Ghana.

Father Saah-Buckman entered the Josephite program of priestly studies in 1987, beginning at Xavier University in New Orleans and ending at St. Joseph's Seminary in Washington. He was ordained a priest by Cardinal William H. Keeler at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore on May 15, 1993.

Father Saah-Buckman's first ministerial assignment was for three years at Corpus Christi Parish in New Orleans, serving as an associate pastor. In 1996, he was appointed to his first pastorate at St. Francis Xavier parish in Baton Rouge, La., continuing in that role for eight years. In 2004, he assumed the pastorate of Holy Family Parish in Natchez, Miss., which continued for four years. He was then assigned for the next four years further south, at All Saints Parish in New Orleans.

For the past six years, Father Saah-Buckman has been ministering as pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Houston, Texas. It is there where he will be celebrating his 25th year as a priest during the Josephite year celebrating its 125th jubilee.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

FATHER WILBUR

JOSEPH ATWOOD, SSJ

Father Wilbur Joseph Atwood, SSJ, died on St. Joseph Feast Day, 2018. A longtime teacher and staff member at St. Augustine High School in New Orleans, he would have celebrated his 90th birthday June 1 and his 60th year in the priesthood June 15.

Wilbur J. Atwood was born on June 1, 1928, in Great Barrington, Mass. He was the third child of George and Mary Hart-Atwood and was baptized in the local St. Peter's Catholic Church. Educated in the town's public schools, he entered St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart, minor seminary in Newburgh, N.Y., in 1949 following high school graduation in 1946. He continued through the novitiate year and in 1952 entered St. Joseph Seminary in Washington, D.C.

After philosophical and theological studies, he was ordained to the priesthood on June 15, 1958, by Bishop John McNamara, at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Washington, D.C.

Father Atwood's first assignment was to Holy Family Parish in Natchez, Miss., as a parochial vicar. He also taught in the parish's St. Francis High School.

In 1960, he received an appointment to teach at St. Augustine High School in New Orleans that lasted until illness forced his retirement in 2017.



Over a span of 57 years, Father Atwood's assignment at St. Augustine's covered several positions in addition to classroom teaching. He served multiple terms as vice-rector and as rector of Josephite Faculty House. In 1985 he became the high school librarian, a position he fondly treasured through the library's expansion into a new and spacious setting in 2005. Father Atwood continued schooling and gained his master's degree. He also served as director of finances at the school.

While remaining in teaching positions, Father Atwood resided and assisted in several New Orleans parishes. Having served 60 years of priesthood in his 90 years of life, may the many students and persons he encountered prosper in wisdom and love. May almighty God grant you peace.

Father Atwood's funeral was held at Corpus Christi Catholic Church in New Orleans on March 26. The internment was at St. Louis No. 3 cemetery's, Josephite Crypt.

Josephites' first African priest looks back on 25 years

BY ERIK ZYGMONT

For a priest whose journey – across the world and to multiple parishes – has been full of change, Father Michael Saah-Buckman, SSJ, has kept his focus on that which cannot change.

“I love to create a spiritual atmosphere,” said Father Saah-Buckman, who in 1993 was the first African to be ordained a Josephite priest, by Cardinal William H. Keeler, then archbishop of the Baltimore Archdiocese.

Currently serving as pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Houston, Father Saah-Buckman celebrated the 25th anniversary of his priesthood with his parishioners May 19 and 20.

Born in Ghana June 23, 1955, Father Saah-Buckman, second of 18 children in a devout Catholic family, initially discerned the call to priesthood at age 15. The associate pastor of his parish in the central region of Ghana asked him if he wanted to become a priest – Father Saah-Buckman’s emphatic “yes” contrasted sharply with the negative answer he had given to the same man just two years prior, according to a profile provided by St. Francis Xavier.

After high school and some seminary training in Ghana, and a bit of additional discernment, Father Saah-Buckman joined the Josephites in 1987. He had discovered the Society through spiritual directors and priest friends and was powerfully drawn to it.

“It was because they had the



Father Michael Saah-Buckman, SSJ, pastor, washes parishioners’ feet at the Holy Thursday liturgy at St. Francis Xavier in Houston. (Courtesy St. Francis Xavier, Houston)

one-track mission,” Father Saah-Buckman explained. “I wanted to commit to that one track – helping the African-American community.”

He studied at Xavier University in New Orleans and entered the novitiate in Houston.

He completed his major seminary studies at the De Sales School of Theology and the Theological Consortium, both in Washington, D.C.

Father Saah-Buckman’s first assignment was as associate pastor of Corpus Christi Church in New Orleans. He served as pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church in Baton Rouge, La., from 1996 to 2004, and of Holy Family Church in Natchez, Miss., from 2004 to 2008, and of All Saints Church in New Orleans from 2008 to 2012.

He received a warm welcome and continuing hospitality from the community he committed to serve.

“I appreciate where (African Americans) have been, and they have been happy to integrate me into their culture and accept me into it,” he said.

Father Saah-Buckman has shepherded parishes that include school communities, such as St.

Francis Xavier in Baton Rouge and Holy Family. A new roof on the former is among the building and property improvements over which he has presided over the years.

All worthy tasks Father Saah-Buckman has tackled with gusto, but he is clear about his priorities.

“I hope I’ve left some spiritual marks on people,” he said. “Yes, we’ve made improvements, but spiritual growth is more important than the buildings.”

He backs up his words by offering the sacrament of reconciliation prior to all four weekend Masses at St. Francis Xavier.

The parish is also in the process of completing a prayer garden, a space to “just come in and spend a moment or two in quiet reflection,” Father Saah-Buckman said.

“Catholics and non-Catholics are welcome,” he added.

His favorite ministry? Visiting the sick and shut-ins.

“I operate on the principle that, if for any reason, you can’t come to the church, then the church has to come to you,” he said, citing a simple passage from the Book of Proverbs: “Take good care of your flocks, give ample attention to your herds” (Pr 27:23).

Successor to slain civil rights leader urges unity

BY CHRISTOPHER GUNTY

The Rev. Raphael G. Warnock invited those attending an inter-faith/ecumenical prayer service April 12 at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Baltimore to join hands.

As all in the nearly full cathedral did so, Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori joined hands with Mayor Catherine Pugh and Darryl DeSouza, then the city's police commissioner.

Rev. Warnock, senior pastor of Atlanta's historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, invited the congregation to imagine a great multitude looking into each other's eyes unafraid.

The preacher said he asked one of those in this vision what was happening.

"He said, 'It is the kingdom of God imbued with love and justice,' and so I asked, 'Where is this?'" Rev. Warnock said.

"And he answered, 'It exists already in the hearts of those who have the courage to believe and struggle.' And so I asked, 'When



is this?' And he answered, 'When we learned the simple art of loving each other as sisters and brothers.'

Rev. Warnock, spiritual successor to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., was invited by Archbishop Lori to be the guest preacher to commemorate the April 4, 1968, assassination of Rev. King.

Archbishop Lori said the goal was to "remember that tragic day 50 years ago when we lost one of the greatest leaders our nation has ever produced."

"Fifty years after the death of his earthly body, his spirit and his words and his example continue to be present among us," he said. "And what a true tragedy it would be if we ever stop opening our hearts and our minds to the teachings he shared with us, not only in words but in actions."

Archbishop Lori, who published a pastoral letter on Rev. King's



principles of nonviolence earlier this year, noted that April 12 was the third anniversary of the arrest of Freddie Gray Jr., whose death from injuries suffered in police custody touched off days of unrest in the city.

"As we saw three years ago in communities all over the city, people helped each other, neighbors of every race and creed helped their fellow neighbor," Archbishop Lori said.

Rev. Warnock said Rev. King "recognized that there was racial bias and he was honest about it. Translation: It was the 1963 version of 'Black Lives Matter,'" Rev. Warnock said. "He was the best kind of patriot because he loved the country enough to tell the country the truth."

Gunty is editor of Catholic Review Media, the media arm of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Conference calls for action against racism

BY DEACON AL ANDERSON

On the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in solidarity with the struggle to eradicate racism, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) and its partners and endorsers, including Pax Christi, the Franciscan Action Network, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), the Sisters of St. Francis and the Columban Fathers gathered in Washington, D.C. April 4 to launch a truth and racial

justice initiative called "Awaken, Confront, Transform (ACT). The group was called to:

AWAKEN to the truth that racism is ever-present, deeply rooted in American culture, and profoundly damaging to our communities.

CONFRONT racism, speak truth to ourselves, our communities and institutions, and stand against injustice.

TRANSFORM the hearts, minds and behaviors of people and structures that shape society.

The NCC representatives and Dr. Sharon Watkins, ACT Now



coordinator, drew correlations between the involvement of clergy then and now, emphasizing how only through honest, forceful and loving confrontation of the evil of racism can true transformation of hearts, minds and systems occur.

Blessing and burden

Josephites sacrificed to bring education to Black children



BY GEORGE P. MATYSEK JR.

Although the Josephites of the late 19th- and early 20th centuries lacked manpower and money, that didn't stop them in their relentless quest to open Catholic schools in the geographically far-flung areas they served.

