



...To welcome as companions all inspired by
the charism of Edmund.

Chapman

The General Chapters of the Congregation of Christian Brothers gather insights, prayers, and inspirations of Brothers throughout the globe and articulate a plan of action for the next six years. The concluding document from the 2014 Chapter conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, called *Brothers to welcome as companions all those inspired by the Charism of Edmund*. Brothers, joined with others touched by the Charism of Edmund, constitute a “we” that come together in a variety of ways.



D. Kyne

Some of us attended schools of the Christian Brothers. Some entrusted our children to these schools, delighted in the spirit, formed friendships, and wanted to extend our involvement even after our children moved on. Others are or have been teachers, administrators, and staff members in Edmund Rice Christian Brother ministries. We have in common a desire to fulfill the will of God as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. Touched by the example and spirit of Edmund and others who also have become his companions, we seek to deepen our engagement in this unique charism, understanding “it is good for us to be here.”

The engagement takes many forms. University students, laborers, professionals, parents, grandparents, religious, and a number of priests, have experienced the call and respond in ways that make sense in our daily lives on this segment of our faith journeys. From a simple personal intention to a number of formal allegiances, including membership in an Edmund Rice Society as Associates, each discerns an appropriate response to the call of Jesus Christ, who is ever seen as the way, the truth, and the life. Three core aspects of our belonging are community, prayer, and service.

COMMUNITY

We experience ourselves as belonging to a larger community of brothers and sisters united by our faith in Jesus Christ. We desire to grow in this faith, and in our commitment to use what gifts we have in the service of our neighbors, particularly those most in need. We seek to share our stories, to attend to each other’s aspirations and struggles, celebrate good news, sustain each other in moments of pain, and foster a vision filled with hope and joy.

We seek to be community builders opening ourselves to those with whom we share our daily lives. Opportunities to be physically present to other members of the Edmund Rice Network may be rare. While some are in frequent contact, sharing residences, work sites, campuses, or parishes, most of us are joined simply in

prayer, e-mails, phone conversations, newsletters and occasional gatherings. The gatherings may take the form of conference calls, campus visits, scheduled meetings, memorial masses, mission ventures, and/or annual retreats.

PRAYER

Praying with and for each other is a powerful form of community building. Edmund's earliest companions faced the challenge of introducing unschooled youngsters to a full day and week of learning. In consideration of classes with as many as one hundred and fifty students, they found prayer an essential aspect of their daily lives. Theirs was a spirituality grounded in Scripture, Eucharist and Marian devotion. The initial Rules and Constitutions of Edmund's Society of Religious Brothers states: *They shall make the presence of God the object of their particular attention; and shall, from time to time, renew in themselves a sense thereof.*

Edmund, as a lay man, was an early promoter of biblical reading and reflection. Annotations in his bible indicate the application of scriptural verses to his daily business practices. Mass and common prayer were fixed moments in the life of his small group of companions. He lobbied for a privilege, unique in that era, of having the Blessed Sacrament reserved in each of the Brothers' residences. He wrote his pastoral letters in these chapels.



Marian devotions assumed a significant place in the lives of the Brothers and in their classrooms. A statue of Mary along with a Bible appear in the earliest portraits of Edmund. The Rosary, May shrines, litanies, and, in later years, the invocation of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, were a softening feminine presence in the all-male schools.

Edmund found inspiration in two saints: Ignatius of Loyola, whose name he assumed as his own name in religion, and Teresa of Avila, whose portrait hung in his bedroom. Each described a graded path of affective discernment leading to personal and spiritual growth and enlightenment. In the nineteenth century language of the *Rules and Constitutions*: *The end of this Institute is that all its members labour, in the first place, for their own perfection; and in the second, for that of their neighbour....*

Succeeding generations of followers of Edmund have adapted our spiritual practices, holding on to what is essential, while opening to new forms of expression in the light of the emerging universe story. Prayer intentions keep us mindful of each other, our families, and our friends. We are united in a personal and communal *God Quest*, cherishing the gift received, sharing the gift in community, and giving the gift away in the form of service.

SERVICE

The specific mission entrusted to the Brothers by the Church is the *evangelization of youth through the ministry of Christian education*. Time and circumstances have extended the engagements of the women and men who share the Charism of Edmund to people of all ages and conditions, of other religions, or, of no religion. As members of the Edmund Rice Network we are committed especially to the poor and those on the margins of society.

The *Essential Elements of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother Education* underscores service to the poor and advocacy on behalf of those denied justice as foundational. Students are encouraged to become engaged in local service projects and immersion experiences in the inner cities and rural pockets of poverty in North and Latin America. Exposure to the plight of the immigrants and afflicted throughout the globe informs their participation in Mission Frère Advocacy. They come to see themselves as part of an international Edmund Rice Network including Mission Frère in Harlem and Haiti, the emerging *Our Way into the Future* Communities in Africa and India, as well as Edmund Rice International, lobbying for justice in the United Nations in Geneva and New York City.

In sharing the Charism of Edmund we foster these missionary efforts with prayer, financial support, and advocacy. We seek ways of developing similar service opportunities in our neighborhoods, or to join one of the domestic or international mission immersions.



... Children, refugees, immigrants, those living on the margins in Brownsville, Texas; Bonita Springs, Florida; Lima, Peru; join in expanding the vision of our students. We carry the voices home. We tell their stories, which become our stories, in Geneva, New York and our own communities.

Service, if done in the spirit of Edmund, carries the distinguishing characteristics of *presence*, *compassion*, and *liberation*. We remind each other of the call to open our hearts and be fully present to our co-workers, to the individuals and communities we seek to serve, and to the Lord present in each of our brothers and sisters. Such presence nurtures a relationship of compassion, of deep affective participation in the joys and the hurts of the life we share. We allow ourselves to be sensitized to whatever blocks growth or personal and communal advancement. We experience the call for liberation and understand we need to do our part in promoting full expression of the freedom of the daughters and sons of our Father.

OUR COMING TOGETHER

Each era seems to expand the ways of carrying forward the Spirit and Charism of Edmund Rice. We have struggled with naming the sum of our ways of gathering. Edmund Rice Family, Community, Society, