

Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

Serving in the United States for more than 100 years

MARCH/APRIL 2005

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TSUNAMI - SRI LANKA

by Nilindra Gunsekera, SSS
Regional Superior of Sri Lanka

This letter was written to update the international Provinces of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament on the tsunami of December 26, 2004, and its devastating effects in Sri Lanka. (Abridged copy.)

Thank you for your concern and prayers. It gives us great courage to know that you are united with us and our people, who have been engulfed in a great tragedy.

This is how the news of the Tsunami reached me:

It was Boxing Day. The 26th December is usually quiet here in Sri Lanka, but last year it was a Sunday. So, I was traveling from the Aspirancy at Havelock Town to St. Philip Neri's Church in Pettah [Colombo]. I was scheduled to preside at the Eucharist starting at 9.00 a.m.

It was around 8.30 a.m. when I reached Olcott Mawatha Road, which runs in front of our church. This road spans a bridge over the Beira Lake. That morning, I saw a crowd of over 200 people peering over the guard rails of the bridge into the lake. I chuckled to myself thinking how it was only in Sri Lanka that one would find over 200 people

staring down into the waters of a lake. This sight puzzled me, but I was driving and had many things on my mind that morning.

I was in the sacristy by 8.40 a.m. I was positively happy. After Mass, having greeted and met with friends, I casually made my way to Fr. Roger's room. My parents' golden wedding anniversary was to be celebrated on the 29th December, but unfortunately my computer had crashed on the 23rd December 2004, and I had not prepared the liturgy.

So, there I was sitting at Fr. Roger's computer working diligently. It was around 10:45 a.m. on the 26th December, when Fr. Sunil saw me on the computer, and walked in, announcing that there had been a tidal wave that had hit the southern coast of Sri Lanka. Fr. Sunil thought that I was on the net, verifying the information. Upon hearing his voice I swiveled around in my chair, and

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From the Provincial . . .



In this issue of our Newsletter you will be reading about two pieces that have to do with the recent disastrous tsunami that hit parts of Asia just after Christmas. The toll in human deaths and property destruction is almost incalculable. Our religious Congregation has a number of communities in South India and Sri Lanka. Understandably, we were all anxious to get some news about our people in those regions. In India, our communities were out of the danger zone, whereas Sri Lanka was hit harder and the effects of the tsunami were more extensively felt around the island nation.

We are providing two pieces in this issue for you to read. The first is written by Fr. Nilindra, the regional superior of our communities in Sri Lanka. He gives us a first-hand account of how the news of the tsunami reached him and some of the responses he and other Blessed Sacrament religious took in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. As a result of his letter which was

made available to our religious here in the USA, and especially through the assistance of Fr. George Dunne, SSS, at St. Stephen's parish in Florida, and other generous donors, we have been able to send close to \$35,000 for tsunami relief through our own Blessed Sacrament community in Sri Lanka. We thus feel secure in knowing that the moneys sent will be used for the most needy.

The second article is also in the form of a letter which was sent to Br. Gerard Hickey, SSS, at our community in Cleveland. This is an account of the miraculous escape of Keira Coleman, the niece of Br. Austin Coleman, SSS, from our community in New York City. Keira was in Thailand when the tsunami hit. We are grateful for her safe return to Ireland, even as we mourn the loss of so many others.

In these tragic times and horrific events when so many innocent people die, it is normal and natural to ask, "Why?" Even at the time that we formulate the question, we know someplace down deep within us that there is no adequate answer to our query. I suppose our question is more a cry of anguish than it is a question requiring a clear and specific answer. Tragedy always leaves us unsettled and impotent in the face of forces (be they natural, economic, or political) beyond our control.

It is with this sense of helplessness that we, as Christians, often journey through the Church's season of Lent

with only the hope of promises made to a powerless, but faithful, people. These promises of a "new heaven and a new earth where no more tears will be shed, and where death will have lost its sting" are what sustains us in our darkest moments. They were the promises that Jesus himself had to keep in mind as he gave his life for the world, for you and me. When the Church celebrates Holy Week beginning with Palm/Passion Sunday and ending with the magnificent liturgy of Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday, she dramatically reminds us of our deep roots in the faith of our ancestors who journeyed before us and who continue to accompany us. At the heart of these liturgical rituals of remembering is the Eucharist. The celebration of Holy Eucharist, the memorial of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus strengthens our resolve to be a people of hope, for that is God's gift to a world too often hurt and wounded by its own follies or by natural disasters.

May your Easter celebration be one of joy in hope. ✚

Norman B. Pelletier, SSS
Provincial

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burst out laughing asking, “A tidal wave in Sri Lanka?” I mentioned that it would be a good idea to turn on the news.

I was back at work. I had to finish the Liturgy Preparation before my next Mass. I had been scheduled for 4 Masses on that Sunday. While typing, I could not help the thoughts flashing across my mind— ‘This could well be a wee little sea erosion.’ Usually, such news also makes the headlines in Sri Lanka.

By noon we were informed by the state media that the southern town of Galle which was cosmopolitan and largely inhabited by Sinhalese and Muslims, was under water. Even this news, I accepted with a pinch of salt. From having lived in Sri Lanka for over four decades, I knew from experience that flooding in Sri Lanka was nothing as dangerous as the flash flood that ravaged certain other countries. To me this appeared to be media hype. To my knowledge, flooding in Sri Lanka results in a gentle rising of the river, over a period of a few days, and which is carefully monitored so that it only leads to a displacement of families without the loss of life. Many in Colombo thought that, at worst, there would be around three feet of water in Galle.

Then came the chilling news that 300 people had perished. Telephones lines were also down. This added to the skepticism. Apart from the news broadcasts, there was no visual footage on TV. Roads were declared inaccessible. We Sri

Lankans are optimists, else we could not have survived three decades of ethnic strife, resulting in untold misery, personal loss, and deprivation. The only tidal wave that I had seen was in the movie *Poseidon Adventure*.

The unfolding drama was surreal—I could not fully comprehend the turn of events. Gradually, news began to filter in that another southern township, Matara, was badly affected. Also mentioned were that both Eastern and Northeastern towns such as Batticaloa, Mullaitivu, and Pottuvil, were also devastated. By nightfall the death toll was estimated at 500. The fact was that never had a tidal wave approached the maritime limits of Sri Lanka during the past 2000 years. Sri Lankan history does, however, record a tidal wave that occurred over 2000 years ago.

The clarion call to action was the live footage of this devastating tidal wave sweeping away five ladies who were clinging on to each other. In the background, I saw buses being washed away, and a train, too. At that point, every Sri Lankan ‘woke up’ with a start. We saw cars and vans being washed away like *dinky toys*. That was when we as a nation sat up in consternation, realizing the full magnitude of the tragedy.

Sometime later in the afternoon on the 26th December, I received a call from my brother asking that I accompany him in evacuating his wife’s sister’s family. They live four miles away from the periphery of Colombo, in a town called Moratuwa. At this point, I felt some alarm. My

brother’s parents and sister-in-law were brought back to Colombo, and housed at my brother’s residence and I drove on towards the South. I was amazed at the debris that littered the road. My brother had voiced the concern that a rumor was rife that another tidal wave could ravage the coast.

I wanted to travel as far as I could to see what had happened. I felt fear and disbelief. I could only go to Panadura, which was the next town. Stalled vehicles and debris blocked my path. The light was fading, and I wanted to be back home.

The next morning, I left for Nuwara Eliya since I was scheduled to officiate at the wedding of Br. Felix’s sister. The ceremony was at 11:30 a.m., and I left Colombo at 5:00 a.m. because this was a good five hour drive. I acknowledged with amazement that even though life may be utterly disrupted at a national level, life had to continue, too—it was part of the process of moving on. To me this was a new experience because here in Sri Lanka, in our own little corner of the world, we have been used to canceling events as a mark of respect or a sign of mourning. Weddings are different. These are once-in-a-lifetime events, if of course nothing untoward would happen to either party. My mind was in turmoil because I myself had to come to grips with whether or not to celebrate my parents’ golden wedding anniversary.

Theology may be acquired in an educational institution, but thankfully

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WISDOM is acquired in the midst of life and I was acquiring wisdom by reflecting upon my experience. The path at this point seemed unclear—this is an essential feature of making a pilgrimage through life. I did what I had to do, and returned to Colombo around 7:00 p.m.

By mid-afternoon on the 28th of December, I made another attempt to travel to the affected areas. This time I reached a township called Kalutara. I believe that this is the halfway point on the way to Galle. I found the going difficult, and slow. The roads were congested not only due to the debris, but also because people from other parts were pouring into the area. The government authorities and the media asked us to help clear the roads by turning back. This was a real Hobson's choice—there I was trying to extend solidarity and support, and despite all my goodwill, ending up an obstacle to the governmental relief efforts. Tempers were getting frayed. Being in religious garb, I thought the prudent thing was to turn back. People were grieving and lamenting on the roadside. This was a national day of mourning. I went into shock! I felt NUMB!

That night, I slept poorly. On one hand, it was my parents' golden wedding anniversary, on the other hand, I had seen the devastation. What saved the day was our realization that there was insufficient time, and no effective way of notifying invited guests that the celebration would be

postponed. So, after a 'family-parley,' we decided to celebrate the event—my parents' golden wedding anniversary—on a very low key.

It was only on the 30th December that I finally reached the outskirts of Galle. As a gesture of solidarity, the few dry rations that were taken along were distributed. It was late evening when we reached the outskirts of Galle, and not knowing what awaited us, we decided to turn back. Cars and vans were piled one atop the other. A train had been swept away off the tracks, but the death toll was not known. We were hoping for the best. However, I had never traveled in that particular train—which makes this daily run, so I did not know the number of casualties. But the people of the area knew—their eyes said it all. Six private vans with a full complement of passengers were reported missing. I opt to leave out the gory details, because death is never an easy thing either to experience or describe. Sadly, so numerous were the deaths that we as a nation could not accord them all a dignified burial. This was indeed a catastrophe!

I conclude that our efforts, however spontaneous and generous, will never be adequate when comparing the extent of the calamity. My humble opinion is that our efforts can never measure up to the needs of the hour—we were unprepared as a nation. This was a tidal wave after over 2000 years, or so they say in the State Media.

Current Situation

Some areas are flooded with relief,

others are not. This however is not deliberate. Inaccessible roads, inadequate information, unavailability of heavy earth-moving equipment in adequate numbers, the inability to harness the available resources because of inexperience in these types of situations, greed, corruption, and political maneuvering may have also contributed to the scenario.

Sri Lankan spontaneity is our own undoing because there is no clear strategy or national policy. Everyone wants to do something, indeed anything, rather than sit around and wait. Though commendable, it is also fraught with pitfalls because we may be oblivious to the long-term effects of the calamity and focus on remedying the more immediate short term problems.

We are thankful to the international community who have sent in their marines and doctors with helicopters, heavy earth-moving equipment, and mobile airborne hospitals.

School books have already been provided to the children of 62 affected families.

Many of our religious are involved in relief work, mainly in sending over supplies to effected areas and visiting these people. We have sent medicines to the South. I will be accompanying a truckload of dry rations and roofing sheets to the tamil-speaking east as a sign of goodwill and a gesture of bridge-building. Fr. Ignatius will accompany me, along with the Novice Master

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TSUNAMI - THAILAND

Fr. Sagara. We may take the novices along. Anyway, Fr. Ignatius and I will leave on the 17th of January and hope to return on the next day.

Thank you for your concern.
Fraternally,

Nilindra sss ✚

A significant contribution was sent from the Province of St. Ann to help with relief efforts. If you are interested in helping, send your contributions to:

Congregation of the
Blessed Sacrament,
5384 Wilson Mills Road
Highland Heights, OH 44143

Prayer to Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament

Blessed are you, Mary,
exalted daughter of Sion!
You are highly favored
and full of grace,
for the spirit of God
descended upon you.

We magnify the Lord
and rejoice with you for the gift
of the Word made flesh,
bread of life and cup of joy.

Our Lady
of the Blessed Sacrament,
our model of prayer
in the Cenacle,
pray for us
that we may become
what we receive,
the body of Christ your Son.
Amen.

Br. Gerard Hickey, SSS, received news that Br. Austin Coleman's (St. Jean's) niece, Keira, survived the tragic tsunami disaster in Thailand. Keira was scuba diving on the island of Phi Phi when the tsunami hit. Miraculously, she survived where so many from that island did not. She is now recuperating back in Ireland.

The following account is taken from a letter to Br. Gerard from the brother and sister-in-law of Br. Austin. We are happy to join Br. Austin, his brother, Don, and sister-in-law, Trina, and Keira herself, in thanking God for her safety from the midst of the tsunami in Thailand.

The last three weeks, says Mrs. Coleman, have been a nightmare and we've been through a roller coaster of emotions but, thankfully, it all ended well for us. As I write this, she says, I'm listening to a radio announcement of the return of yet another young Irish person's body to Ireland from the island of Phi Phi and thank God that we have been spared those families' pain.

Mrs. Coleman continues: Keira had managed to get a message to Br. Austin's answering machine at St. Jean's in New York, and he relayed the good news to us. Can't imagine how we would have endured not knowing she was safe. We bought the *Irish Independent*, December 26th and were surprised, but reassured, on reading the following article which best sums up what

happened:

In the yellow zone ward, Keira Coleman sat clutching her bandaged left arm. She was on Phi Phi, a small island 42 km south-east of Phuket, on St. Stephen's Day. Hundreds of people are believed to have died on the island (2,500 I believe) which was virtually obliterated by the force of the tsunami. Ms. Coleman (30) from Cork, was in her beach-side bungalow at the time. "I was still in my nightie," she said. "I heard the wave. It sounded like rain. I looked out of the window and saw people running. Before I knew what to do, the bungalow was swept away down the street with me inside it. I was trapped between the door and a wall. The bungalow got caught up in a river of water and as it picked up speed, it started to sink and I was pushed under water. I came up and got a gulp of air, then I was pulled back down and I was spinning around under water. It was terrifying. I was sure I was going to drown."

After what seemed like an eternity, the bungalow hit another building and Ms. Coleman managed to struggle free. Astonishingly, she suffered only a broken arm. "There were bodies all around me in the water," she said. Like many others, she spent the night at the View Point, the highest point on the island, fearful of another deadly wave. Yesterday a boat took her to Phuket.

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In the news . . .

It was of great consolation to her family having some definite background news about her condition. Apart from a broken wrist and many lacerations and bruising to her body she considers herself lucky as many people lost limbs and suffered horrible injuries from glass and corrugated iron sheets carried with great force by the tsunami.

She has been truly blessed and so have we says Keira's mom and dad. "We feel that she was 'Knocking on Heaven's Door' but she would probably feel that she has been to 'hell and back.'" ✚

Fr. Sunil Rupasinghe, a Blessed Sacrament priest from Sri Lanka, who just recently earned a Ph.D. in Psychology [in Chicago] was on vacation in his native Sri Lanka when the tsunami hit the island.

He reported that he offered his services to the Ministry of Defense which sent him out to Ambalangoda to train teachers in grief counseling, help kids who had faced the tragedy and to Trincomalee to train Navy counselors also in grief counseling. He was also invited to the Ampitiya Seminary to train the theologians in counseling skills as they were going out to help the survivors. There were also a few other professional groups who asked Fr. Sunil to help them out. Overall, he reports that he was satisfied that he was able to help some and train others. For a more complete story of Sunil's post-tsunami ministry in Sri Lanka, see the interview by Judy Masterson of NewsSun paper in Waukegan, IL, where, in her column on February 3rd, she gives more details. It is accessible at the following website:

<<http://www.suburbanchicagonews.com/opinions/columnists/masterson/w03judycol.htm>>. Sunil would like to thank members of the province for their prayers and concern. ✚

*Please pray for our deceased religious . . .***MARCH**

06 1913 Br. Patricius Welsh
09 1979 Rev. Ernest Lussier
10 1978 Rev. Aimé Legendre
11 1929 Rev. Alfred Pauzé
12 1942 Br. Leander Brodeur
14 1982 Rev. Clement Hébert
20 1963 Rev. Georges
Ladouceur
30 1952 Rev. Beat Gmür

APRIL

07 1942 Rev. Fernando
Gaudet
10 1934 Rev. Edward Dwyer
10 1991 Br. Ramon Reyes
12 1985 Rev. Emile
Berthiaume
13 1994 Rev. Patrick Markey
13 1998 Rev. John J. Gartner
21 1992 Rev. Wilfrid
Thibodeau



22 2004 Rev. Timothy Mangan
25 1947 Rev. Wilfridus
Boissonneault
27 1991 Rev. Paul Gariepy
28 1993 Rev. Aurelius Gariepy

MAY

07 1986 Rev. Henry Foley
07 2004 Br. Ignatius
Montgomery
09 1944 Br. Claude-Hudon
Beaulieu
13 1985 Rev. Ralph Lavigne
15 1996 Rev. Jose
Barandiaran
23 1975 Rev. Peter Goulet
25 1912 Br. Leonardus
Routhier
25 1975 Br. Anthony Nolan
26 1974 Rev. Normand
Audette
291 994 Br. James Lent

REMEMBERING MICHAEL GALLIGAN

by Regina Health Center (Pastoral Ministry Staff)



sacristy and Church, Br. Michael came to Cleveland to join his confreres at St. Paschal Baylon (Cleveland community). In June of 2004, he joined other members of his congregation at Regina Health Center.

Br. Michael had a variety of interests throughout his life. He enjoyed golfing for many years and loved watching baseball games on television. Music, especially Irish songs,

reading, and the Men's Club have been recent interests. Regardless of where his ministry might take him, Br. Michael continued to communicate by telephone with his sister, Peggy, whose last visit with him was at Regina Health Center the weekend of January 28-30th. God called Michael home on the anniversary of the birth of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the founder of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation. †

Michael Galligan was born to James and Agnes Galligan on August 16, 1928. One of three children who suffered the loss of their father at an early age, Michael recalls how hard his mother worked after that loss in order to keep the family together. While his brother and sister pursued other interests, Michael followed a desire for the priesthood. He entered the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in New York. Over time, he realized that his call was to religious life as a brother. He took first vows in 1950. In this capacity, Br. Michael performed a variety of ministries in the area of maintenance. He was responsible for cleaning and maintaining buildings, as well as the proper care of flowers and landscaping. His work provided experiences in a variety of climates not only at Blessed Sacrament ministry sites throughout the United States, but also in the Philippines.

In the summer of 2003, after leaving a dearly-loved ministry in Mensasha, Wisconsin, where he cared for the

Blessed Sacrament - CHARISM

by Br. John Mark L. Aceno, pSSS
Davao City, Philippines

Being followers and Disciples of Christ.

Living in an unsophisticated life, like our founder
who gave up everything so that he could follow Him,

Enlightened by the Holy Spirit of truth in the Holy Eucharist

Sharing the Eucharistic spirit all over the world,

Spreading God's love especially to the less favored,

Encouraging people to be bread, broken and shared,

Devoted in God's love in Jesus Christ through the Eucharist.

Selfless giving with

Ardent love and

Courage to fulfill our Eucharistic mission,

Renewed, become one body and blood of Christ,

Appreciating God's gift of love with

Mary, our Mother and Model of Faith, and

Embracing the Eucharistic Spirituality

of St. Peter Julian Eymard in the

New generation

Transformed triumphantly.



PROVINCE RETREAT 2005

by Robert Lussier, SSS

On January 31, a large group of SSS Religious and Associates met at the San Pedro Center in Winter Park, Florida, to begin a week of retreat with Dr. Nathan Mitchell. We thank Nathan for his time and his expertise, since, along with the conferences during the day, we also enjoyed an informal question and answer period with him every evening.

The content of the retreat is hard to describe, because Dr. Mitchell is as much a poet as he is a liturgist. The conferences were packed with images and symbols and literary allusions. Some of the highlights were his remarks on the following

subjects:

Prayer: St. John of the Cross says, “If you want to pray, come empty, do nothing.” Bring an emptiness for God to fill. In a similar vein, St. Eymard speaks of praying “under the gaze of Jesus,” so that prayer is less looking at God than letting God look upon us.

Conversion: Used to mean “flight from the world.” Instead, perhaps it should be more a turning toward the world. We’re called to embrace our world instead of standing at a distance. Jesus touched the leper. We try to listen more attentively to our bodies and emotions. Instead of

having all the answers, we accept the questions. We become bread for others.

Other topics were: Bread, Memories, (the Bible is a collection of memories), Hunger (for companions, for meaning, and for a world transformed by Christ—so that “bloody ground becomes holy ground.”)

The Florida weather didn’t always cooperate, but there was much to warm the heart. It’s always a treat to meet [with] the brethren (and sistern!) again . . .



Dr. Nathan Mitchell leads the SSS religious and associates during their retreat.



St. John of the Cross says,

“If you want to pray, come empty, do nothing.” Bring an emptiness for God to fill.



Frs. Bill Young, SSS, (left) and Paul Bernier, SSS, (middle) speak with Dr. Nathan Mitchell (right) at the welcome social, the first evening of the retreat.



Retreatants listen attentively to Dr. Mitchell.



