



the Seraph

News and Notables of
St. Bonaventure
Province

Issue #2 2021

May God be praised, forever!



On Friday, February 12, the staff and residents of St. Joseph Home in Palatine, Illinois, celebrated the 70th anniversary of Br. Martin Schmitz's First Profession of Vows. It was also pointed out that Br. Martin was one of the Friars who had been at Marytown from its early days in Kenosha through its establishment as the National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe in Libertyville.

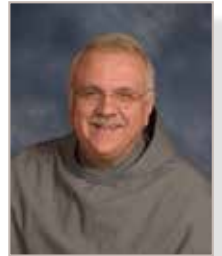
Br. Martin is quick to give thanks and praise to our Lord for his vocation and life as a Franciscan Brother. He says that one of the spiritual highlights of his life is when he visited Mount Alvernia in Italy where St. Francis received the stigmata.

Living at St. Joseph Home, Br. Martin tells us, is the 'frosting on the cake.' He is very grateful to be a part of the community there. Whether leading the Rosary or Chaplet of Divine Mercy for prayer groups, or through sharing his faith with anyone he meets with during his day, Brother is an inspiration to all who live and work there. They say they feel blessed to have him as a part of the St. Joseph Home family.

May God be praised, forever!

A WORD FROM OUR PROVINCIAL

Dear Friars,



Praised be Jesus Christ!

As we continue our Easter celebrations, I am reading a book, **Divine Mercy: A Guide from Genesis to Benedict XVI** by Robert Stackpole, STD. Chapter five is titled, *St. Francis of Assisi and the Early Franciscans*. In this chapter, the author uses a few examples from the prayers and stories of St. Francis, the early Franciscan sources, and the writings of St. Bonaventure, to show how St. Francis himself trusted in and preached about the mercy of God, and how St. Francis wanted to inspire his followers to trust and preach about God's divine mercy.

Some theologians and spiritual writers will go so far as to say that God's Divine Mercy is His greatest attribute; but that is something to be discussed and debated in academic circles. What I think we are being called to do at this time in the Church is to call people's attention to God's merciful love lavishly being poured upon us.

With the world still reeling from the effects of the pandemic, and people still afraid to gather or even come back to Church and the Sacraments, what we need to do as Franciscans is follow the example of St. Francis and the early Franciscans, and preach by word and example about how we have been transformed and sustained by God's Divine Mercy.

Who of us can stand before God the Father and claim that Jesus had to die for us? Who of us can claim that we so perfectly follow God, His will, His Law, the Commandments, and the Beatitudes, that we do not need to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

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As friars, have we internalized our Rule and Constitutions so that our lives can be held up as an example for others to follow? I know we are not bad men, because bad men do not profess the Gospel and struggle to live the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. But where would we be if we did not experience God's Divine Mercy, not just once a day, but throughout the day?

Pope Francis reminds us that the Church is not for the perfect, but a field hospital for the wounded. We have all been wounded by sin! We are all disordered. We are disorientated because, as St. Paul says, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." I know that our culture does not like to hear that we are disordered, but as men of the Gospel we proclaim the truth of the Gospel, in and out of season. We are all in need of God's Divine Mercy, and when we open up ourselves to God's Divine Mercy we are changed, we are not the same! It is God's grace that moves us to come to the wellspring of His mercy and love. It is God's grace that enables us to recognize that we need Him, that we need to confess our sins, that we need to celebrate and receive Him in the Eucharist, the source and summit of who we are and are called to be.

As men of the Word, men of the Gospel called to live in community with one another, with our God, and even with our world, let our lives proclaim God's Divine Mercy! Tell the story of how God's merciful love saved and continues to save you. As some banking commercials say: "Don't bounce back but bounce forward!" Announcing God's merciful love in word and deed will truly have a transforming effect not only on the Church but on the world as well. Let's not be afraid to cast our nets into the deeper waters! With God at our side, we have nothing to lose!

God bless,
Michael



Let's not be afraid to cast our nets into the deeper waters! With God at our side, we have nothing to lose!

Marytown



Celebrating the Triduum



St. Ita & St. Gregory

Continued on pages 4 to 7



Basilica of St. Josaphat

Sharon Felten, a parishioner, has been decorating our Paschal Candle for years. She's pictured holding her masterpiece.



Paschal Candles for St. Ita, St. Thomas of Canterbury,



And St. Gregory



Our Lady of the Rosary

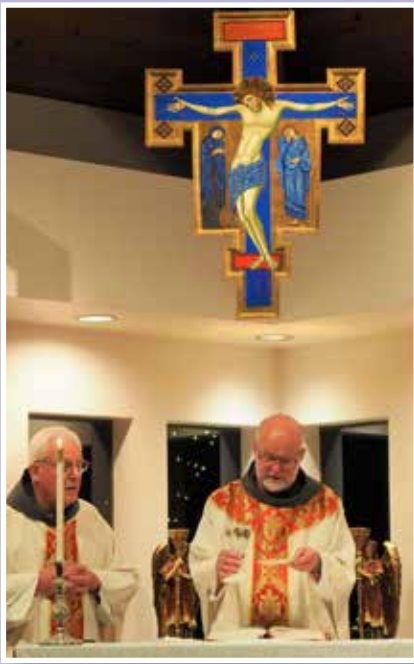
The friars of Mount St. Francis gathered for Easter Lunch. The table was festooned by Tony Fox. Pictured from left to right: Alejandro López, Tony Fox, Bernard Mary Funkalsrud, David Blowey, Dominic Levaq and Leonides Mateo.



St. Gregory



St. Bonaventure Friary



Novitiate

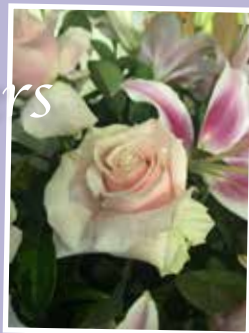


The Easter Bunny made it through Covid again this year and arrived safely at the novitiate.

In March this year, Bernard Mary Fonkalsrud of the Australian Delegation of Our Lady Help of Christians began employment with the Diocese of Broken Bay (northern suburbs of Sydney up to the Central Coast) as the 'Sacramental Life and RCIA Coordinator.' This ministry is well suited to Bernard, who has a background in teaching both in school and parish environments. His role involves the ongoing formation and support of parish coordinators, creating and reviewing resource material, as well as working with the wider diocesan 'Parish Renewal & Discipleship' team and their initiatives.



Close up of flowers
at Kellyville



St. Josaphat Parish School was featured in a recent issue of the Catholic Herald!

St. Josaphat Mother Creates Lenten Display

**KAREN MAHONEY
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD**

Luis Ruiz, a fourth-grade student at St. Josaphat Parish School is accustomed watching his mother, Maria Flores Ruiz, create elaborate decorations in their home for most of the major Catholic holidays. She creates detailed tablescapes and vignettes in their home, utilizing fabric, paint, statuary, relics, candles and other items. When Luis proudly showed some photos of her decorations to his principal, Karen Strasser, she was eager to utilize the woman's talents in the school.

"On Christmas Day, I went to Mass at Holy Hill and received a relic from the statue of Our Lady of Good Success in Quito, Ecuador. The relics are few and far between, but it was given to me after Mass by a friend. I was so amazed and grateful to receive it," Strasser said. "The Feast of Our Lady of Good Success is Feb. 2, which is also the Presentation of Jesus. I wanted to see if Maria could find a way to display the relic beneath a 15-foot image of Our Lady of Guadalupe that we had painted over the summer."

Strasser contacted Maria and explained what she wanted to do on the school's stage with the image and the relic. Flores Ruiz created the display using the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe as a backdrop. She strung lights around and behind the image, and used ribbons, candles, roses and more.

"It was extraordinarily beautiful," said Strasser. "She did this all with no direction and then told me, 'Wait until you see what I am doing for Lent.' I told her she was hired. She doesn't get paid anything, but she was hired."

Naturally creative, Flores Ruiz explained that her ideas come from the many decorations her mother and grandmother used to do in their homes in Mexico.



▲ Maria Flores Ruiz has created a Lenten display for St. Josaphat Parish School. (Photo by David Bernacchi)

"I enjoy doing this and try to do something in our home for every holiday," Maria said. "I don't normally do it as big as I did for the school, but smaller for our home. On Valentine's Day, I set up candles in the shape of a rosary, and displayed pictures of my dad and brother who had died. I like to shine the light on moments that are faith-filled or Catholic holidays and spiritually connected to our own life."

Luis is very proud of his mother and appreciates the great effort she goes to for their family.

"We prayed rosaries for my grandpa and uncle, who both had died, and it was the anniversary of their deaths because they both died within a couple of days of each other," he said. "She does lots of beautiful things for the holidays in our home for us."

One of the more beautiful aspects of Flores Ruiz's creativity, explained Maureen McCourt, sixth-grade homeroom and middle school ELA teacher, is her influence in helping the school hold on to Mexican culture.

"Our school is 98 percent Hispanic, and she is helping to keep their heritage alive by educating us in Mexican traditions," McCourt said. "Maria embraces the faith and helps it come alive in our schools. I hadn't known many of the Mexican traditions, but Maria is teaching all of us; so we can keep it going for our students."

To create the school's Lenten display, Flores Ruiz garnered the assistance of her brother, who helped her create the three massive wooden crosses. She also had him help her bring in large rocks for the display, something Strasser was shocked to see on the school's security camera.

"I wasn't sure when everything would be delivered and saw these guys coming in to the school on the camera with these huge wooden crosses and massive rocks," Strasser said. "It shocked me a bit at first. I was thinking, 'What the heck?'"

The colorful display also features yards of fabric in purples, pinks, beige, blues and peach, which Strasser said came from the gift store across from the Basilica.

"It was closing, so I brought Maria over

there and while we were looking through items that might work for the display, we found a big box of fabric with lots of purple in there, so we are happy that part of this display comes from the Basilica gift shop," she said.

Flores Ruiz said she hopes the schoolchildren, teachers and staff feel happy and learn more about their Catholic Faith.

"Some who come here may not believe in God or may not know a lot about our faith, so I hope the kids will talk about the display with their families and through some act of the Holy Spirit, ignite the faith they had forgotten and bring them back to Church," she said. "I know it might be a long shot, but if the kids get excited, it might begin a conversation at home and maybe their moms and dads will come back to the Church."

For McCourt, whose three middle school classes currently meet in the gym next to the stage, she is certain the children will bring the discussions home to their families.

"The kids were absolutely amazed, and I was amazed and moved by the beauty of this Lenten display. I got tears in my eyes and almost cried for all this school mom did for us," McCourt said. "This is so beautiful and speaks to who we are as a school and as a strong family community."

The celebration of Christ's Passion are the three most important days in the Church calendar, said Flores Ruiz. She wants to ensure that Mexican families don't check their faith at the door to assimilate completely into American culture.

"It is important to us to keep the faith alive," she said. "I like being able to share our culture and am happy St. Josaphat School is welcoming and celebrating it!"

The Story of Fr. Casimir Cypher

Fr. Casimir Michael Cypher OFM, Conv., was a son, brother, Franciscan friar, Catholic Order of Foresters member, poet, missionary, and martyr. His life was not supposed to end in Honduras 46 years ago.

By Connor McEleney and Nick Sentovich

To know him was to know grace, and to witness him was to witness a modern-day St. Francis of Assisi. Born in 1941 in Medford, Wisconsin, Michael Jerome Cypher left after eighth grade to study at a Conventual Franciscan minor seminary. He had eight brothers and three sisters. They were a Catholic Order of Foresters family. Later, in 1959, he went to Lake Forest, Illinois, and took the name "Casimir."

After a stint serving

at a Franciscan parish in Hermosa Beach, California, Fr. Casimir was called to Honduras. He arrived in October 1973 to begin working in remote villages scattered among the mountains of Gualaco in the Honduran department of Olancho. Although he never fully grasped the native language, his warm personality made up for his struggle to communicate verbally.

Dr. Mike Gable, a professor of theology at Xavier University and

former lay missionary who worked with Fr. Casimir in Honduras, recalled the Franciscan's early mission work in Gualaco. "His job was to go out on horseback and visit the villages that were part of our huge parish," Dr. Gable said. "He would go with saddlebags and give Mass in homes."

**Be the sun you
were created
to be!**

-Fr. Casimir, "The Sun"

For weeks, Fr. Casimir would go up into the mountains before returning to Gualaco. When he returned after enduring the rugged terrain, he would relax and tell stories by candlelight with Dr. Gable. "We shared a room, and he liked to do art that I was impressed with. He showed me some of his poems and I thought, 'Wow, this guy's got some Franciscan spiritual depth that is just impressive.' He really had a spirituality that was far advanced," said Dr. Gable. "We'd stay up and talk and tell funny stories. He often

spoke about his mother Elizabeth and how she kept their Catholic family tight in their faith."

Throughout his life, Fr. Casimir had a reputation of being carefree and generous. But when he sat down to write, he was anything but carefree. His best work, a poem called "The Sun," has stuck with Dr. Gable since the moment Fr. Casimir showed it to him in Honduras.

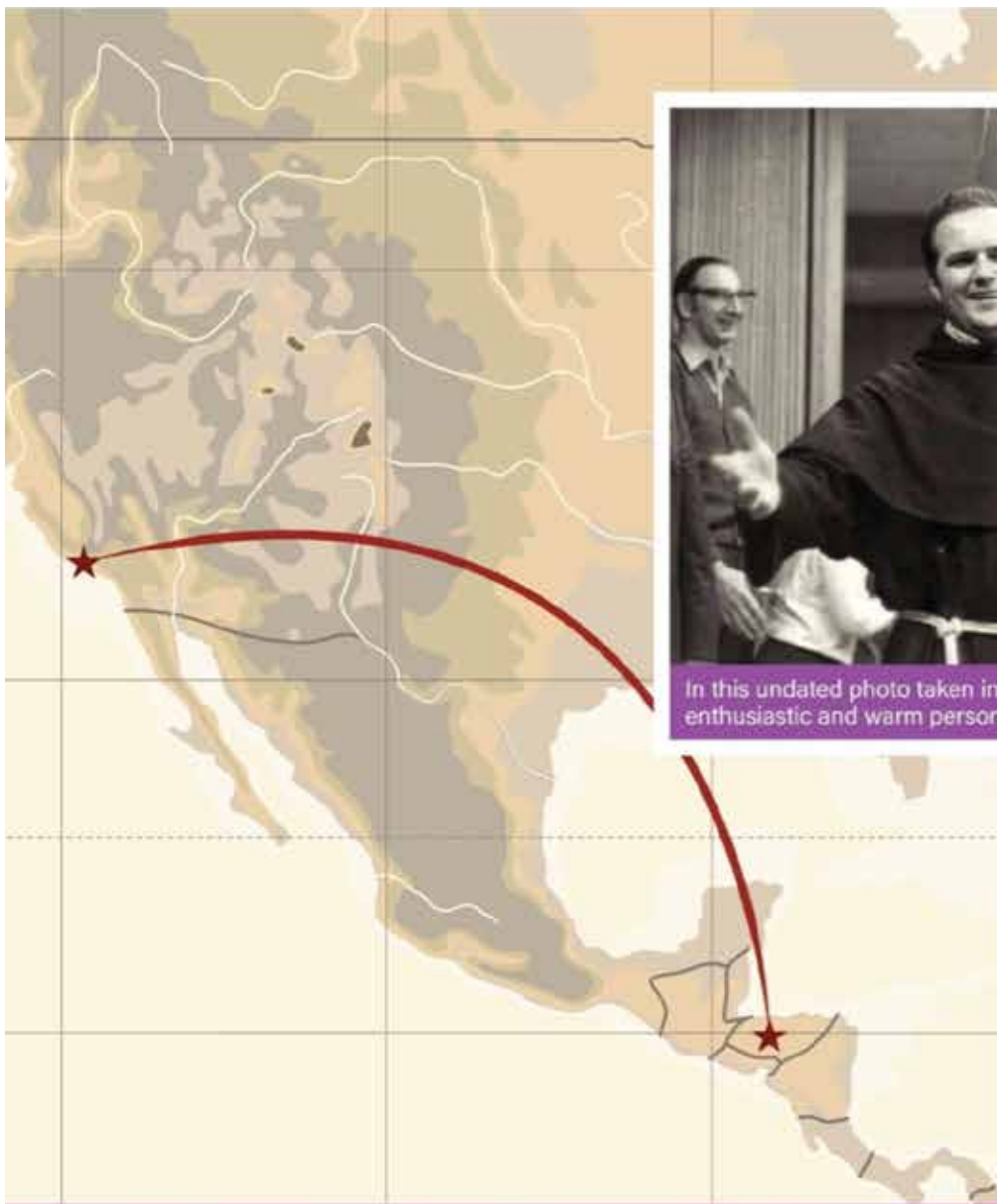
"It was written for Juanita Klapeke, a missionary from Louisville, Kentucky, who really struggled with the rough cowboy culture in Honduras. Things were falling apart for her, so she decided that the work was not for her," said Dr. Gable. "She was disappointed, so Casimir wrote a beautiful poem called 'The Sun' to let her know that she could be the sun to people no matter where she was, just by using her love for others. He carved the poem into a mahogany plaque and gave it to her."

At Fr. Casimir's memorial Mass in Rockford, Illinois, Juanita read "The Sun."



Fr. Casimir Michael Cypher, OFM Conv.,
Associate Pastor, 1972-1973,
Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Hermosa Beach, CA.
Martyred in Honduras (June 25, 1975)

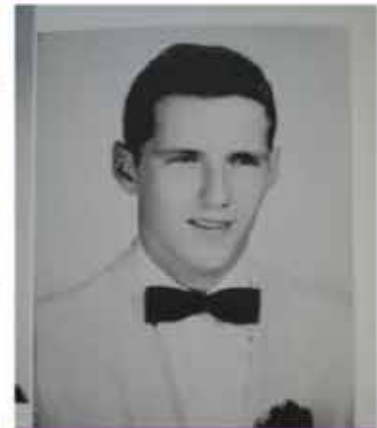
Before he arrived in Honduras, Fr. Casimir served Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Hermosa Beach, Calif., from 1972 to 1973. He also spent time in the Diocese of Rockford.



In 1973, Fr. Casimir flew over 2,000 miles from California to Honduras where he did missionary work in Olancho. At the time, infant mortality in Olancho was high, and there was extreme political tension over land ownership. Furthermore, most Catholic priests in Honduras were not native to the country. Fr. Casimir would briefly return to the U.S. in 1974.



In this undated photo taken in Rockford, Ill., Fr. Casimir's enthusiastic and warm personality shines through.



In high school, Casimir consistently performed as a top student while exceeding in athletics. He received an award for his athletic achievements.

"She barely made it through," said Dr. Gable. "About five years after Casimir died, I found out that Juanita was dying of cancer when her parents invited me to read the poem at her funeral." Dr. Gable paused and took a deep breath. "That was really hard to do."

After serving in Olancho, Fr. Casimir was stationed in San Esteban. Friar Mark Weaver, a Conventual Franciscan

who served in Honduras after Fr. Casimir, said Casimir began repairing the church in San Esteban himself, a choice characteristic of his action-oriented approach to his ministry.

He did more than just physical labor, he was an advocate for education and the promotion of vocations. In early 1975, he wrote to his provincial office, "We're trying to help the kids get to high school and

promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Since people here are poor in all aspects, it's a little tough. We're always short of funds."

Letters that he wrote home show that he suffered a great deal in Honduras. In August 1974, he wrote to his friend, "I've been sort of sick for a while—physically, mentally, and spiritually." This was no exaggeration. Five months later, he

suffered an infection in his bloodstream that required swift medical intervention in the U.S. During his time back in the states, he spoke in California and opened up about his struggles in Honduras. In that moment, perhaps he let himself be vulnerable. "God let me find out how weak I was." Nevertheless, he flew back to an increasingly unsafe Honduras soon after.

The heated political environment there was no joke: the Honduran military government and rich landowners felt threatened by the Catholic Church's work in social justice, including its involvement in a new democratic political party. "The peasants," according to a 1975 New York Times article that covered the political tension, "live on bare subsistence levels and make up 87 percent of the country's three million people." They were calling for sweeping reforms.

Although Casimir was not politically involved, in part because he lived far from the big cities in Olancho, the mere fact he was a priest put his life in danger.

Prior to his final journey to Honduras, Dr. Gable, who has since returned to the U.S., pleaded with Casimir to remain in the states. Casimir replied, "I can't abandon my people at this time. I know there's trouble, but I have to go back."

"He made a choice to go back knowing that things were not going to get prettier or easier," Dr. Gable said. "To me, that's the mark of sainthood."

One day in the summer of 1975, Fr. Casimir was driving his red Dodge pickup truck into Juticalpa, the capital city of Olancho. Sources differ on the reason he was going there. Some claim that he was delivering

a package. Others say he was driving a sick parishioner to the city hospital. One source thinks he was going to get the truck repaired. What no one disputes, however, is that hours earlier in Juticalpa, a platoon of soldiers and teachers and grade-school children rushed into a building and massacred a group of farmers inside. Casimir, unaware of the slaughter, was driving straight toward the building.

For reasons unknown, Casimir is said to have exited his vehicle in Juticalpa. Somehow, he was quickly apprehended by the soldiers and taken to jail. After he was questioned and tortured, the soldiers killed him and threw his body into a well. Some have speculated that his death was a case of mistaken identity because there was another priest in Honduras named Michel who was more politically active than Casimir. The soldiers, the theory goes, saw the name 'Michael' on Casimir's ID and mistakenly thought he was their target.

Although he is gone, Fr. Casimir's legacy lives on in the lives he touched. "It's a blessing to say that I knew a person who was very much like Jesus," said Dr. Gable.

Fr. Casimir's deep spirituality, generosity, and love for the poor serves as a model for all Catholic Order of Foresters members. CF



Casimir had always wanted to be a priest. But even more than that, he sought to live with few material possessions while serving the poor and underprivileged. This desire landed him in Honduras.

Upcoming Events

Friars Day, Marytown

with Fr. Wayne Hellmann (afternoon only) **Thursday, July 15**
& 1st Profession of Friar Anthony Ruffolo @7pm (tentative)

Ordination of Thomas Fetz to the Priesthood, St. Ita

11am **Saturday, September 18**

Strategic Planning Day, Marytown

with representatives from Plante Moran **Monday, October 11 (all day)**

Dates for Ordinary Provincial Chapter (2022), Marytown

First Session: **April 25 - 29, 2022**

Second Session: **June 27 - July 1, 2022**



*O Lord Jesus,
through You I humbly beg the merciful Father
to send the Holy Spirit of grace,
that He may bestow upon us His sevenfold gifts.*

*May He send us the gift of WISDOM,
which will make us relish the Tree of Life
that is none other than Yourself;
the gift of UNDERSTANDING,
which will enlighten us;
the gift of COUNSEL,
which will guide us in the way of righteousness;
and the gift of FORTITUDE,
which will give us the strength to vanquish
the enemies of our sanctification and salvation.*

*May He impart to us the gift of KNOWLEDGE,
which will enable us to discern Your teaching
and distinguish good from evil;
the gift of PIETY,
which will make us enjoy true peace;
and the gift of FEAR,
which will make us shun all iniquity
and avoid all danger of offending Your Majesty.*

*To the Father
and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit
be given all glory and thanksgiving forever.
Amen.*