Josephite leaders made it a priority because they saw education as the means of improving conditions in the African-American community. They also believed parish schools were key to nurturing and spreading the Catholic faith.

"The general rule was immediately to try to establish an elementary school after the church was built," said Father Edward Chiffriller, SSJ, pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Baton Rouge, La., and a former superior general of the Josephites. "The early Josephites discovered that there were very few public elementary schools in the towns and cities where we served that would educate Black children."

Catholic schools were critical for establishing a sense of community, according to Dr. Stephen J. Ochs, author of "Desegregating the Altar: The Josephites and the Struggle for Black Priests 1871-1960."

"The schools became a real focus for the parish and for African-American Catholics who were a minority within a minority," Ochs explained.

As much as they were a blessing, Ochs said, schools were also a significant burden.

"The Josephites were trying to scrounge together enough money to pay the pittance of a salary that their lay teachers received,"



An undated file photo shows a Sister of the Presentation of the BVM with students at St. Lucy School in Houma, La. (Josephite archives)

said Ochs, a history teacher at Georgetown Preparatory School in Rockville, Md. "The Josephites themselves ended up teaching part-time in some of their schools."

St. Katharine Drexel helped the Josephites by contributing money to establish schools among their parishes. St. Katharine's religious community, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, also taught in some Josephite schools, as did women of other religious congregations including the Oblate Sisters of Providence, Sisters of the Holy Family and others.

Schools staffed by religious communities adapted the educational approaches of their orders, Ochs said, but there was not a systematic approach among those schools staffed by lay people.

"It followed the pastor's lead and the person to whom he turned the school over to run," Ochs explained.

One unique and innovative aspect of early Josephite education was that some students received catechetical training from African-American Josephite seminarians, Ochs said. The Josephites required their Black priesthood candidates to interrupt seminary training to do catechetical work in parishes and schools.

Two of those seminarians, Wallace O'Hare and John Green, went to Jarratt, Va., circa 1900 to open a Catholic school. Their efforts were met with opposition by Black Protestants, who warned that the Catholic Church sought to reintroduce slavery, according to Ochs' research.

O'Hare and Green attended protest meetings and alleviated the concerns of the opponents, Ochs said. They opened the school, recruiting 60 students ranging in age from 6 to 28.

Father Frank Hull, SSJ, archivist for the Josephites, said one of the great missionary efforts in Josephite education came from Father John McShane, SSJ, in the middle of the 20th century. The priest was successful in recruiting 14 Presentation Sisters from New York to operate a grammar school and high school for more than 18 years in Houma, La.

"There was, at the time, no public high school for Blacks in Houma," said Father Hull, noting that the school buildings are still in use as a diocesan office building and a day-care center.

In addition to parish schools, Josephite faith communities operated religious education programs for children not enrolled in Catholic schools.

The number of students in Josephite parish schools grew steadily through the first half of the 20th century. A Josephite centenary history noted that in 1918, each of the Josephites' 38 missions had a school, a number that climbed to 48 by 1923.

According to Ochs' research, by 1943, the Josephites collaborated with 284 religious sisters and 54 lay teachers to educate 15,498 children in 68 parochial schools.

When Father Chiffriller became the Josephites' vicar general and director of education 27 years ago, the number of Josephite parish elementary schools stood at 18. Today, there are four elementary schools: Most Pure Heart of Mary in Mobile, Ala., St. Joan of Arc and St. Leo the Great in New Orleans, La., and St. Francis Xavier in Baton Rouge, La.

Although the Josephites ran several parish high schools over the last century, only one



A Franciscan Sister of Philadelphia provides religious education at a Josephite parish in this undated file photo. (Josephite archives)



Father Vincent Warren, SSJ, longtime pastor of Most Pure Heart of Mary Parish in Mobile, Ala., oversaw rapid growth of the parish elementary and high schools in the 1940s. Earlier in his ministry, Father Warren was kidnapped by the Ku Klux Klan in 1926 for daring to minister to and educate African Americans in Virginia. (Josephite file photo)

remains: St. Augustine in New Orleans.

"Loss of enrollment, rising costs and the loss of religious sisters staffing the schools gradually forced the closing of those schools," Father Chiffriller explained.

Considering the limited resources Josephites had to work with, Ochs believes they achieved remarkable results. He noted that

statistical studies have shown that Black Catholics are better-educated and more economically successful than non-Catholic African-Americans. Josephite schools likely contributed to that positive outcome.

"I think they succeeded in helping evangelize and preserve the Catholicism of the Black Catholics who were in their parishes and schools," Ochs said.

Fruit of a century's labors

Josephites prepped students for workforce

BY ERIK ZYGMONT



While the Josephites have long been associated with providing education to those in need, the African American-serving order has also historically emphasized those skills calibrated directly to the workforce.

“It was an opportunity to focus on learning, not just surviving on the streets,” said Brother Louis Tomasso, SSJ, who taught at St. Joseph’s Industrial School in Clayton, Del., during the 1960s and 1970s.

The school – which in addition to standard academics instructed students in trades such as printing, carpentry and electrical work – has a fascinating history beginning with a group of African-American Catholics who worshipped in the basement of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church in Wilmington, Del., just before the dawn of the 1900s.

Their pastor, Father John DeRuyter, SSJ, helped the community, known as St. Joseph’s Mission, establish its own church nearby, thanks to financial help from St. Katharine Drexel, the Philadelphia heiress known for her service to Native Americans as well as African Americans.

St. Katharine also helped – through both her finances and legal resources – the new parish open an orphanage which would soon move to Clayton and become St. Joseph’s Industrial School.

According to Brother Louis, the school served male students from approximately the fourth through eighth grades, and grew to include the first half of high school in the 1960s.

In addition to trades and

academics, St. Joseph’s taught religion, he said.

“Not all students were Catholic, by the way,” he said, adding that not all were African American, either.

“There were some Caucasians, and some Hispanic students, principally from D.C. and New York City,” Brother Louis said.

Students also came from Baltimore; Norfolk, Va.; Philadelphia and Detroit.

“Some of them, even back then, came from single-parent families, or were in trouble, or had academic issues and needed one-on-one attention,” Brother Louis remembered. “Sometimes, if a student was going to end up in trouble, an alternative was ‘Why don’t you try St. Joseph’s Industrial School?’”

He acknowledged that teaching such students was “challenging, but don’t write them off.” Brother Louis remembered two brothers from Washington, D.C., one “academically gifted,” the other less so, “but what he learned, he retained.”

Both brothers went on to success, the former serving as principal in several Washington schools.

“Several students from D.C. came from our parishes, went back to D.C., graduated from high school and went on to their

lives’ work and did very well,” Brother Louis said. “Some went on to minister in their parishes.”

St. Joseph’s Industrial School was not the only workforce-skills institution with which the



Father John DeRuyter, SSJ, acquired property in Clayton, Del., in 1895 to establish St. Joseph’s Industrial School in an existing building on the property. He was in the process of erecting nine buildings that formed the original school campus when he died of a heart attack on Aug. 21, 1896. (Courtesy Josephite archives)

Josephites were involved.

Established in Richmond, Va., the Van de Vyver Institute operated from approximately 1910 until 1969 as a mission of St. Joseph Parish in Richmond.

The parish, established in 1885, was the first African-American Catholic parish in Virginia and was under the care of the Josephite Fathers from Mill Hill,

England, predecessors to the Josephites.

At its peak, the Van de Vyver Institute – named for Bishop Augustine Van de Vyver, sixth bishop of the Diocese of Richmond – educated more than 1,000 students in its day and night programs, according to information found in back issues of the *Harvest* by Father Frank Hull, SSJ.

“The sisters were teaching everything under the sun,” Father Hull said, in reference to the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore, also originally from Mill Hill.

The sisters, who would merge with the Wisconsin-based Sisters of St. Francis in 2001, had taught at Van de Vyver’s previous iterations, including St. John the Baptist Industrial Institute.

Unlike St. Joseph’s Industrial School, Van de Vyver taught both boys and girls, and at its peak offered programs from kindergarten through high school.

“It was an outstanding center for education, which was not ordinarily available to Blacks, and it met a great need,” Father Hull commented.

Among standard trades, students learned barbering, embalming, tailoring, nursing, auto mechanics and much more.

As at St. Joseph’s Industrial School, religion was an integral part of life at Van de Vyver. According to an article in the May-June 1928 issue of the *Harvest*, “a constant stream of worthy converts” were welcomed into the Catholic Church through the school.

Van de Vyver closed in 1969, in order to “facilitate integration,” according to an April 12, 1969, article in *The Richmond Afro-American*, also provided by Father Hull.

The building, which had become the Richmond Senior Center, burned in a 1973 fire, reported the *Catholic Virginian* in February that year.



In addition to standard academics, students at St. Joseph’s Industrial School in Clayton, Del., learned job skills such as carpentry and printing. (Courtesy Josephite archives)



The Josephites operated Van de Vyver Institute at St. Joseph’s parish in Richmond for 53 years and has as many as 700 students in classes ranging from embalming to pre-law studies.

RIGOROUS EDUCATION

Josephites formed in philosophy, theology, canon law

BY ERIK ZYGMONT

At times the fruits of a solid education are diverse and difficult to quantify; at others they are plainly evident.

Retired Father Edward Mullowney, SSJ, was stationed in the New Orleans Archdiocese when Monsignor Joseph Vath – then on the tribunal in the Big Easy, later the first bishop of the Diocese of Birmingham, Ala. – made an observation.

“I never have to return a case to a Josephite for being poorly prepared,” he said, according to Father Mullowney.

Father Mullowney, in turn, had to write his former professor, Father Joseph Waters, SSJ, who had taught canon law at St. Joseph’s Seminary in Washington, D.C., then a full-fledged major seminary staffed by the Josephites.

“I said, ‘That is a compliment to you, Joe,’” Father Mullowney remembered.

St. Joseph’s Seminary instructed men destined to serve the African-American community from the early 1900s until the late 1960s. Today, it is the home base for aspiring Josephites studying at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

“We had some excellent teachers,” remembered Father James Fallon, SSJ, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in LeBeau, La.

Father Fallon also recalled Father Waters, who taught moral theology in addition to canon law.

“There was no speculation on speculative matters,” Father Fallon said. “He was so clear and concise, it was awesome.”

Father Fallon also singled out Father Robert McCall, SSJ, who taught philosophy, students’ “first two years’ burden” at St. Joseph’s.

“I think a lot of students who would not have warmed to philosophy if not for him,” Father Fallon observed.

In fact, the seminary was well-equipped to form priests according to their aptitudes.

“Our faculty was able to ascertain which students would be able to master the technicalities of Thomistic theology, and those who would have trouble with the technicalities but could absorb the theology in a more practical way,” Father Fallon explained, noting that mastery of Thomistic theology requires the adoption of specific terminology and a familiarity with the Greek philosopher Aristotle.



Father Charles Uncles, SSJ, was a member of the faculty of the Epiphany Apostolic College in Baltimore and New York who gave academic training to many future Josephite priests. (Courtesy Josephite archives)

Those who did not take that path, thanks to solid instruction at St. Joseph’s, nevertheless became “very good theologians in a practical way, and, to tell you the truth, model priests,” Father Fallon said. “A priest can have a tremendous amount of knowledge of religion in a more personal way.”

“Thanks to the faculty’s oversight, they understood each person’s abilities and treated him accordingly,” he added.

Father Fallon noted that for either track, the course of study was quite rigorous. Aspiring Josephites spent six years at minor seminary – equivalent to all four years of high school plus the first two years of college – at the former Epiphany Apostolic College in Newburgh, N.Y.

One of Epiphany’s most celebrated professors was Father Charles Uncles, SSJ, a parishioner of St. Francis Xavier in Baltimore who became the first African American ordained to the priesthood in the United States in 1891.

Father Uncles, a former teacher in Baltimore County, was a professor of Greek, Latin and French at the college when it was located in Baltimore. After its 1925 move to New York, Father Uncles went with it.

Early Josephites experienced impressive growth

At the time the split with the Mill Fathers in the spring of 1893, the Josephite community numbered about 32 men with about half in America and the other half in London or on assignments in India, Kashmir, Borneo, Pakistan or New Zealand. Only five men chose to start a new community dedicated solely to the African-American mission.

Within two months, with its first seminarian ordained, there were now six. Six months later one of the original five died suddenly. But in the following year another Mill Hill Father joined the new Josephites.

These six men were now in charge of four parishes: St. Peter Claver in Baltimore, St. Joseph in Richmond with its many missions in Norfolk, and St. Joseph in Wilmington and its new orphanage. Epiphany College and the new St. Joseph Seminary were also assigned

to the new community. The four other Mill Hill parishes, including their first – St. Francis Xavier in Baltimore – were returned to their respective dioceses

Over the first 10 years (1893-1903), 36 men were ordained in the new Josephite community, more than the total Mill Hill member at the time of the divide. The number of parishes had grown to 11 with sites as far away as Houston. St. Joseph's Catechetical College had opened in Montgomery, Ala., and St. Joseph Industrial School was started in Clayton, Del..

The first Josephite superior general, a 16-year veteran Mill Hill member, Father John Slattery, SSJ, guided the new community for 10 years but encountered opposition especially with his strong views promoting Black clergy. He resigned from the priesthood as the society moved ahead into more fruitful mission.



This building was home to the Epiphany Apostolic College in Baltimore from 1889 until the college moved to New York in 1925. (Courtesy Josephite archives)

The priest helped provide the academic foundation for numerous future Josephite priests as they prepared for mission work among African Americans. He died at the college in 1933 at age 74.

On a Facebook page created for Epiphany, alumni speak highly of the institution. One noted his biology teacher, then Father Eugene Marino, went on to become the first African-American archbishop in the U.S., serving as ordinary of the Archdiocese of Atlanta from 1988 to 1990.

"I thought it was a beautiful locale – that might

have been one reason I went there," Father Fallon said.

After minor seminary, the aspiring Josephites entered their novitiate year, "a year of special spiritual training," according to Father Fallon, without academics at all.

Following that, it was six years at St. Joseph's, for a total of 13 years of formation, "if you did the gamut," Father Fallon said.

Several graduates of St. Joseph's went on to become teachers themselves. Father Mullaney noted that Father Joseph Leonard, a fellow classmate of his from the class of 1955, went on to teach at his alma mater as well as author a book, "Theology and Race Relations."

"Looking back, it was a great experience," said Father Mullaney of his Josephite formation. "We were certainly fortunate – they did an excellent job of giving us an education in both philosophy and theology."

Today, Josephite seminarians study at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

"The purpose of (Catholic University) is to provide a rich theological, ecclesiastical and spiritual center for priests across the U.S.," Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ rector of St. Joseph's Seminary, where Josephite seminarians live, told *The Harvest* in a previous interview. "We're really thanking God for that and taking advantage of that."

‘To help those who help you’

From founding, Josephites cultivate African-American vocations



BY ERIK ZYGMONT

It wasn't something the Josephites did that attracted the young Father Charles Andrus Jr.; it was who they were.

"If I was going to become a priest, I was going to join the group that brought the faith to my community," said Father Andrus, who was ordained for the Josephites in his hometown of Lebeau, La., in 1976.

The uncomplicated formula brought numerous African-American men to the religious order founded to serve them.

According to Father Andrus, now pastor of St. Joan of Arc Parish in New Orleans, it was simple but deliberate, and promoted in the late 19th- and early 20th centuries by Father Pierre Oscar Lebeau, the Josephite priest who established spiritual guidance and consistent access to the sacraments for the Catholic community of freed

slaves that would eventually take his name.

"He was convinced that if the church was going to make any strides in the Black community, they had to raise up indigenous clergy," Father Andrus explained.

The idea of Black priests is foundational for the Josephites.

Father John Slattery, SSJ, the Josephites' first superior general, was adamant about educating and ordaining Blacks.

St. Joseph's Seminary in Baltimore, established through Father Slattery's leadership, was the first Catholic seminary in the country that accepted whites and blacks.

"The Josephites were most pioneering in trying to attract African Americans to the priesthood," said Dr. Stephen J. Ochs, author of "Desegregating the Altar: The Josephites and the Struggle for

Black Priests 1871-1960." "The Josephites saw that the only way to evangelize in a widespread way among African Americans was to have priests of color – but they encountered much opposition along the way."

In the late 20th century, Josephites made a push to attract African Americans to the permanent diaconate after it was reestablished at the Second Vatican Council. They also ventured to Africa to encourage young Africans to partner with or enter the Josephites to serve in American parishes.

St. Joseph's Catechetical College in Montgomery, Ala., opened in 1900 to promote lay involvement in faith formation. Operating for 20 years, it gave young men the skills to teach the Catholic faith.

The uncanny ways vocations



Deacon Willard Witherspoon blesses a boy during Mass Nov. 13, 2016, at St. Peter Claver Church in Baltimore. Josephites have been leaders in encouraging men to pursue the diaconate. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

have been “raised up” over the years point to fervent prayer on the part of the Josephites.

Though he wanted to be a priest even as a child, Father Anthony Bozeman, SSJ, pastor of St. Raymond-St. Leo the Great Church in New Orleans, admits that the plot twists in his own story are “bookworthy.”

He grew up at the former Our Mother of Sorrows Church in Philadelphia, an archdiocesan parish, and spent summers in Tuskegee, Ala., where he attended Mass at St. Joseph Church.

His childhood vocation was pushed to the side as he spent his high school years “dating and doing things normal teenagers do.”

“I had a lot of respect for the priesthood, but didn’t think it was for me,” Father Bozeman explained.

A meeting with Father Rayford Emmons, the first African-American priest ordained for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, awakened a seed he “had not watered or let others water for years.”

Father Bozeman entered the seminary several years later, and in 2000 was ordained for the Philadelphia Archdiocese.

Although quite happy at the Black parish at which he served, “I felt somehow I was still not living out the call God gave me.”

Father Bozeman looked into a few religious communities, and around the same time discovered a connection to the Josephites, who, unbeknownst to him, had staffed the St. Joseph of his childhood summers. Father Joseph Begay, SSJ, a Scranton native, remembered Father Bozeman from when the former had pastored St. Joseph in the 1970s.

“As I was discerning my call to the priesthood, the African-American community was very instrumental,” he said. “You want to help those who help you.”



Bishop John Ricard, SSJ, celebrates the May 19 ordination Mass for Father Kingsley Chukwudiebube Ogbuji, SSJ, at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Washington, D.C. (Kevin J. Parks/Special to the Harvest)



Francis D. Asomkase, Joseph Gbenga Benjamin and Stanley K. Ihuoma pray during their ordination rehearsal at Holy Comforter-St. Cyprian Catholic Church in Washington May 28, 2010. The men and three other Nigerians were ordained Josephite priests the following day at the church. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

Father Bozeman said the best way to attract vocations is “the ministry of joyful priests.”

“It’s very simple,” he said. They’ve got to see joyful men working in a ministry with the witness they are called to give. Then they might say to themselves, ‘If that guy can do it...’”

Father Andrus observed that the Josephites’ work in welcoming African-American men to the priesthood opened a door.

“We were instrumental in opening dioceses’ minds to accepting

blacks,” he said. “It was the start of a process that blossomed into other dioceses and religious orders. When there’s a Black man ordained in the United States, the Josephites get a toot on the horn.”

The work is not done.

“We still need people to bring the African-American tradition of faith in the Catholic Church; because of that, our unique call and purpose still exist,” Father Andrus said.

George P. Matysek Jr. contributed to this article.

Baton Rouge school instills spirit of nonviolence

BY GEORGE P. MATYSEK JR.

When students at St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge, La., have disagreements that require the principal to step in, Paula Fabre asks the conflicting parties to tell each side of the story. Then the administrator takes it a step further.

“I ask each student in the dispute to tell me one thing that is wonderful about the other student,” Ms. Fabre explained. “It really opens up their ears to find out what the other person has to say. Being positive is always the best way to help solve problems.”

Teachers at the Josephite elementary school take a similar approach, Ms. Fabre said, always finding something good to say about every student.

“We are here so our children can grow and learn about Gospel values and then carry that out into the community,” she said.

Principles of nonviolence are incorporated throughout the curriculum at St. Francis Xavier. Students discuss current events and are encouraged to think about ways they can make a difference in the community and beyond. Religion classes spark conversations, the principal said, as do weekly Masses featuring homilies geared to a child’s level by Father Edward Chiffriller, SSJ, pastor.

This academic year, 20 fifth-graders at the historic school produced a poster showcasing their ideas on how to make Baton Rouge a better place. The students spent countless hours over several months discussing ways of reducing violence and promoting peace.

The final product, now on display at the school, featured slogans such as “Stop the Killing,” “Stop Hatred,” “Stop Racism,” “Stop Child Abuse” and “Stop Kidnapping.”

Several students who worked on the project said the effort taught them that every voice matters.

Kaci Hamilton, an 11-year-old fifth-grader, said



Students of St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge admire a poster they made in support of nonviolence and making their city a better place to live. (Courtesy St. Francis Xavier School)

school discussions on how to stop bullying were especially helpful.

“If you see someone bullying someone else,” she said, “you should not be a bystander. Help that person out and then report it to an adult.”

Kendrick Wallace, an 11-year-old fifth-grader, said the poster project was “a good experience” because it was a student attempt to stop violence.

Christian Carroll, an 11-year-old fifth grader, said he feels shock when he sees reports of violence on television.

“I know we can do better than that,” he insisted.

Ms. Fabre commended Marsha Perkins, the school’s librarian, for coordinating the poster project. “We hope they carry these lessons throughout their lives,” she said.



Josephite African students matriculate

Seven first-year philosophy students have begun studying at Dominican University in Ibadan, Nigeria, Africa’s first Dominican university. From left, they are: Michael Abiodun Shedrach, Solomon Kwaza, Anochirim Peter-Claver, (Josephite Father Anthony Okwum), Okwarachukwu Innocent, Tseva Martin, Onuoha Emmanuel and Ibeh Leonard.

Bridge named in parish's honor

Mayor Ricky Calais of Breaux Bridge, La., and the Breaux Bridge City Council officially named a local bridge "St. Francis Bridge" in honor of the city's St. Francis of Assisi Church April 15 in Breaux Bridge.

The dedication took place following a 9:30 a.m. Mass at the parish attended by city leaders.

Father Joseph Campion, SSJ, pastor, called the dedication a great moment in the 95-year history of St. Francis, making a strong statement about the positive influence St. Francis has had in the Breaux Bridge community.