A gifted musician, Fr. Ernest Falardeau, SSS, shares this gift and talent with the retreatants.

THE HANDS OF CHRIST - A LENTEN MEDITATION

by Jim Hayes, SSS



Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the March 7, 2004, issue of the Church of St. Andrew weekly bulletin, and is reprinted here with permission.

Some weeks ago we began our journey toward Easter with the ashes on the forehead on Ash Wednesday which gave us a public symbol of our faith. Our Lenten journey was also accompanied by the release of Mel Gibson's film on the *Passion of the Christ*. The film depicts the last 12 hours of Jesus' journey on earth.

The way the camera focused in on the hands of the Christ throughout the movie impressed me. The hands of Jesus become for the viewer the focal point from the beginning of the film to its end. The hands of Jesus in His final agony are clenched as He relinquishes His fate to His Father. Jesus' fate is certain yet, even as He is arrested, His very hands reach and heal the soldier whose ear has been severed. The hands of Jesus thereafter are bound and tied. Later, those same hands are locked and

chained as Jesus is brutally beaten. He is then given the cross to carry and the Crucifixion begins. A way to perhaps understand this final journey during this sacred season may be by following the hands of Jesus.

The Hands of Power . . . The journey of Jesus from the first miracle at the Wedding Feast at Cana entailed Jesus, by His hands, subtly changing the standing water in jars into wine. This is followed by the hands that feed the masses, who trail Him throughout the land. He takes into His hands the few loaves and fishes available, looks up to Heaven, blesses the food, and has the food distributed to the crowds. Miraculously, there is even food left over. The powerful hands of Jesus are also seen outstretched and calming the winds during a violent storm on the sea. They are also the same sacred hands that have the power to drive out demons.

Hands of a Teacher . . . As Jesus begins His ministry in the temple, He takes the scroll from the attendant and teaches the scribes and the doctors of Jewish law. The expressive hands of this "Rabbi" are also seen as instructing the crowds about how to live life. He teaches the Sermon on the Mount with His gentle hands of human compassion.

Hands of Reconciliation . . . The hands of Jesus are also forgiving hands. Recall the situation wherein a paralytic is lowered from the roof of a small house. Jesus first heals the soul, then the immobile body. The

hands of Jesus are also seen as a sinful woman is brought in front of Him by the elders of the community for judgement. He bends down and with the fingers of His hand writes on the ground to reveal the crowds' own shame. Think how often we hear in the Scripture about the forgiving word accompanied by a healing gesture.

Hands of Healing . . . Recall the blind man whose sight was restored by the hands of Jesus and the man whose withered hand is straightened by His gentle touch. Remember the ten lepers whose disease made them outcasts within their very own society. Jesus addresses the disease and heals them as they journey on the road. Again, when the daughter of Jarius lay "dying" in bed, her small form surrounded by relatives and friends, Jesus enters the room declaring that she is only asleep.

Keeping our eyes fixed on His hands, we may achieve the proper prayerful attitude when we lift our own hands in prayer.

Then with a word and a healing touch, Jesus lifts the girl and brings her back with the breath of life. The healing power in the hands of Jesus are also directed toward the servant of a Centurion. The Roman official beckons Jesus to, "only say

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**THE HANDS OF CHRIST - A LENTEN
 MEDITATION**

the word and my servant will be healed.” The healing power of Jesus thereby extends to someone who is not even in front of Him, but at that very instant, the servant is brought back to life. Away from home, Jesus is notified that a dear friend, Lazarus, is dying. By the time Jesus gets to his home, Martha and Mary, his sisters, inform Jesus that Lazarus is dead. Amidst His own tears of grief Jesus composes Himself, calls on His Father and summons Lazarus out of the tomb where he is buried. And Lazarus, against all hope, is brought back from the dead to [go among] the living.

Hands of Rage . . . We also are shown the hands of Jesus in a state of rage. Recall the time when Jesus entered the confines of the Temple in Jerusalem and found “money changers” and “vendors” tainting its holy space. The powerful hands of Jesus toppled their tables and drove them out of His Father’s sacred house of prayer.

Hands of Personal Anguish . . . As we start Holy Week, we can imagine the hands of Jesus now clenched in terror, knowing that He will have a meal and be betrayed by two of His closest friends. The hands of the carpenter manifest the knowledge of His fate and suffering.

Hands of Service . . . Just prior to what would be Jesus’ last meal with His friends, He washes the feet of His disciples and friends to teach them that they must imitate Him and serve one another, too.

Hands of Consecration . . . At that same Last Supper of Jesus with His Apostles, the healing and teaching hands of the Christ bless the bread and wine of their Passover meal. Those hands transform the bread to His body and the wine into His Life-Giving Blood. Although Jesus “broke bread” many times before with these men, this final meal was transformed into one of memory and remembrance which lives on to today. Centered on His sacred hands, we see Jesus dip bread into a dish at the same time as Judas reaches into the same dish. In this gesture, He reveals the hands of the betrayer (Judas), who, by his actions, was about to bind the healing and loving hands of Christ.

Hands of Sacrifice . . . The hands of Jesus are bound and led from court to court and bound again more tightly for the humiliation of the scourging He would endure. The hands of the young man who had worked with wood are finally nailed to a wooden cross. The tree of life now becomes a tree of suffering and dying. The hands of all healing now become the scarred hands of the ultimate sacrifice, the crucified Son of God.

After Jesus is taken down from the cross, His sacred hands are bound with burial cloth, wrapped in love by His own Mother. There is still hope. Three days later, the resurrected Jesus is seen. His body is restored but His hands are still marked to bear witness to His being. A week after His death, Jesus is seen having another meal with His friends. Thomas, a disciple who was not there, cannot fathom that Jesus is

alive and well. Again Jesus appears and Thomas places his doubting hands into the nail marks of the Resurrected Jesus -- life is restored and faith is born.

Let us follow closely the hands of Christ. May His hands become our hands as His healing, teaching, and caring inspires our lives. Keeping our eyes fixed on His hands, we may achieve the proper prayerful attitude when we lift our own hands in prayer. And finally, as you raise your hands in prayer, please don’t forget to say an extra prayer for me. Happy Easter!

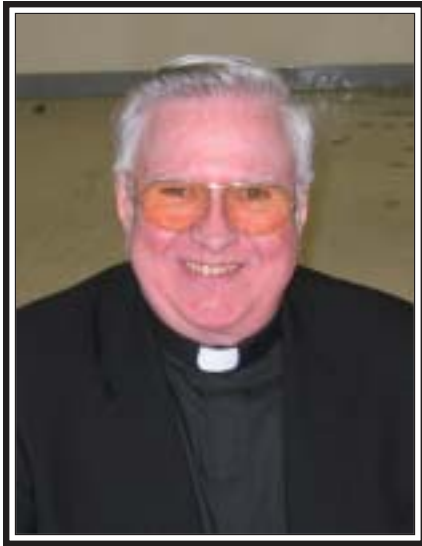
~Fr. Jim †

THE YEAR of the EUCCHARIST

“ . . . the gaze of the Church is constantly turned to her Lord, present in the Sacrament of the Altar, in which she discovers the full manifestation of his boundless love.”

*Pope John Paul II
from his Encyclical Letter,
Ecclesia de Eucharistia*

FR. TOM FITZGERALD CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY



This is Fr. Tom's homily given during the Mass of celebration on the occasion of his 40th anniversary of ordination, December 19, 2004, at St. Joseph Church, San Antonio, Texas.

The first thing I want to do today is to thank all of you who have come here to celebrate with me today and thank Almighty God for the gift of the priesthood.

There are people here from Indianapolis, Fort Worth, from Philadelphia and Annapolis. And there are even some people here from San Antonio.

I want to thank Archbishop Flores, Bishop Zurek and Bishop Flanagan for being here.

It is 40 years ago this day that I was ordained a priest by Bishop McGuire. It was at the end of the Vatican Council—Vatican Council II, not Vatican Council I, and there was nowhere to get a bishop. Bishop McGuire didn't go to Rome and with

13 bishops in the diocese, he didn't get a chance to ordain and was thrilled for the opportunity. Bishop McGuire ordained me in my parish in New York City, St. Jean Baptiste.

Whenever we celebrate an anniversary of this kind, there are lots of thoughts that run through our minds and hearts and it is difficult to sort them out in order to share them with those who celebrate with us.

As I was trying to quiet myself yesterday in order to share my feelings with you, one thought kept running over and over again in my mind: "My soul gives thanks to the Lord for He has done mighty things for me and Holy is His Name . . ." Those words were so, so relevant. He has given me an opportunity to serve and in many, many ways He has full control.

As in anybody's life there were moments of great joy, moments of doubt, moments of seemingly unending struggles, and even moments when I felt like saying forget it, but through it all the Lord was present. He gave me power to overcome every situation and continue to listen and serve.

Because I am a religious of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers and Brothers, I have had the opportunity to serve in New York City, Massachusetts, Chicago, the Philippines, Albuquerque, and here in San Antonio. He saved the best for last and he brought me here—St. Joseph's, San Antonio.

I told our deanery not so long ago that God was so good but especially good here because the priests in this diocese are so good, so friendly, so warm, and so helpful, and always, always ready to be of service, and I thank God for being among them. As a priest, I think one of the things we experience most especially is that little part in the Gospel, remember when St. Peter says to Jesus, "What about us? We have given up our families, our homes, everything to follow You. What about us?"

. . . but through it all, the Lord was present.

"If you give up your fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters, and homes for my sake, you will have 100 times more in this life and eternal life as well." He has been extremely faithful to that promise because, in His goodness, He has allowed the priest, He has allowed me, to serve in various communities, and whenever we serve the people in our parish we all-of-a-sudden become part and parcel of their very lives. At the beginning, when they bring their children to be baptized; when they come to be married, we celebrate their joy and happiness; we listen to their struggles—we are there when they are struggling with their doubts and fears; we stand by them in their sorrow when they lose a loved one. We are a part of their family when they try to grow and make sense out of the burdens they have to carry from day to day. So many times

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**FR. TOM FITZGERALD CELEBRATES
 ANNIVERSARY**

words are not enough—presence is more than words can be. Just to be present to the families we serve in good times and bad; it makes us part of that family. So when Jesus said “you will have a hundred times more fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters,” He really meant it, I think, and I hope and pray that since He has been faithful to that part of His promise, He will also be faithful to His promise of eternal life.

It has been a joy to serve, it is so awesome; it is so awesome particularly on Sunday when we are celebrating with a community that is ours and we look out on that community and we say ‘I know their story. I know their struggles; I know their hurts; I know their families. I know their accomplishments; I know their frustrations; and their disappointments’ and it is so overpowering to be part of that journey.