Mayor Calais reminded the parish community that not only does a bridge connect people north, south, east and west, it also bridges blacks and whites.

Alabama church marks 110 years of worship

Archbishop Thomas J. Rodi of the Archdiocese of Mobile, Ala., was present to help parishioners celebrate 110 years of eucharistic worship, evangelization and service at Most Pure Heart of Mary Church in Mobile with a May 13 Mass followed by a jazz brunch reception.

Most Pure Heart of Mary was founded as St. Anthony's Mission in 1899 by the Josephites to serve Creoles of African descent. Father Joseph St. Laurent, SSJ, and Father Louis Pastorelli, SSJ, ministered there, with Father Pastorelli celebrating Mass for the first time in a building known as the Kearney Institute on St. Valentine's Day in 1900.

An elementary school opened in 1901 that still operates today. A thriving high school operated from 1911 to 1964.

The church was completed in 1908, and the faith community was renamed Most Pure Heart of Mary that year in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Among the highlights of the parish's long history was the founding of the Knights of Peter Claver by priests and members of Most Pure Heart of Mary in 1909. The parish was a place of spiritual comfort dur-



Archbishop Thomas J. Rodi of the Archdiocese of Mobile, Ala., was present to help parishioners celebrate the 110th helped celebrate 110 years of eucharistic worship, evangelization and service at Most Pure Heart of Mary Church in Mobile with a May 13 Mass followed by a jazz brunch reception.

ing the Civil Rights Movement, serving as the public meeting location for the Neighborhood Organized Workers. Parish staff members joined parishioners in boycotts and demonstrations in support of Civil Rights during the 1960s and beyond.

Father Michael Thompson, SSJ, Josephite superior general, gave the homily at the anniversary Mass. Father Kenneth C. Ugwu, SSJ, pastor, was the concelebrant.

CONTINUING THE MISSION

**‘We are all
responsible for
promoting vocations’**



FATHER DONALD M. FEST

It is during the months shortly after Easter when most ordinations to the priesthood take place. As you see in this edition of *The Harvest*, Father Kingsley Ogbuji, SSJ, was ordained May 19. I’m sure you have seen in your own local Catholic newspapers ordinations that have – or will take place – in your community.

Also in this edition of *The Harvest*, you have read about all the men who are celebrating their jubilees – not just their anniversaries, but jubilees – anniversaries of special note. We rejoice that these men, our own sons and brothers, have chosen to answer God’s call and say “yes” to that invitation which came from Jesus himself, the Eternal High Priest.

As we hear in the Gospels, when Jesus called the disciples he said: “Come, follow me” – and amazingly they did. Whether leaving their families or their very livelihoods, all had to leave something behind to take up this invitation. It is never easy – back then or now. There is a sacrifice to be made.

On the Fourth Sunday of Easter every year we celebrate a Day of Prayer for Vocations. We pray that everyone has ears to hear the call of God to live the special calling he has given them. On this day, we also pray in a special way that young men will answer the call that God sends forth – like he did for the Apostles – to come and follow him to be “fishers of men.” What an awesome invitation that is!

How sincere are you in wanting priests to staff your parish? The day of prayer for vocations was back in April, but how faithful have you been since then in praying for young men and women to answer God’s call to come and follow?

In Matthew 9, verses 37 and 38, Jesus said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers

are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest.” We can conclude that for vocations to happen there must be an interest and a concern on our behalf.

We should also be praying for perseverance for those in seminaries and houses of formation as they go through their years of preparation. And, it is important we pray for all priests and consecrated religious to be faithful to the call they responded to years earlier. So pray.

But it requires even more than prayer on our part for our young people to answer God’s call. It requires asking our young brothers and sisters if they have ever considered a call to priesthood or to religious life. Sadly, this kind of vocation, this kind of call, is not usually on their radar screen. WE have to suggest it to many of them.

When you see a young person who exhibits qualities of such a vocation, ask him or her the question: “Have you ever considered what God is calling you to do in this life?” You might add, “I’ve observed how diligent (or devoted or reverent or _? _) you are and think God might be calling you. Give it some thought.”

Sometimes we just have to plant a seed and see what God does with it. If you should get a hint of a humble decline to your suggestion, you might have to tell them that God does not call the qualified, but he qualifies those he calls. We have to realize that sometimes God is going to use us as he puts out the call to others.

Father Donald Fest, SSJ, is pastor of St. Joseph Church in Alexandria, Va.

JOSEPHITE PERPETUAL ENROLLMENTS

FOR THE LIVING AND THE DECEASED JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH 2018

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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