I am a Blessed Sacrament Father and as a Blessed Sacrament Father, I am extremely privileged to share the gift Jesus has given us in the Holy Eucharist. For more than 40 years now it has been such a joy to celebrate the Eucharist with the assembly every week. We come to this church week after week and some are filled with joy because they have had such a fabulous week, others are just about making it, and still others are looking for something they can grab a hold of so they can go out again for the next week.

We come week after week and we hear God’s Word—wherever we

are, whatever experience we had is spoken and proclaimed, it brings healing; it enables us to carry on; it gives us strength to pick ourselves up again; it gives us courage to forgive those who hurt us or whom we have hurt.

The Word we hear on Sunday as a faith-filled people, we take to ourselves and God speaks to us—each one where we are. Then we hear the Word broken for us. It is taken from God’s Holy Word and is somehow shared. And in this particular community especially—it is an awesome thing. People come from all over the country and the world to celebrate Eucharist with us. We hear them say: “You said what I needed to know; I heard what you said; I feel so much better, I needed that.” And I don’t know them from a hole in the ground, but the Holy Spirit takes that Word and brings about strength and healing in the community. Isn’t that marvelous how He works?

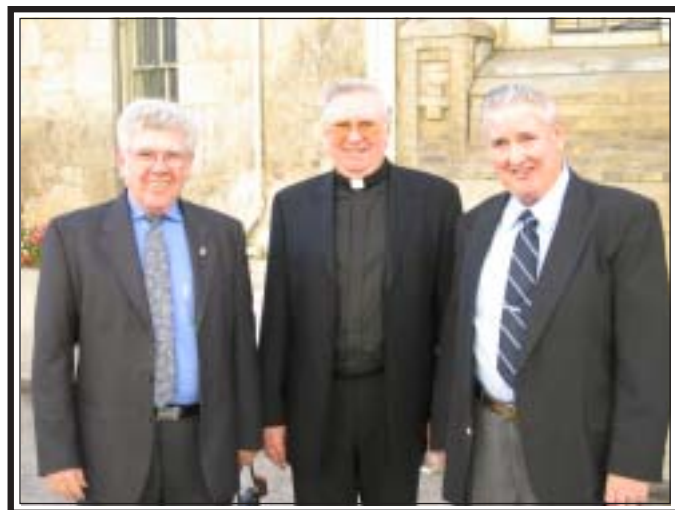
After hearing His Word and experiencing His healing, He gives himself to us so that we can become

truly Christed people—healed of our brokenness; experiencing love at His table; experiencing union; experiencing wholeness and giving us strength; and the desire to bring what we have received to our families or wherever we find ourselves. Week after week, no matter how we feel when we come in, we leave stronger.

I praise God for the 40 years’ opportunity to be part of this. That the Lord has used me in such a way that we are able to share His Word and eat together, and walk hand-in-hand in order to build up our community and our society, and continue to dream and continue the story.

I thank God for my family, for my Blessed Sacrament Community, and I thank God for these priests, because they give me courage and keep me from slacking off, and will enable me to continue to serve for years to come.

I thank God for you and your faith, which is a source of great joy for me. I pray God will bless you abundantly today and every day. ✚



Fr. Tom celebrates with his two brothers, Patrick (left) and Jack (right).

BUSY DAYS FOR THE NOVICES

by Anthony Marshall



There is that old saying, written some time ago to be sure, that says “time flies when you’re having fun.” This saying could not be truer for the novices!

It seems that it was only yesterday that Brothers John Christman, David Stinson, and Anthony Marshall were received into the novitiate at Saint Jean Baptiste in New York City. The months have passed quickly by from that second of August morning. The novices have settled into their various ministries and classes, with Br. Michael Perez, SSS, leading them in their discernment and formation as novice master.

The novices weekly attend classes in Ossining, New York, at the Mariandale Retreat Center sponsored by the Religious Formation Conference. It is there that John and Anthony come together with women and men novices from various orders such as the Carmelites, Sisters of Christian Charity, and many others. Br. Perez and Br. Michael O’Leary, assistant novice master, also have the opportunity to gather with the

formation personnel from the various congregations represented. The weekly classes have focused on topics pertinent to initial formation and religious life, such as the theology of the vows, history of religious life, sacred liturgy, and personal integration. Overall, the information presented has been helpful as is the opportunity that the novices have to work with and relate to other men and women beginning their religious life. The inter-novitiate classes will continue through April.

The Octave of Christmas found the novices and Br. Perez in Cleveland for a little vacation. Br. John and Fr. Michael Noreika, SSS, traveled to Menasha, Wisconsin, for a short visit. Brs. David and Anthony stayed with the very hospitable community at Saint Paschal Baylon and enjoyed the nearly two feet of snow which quickly melted before they returned home to the Big Apple.

Once a week, Br. David ministers at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital in New York’s Upper East-Side visiting the patients and bringing them Holy Communion. His years of experience as a registered nurse give him the unique opportunity not only to attend to the spiritual needs of those whom he visits, but he can relate also to their medical and physical ailments and issues. During his free time, Br. David enjoys photography and visiting the plethora of art museums and attractions that New York offers, as well as keeping in physical shape as part of his New Year’s resolutions.

Taking the Brooklyn-bound subway two afternoons a week is how Br. John commutes to his ministry at Brooklyn Jesuit Prep (BJP). It is there that the wonderful artistic talents of his come through as he shares with his students the wonder and awe for God that beautiful art inspires. Although it can sometimes be a struggle to keep middle-school aged children interested in school-work, Br. John manages to pass along his love for art. In addition to working at BJP, Br. John keeps his director’s chair active filming different things, and recently directing a short silent-film on the life of Saint Peter Julian Eymard which starred Brs. Michael, David, and Anthony. The film was part of a project that the various communities present on their specific charism at the inter-novitiate classes in Ossining.

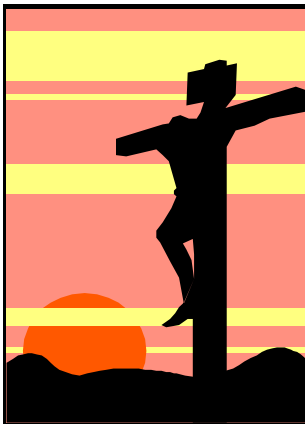
Br. Anthony ministers weekly as a “student-teacher” or teacher’s aide at Saint Jean Baptiste High School, working with a social studies teacher and her global history classes. He has occasionally substituted, and helped with lunch duty in the cafeteria. To prepare interested students for the Sacrament of Confirmation, Br. Anthony conducts a class after school on Thursday. Different things keep the interest of Br. Anthony including reading, exploring Manhattan, and Internet work with Fr. Anthony Schueller, SSS, for the parish. Recently, he helped Fr. Tony set up an “online

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BUSY DAYS FOR THE NOVICES

giving” section for the parish web site (www.sjbrcc.org).

The first half of the canonical year of the novitiate has moved very quickly. Even with the fast-paced lifestyle of New York, and the different classes, ministries, and community living, the novices find that the central part of their day is participating in daily Mass and spending time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. In this Year of the Eucharist, the Holy Father invites religious to never forget that Jesus in the tabernacle wants them to be at His side, so that He can fill their hearts with the experience of His friendship, which alone gives meaning and fulfillment to their lives (cf. John Paul II, *Mane Nobiscum Dominium*, no. 30). In following the footsteps of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, Apostle of the Eucharist, the novices are growing in a deeper friendship with Jesus—learning to celebrate the Eucharist worthily, adore it profoundly, and to live it daily as religious of the Blessed Sacrament. †



BIRTHDAYS

MARCH

07 1962 Rev. Scott Haig
 07 1965 Rev. J.T. Lane
 (40 years young)
 28 1936 Rev. William Young

APRIL

06 1932 Br. Peter Mahady
 07 1936 Rev. Eugene
 LaVerdiere
 13 1945 Rev. Dana Pelotte
 (60 years young)
 13 1945 Bp. Donald Pelotte
 (60 years young)
 25 1942 Br. Michael O’Leary

MAY

04 1948 Rev. Thomas
 O’Mahony
 06 1941 V. Rev. Norman
 Pelletier
 18 1933 Rev. Edward
 Stapleton
 20 1934 Rev. Dominic Luong
 25 1923 Rev. René Belanger
 26 1945 Rev. William Fickel
 (60 years young)
 28 1935 Deacon Joseph
 Bourgeois
 (70 years young)



Prayer Requests . . .

ALL RELIGIOUS, especially those who are ill and suffering, that God would bring healing and strength to them.

For the repose of the soul of Mary Elizabeth Flanagan, sister of **BR. THOMAS FLANAGAN, SSS**, of Cleveland, who passed away in Wales, England, in December 2004. We also ask prayers for the consolation of the Flanagan family and friends.

For the repose of the soul of Theresa Rufo, sister of **FR. ERNEST FALARDEAU, SSS**, of New York City, New York, who died suddenly on Wednesday, December 22, 2004. Please pray for the consolation of the Falardeau and Rufo family and friends.

For the repose of the soul of **BR. MICHAEL GALLIGAN, SSS**, who passed away on February 4, 2005. Please pray for his surviving sister, Margaret, and all of his family and friends, that they would experience God’s consolation.

All of the **victims of the tsunami**, in their suffering and loss, that God would comfort them.



Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

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Workshops:

- *LITE (Life in the Eucharist)*
- *Eucharistic Celebrations,
Contemplation & Communion*

ANNIVERSARIES

... OF ORDINATION

MARCH

19 1975 Rev. Thomas Wiese
(30 years)

23 1972 Rev. Joachim Viet-Chau

25 1950 Rev. René Belanger

25 1950 Rev. Thomas McKeon

25 1950 Rev. Edmund Slattery

29 1952 Rev. Peter Cops

APRIL

02 1949 Rev. Raymond Dubois

13 2002 Rev. Thomas Smithson

16 1994 Rev. Joseph Thai Tran

29 1967 Rev. Dominic Luong

MAY

05 1990 Rev. Frederico Ablog

16 1964 Rev. Eugene LaVerdiere

17 1969 V. Rev. Norman Pelletier

23 1964 Rev. Paul Bernier

23 1964 Rev. William Young

28 1966 Rev. Robert Chabot

31 1975 Rev. John Kamas
(30 years)

... OF PROFESSION

MARCH

19 1965 Br. Arthur Mella
(40 years)

19 1965 Br. Michael O'Leary
(40 years)

19 1966 Br. Michael Perez

APRIL

12 1957 Br. Eugene Blee

15 1970 Rev. Robert Rousseau

17 1958 Br. Francis E. Flanagan

29 1976 Rev. Dominic Luong

MAY

08 1970 Rev. Anthony Schueller

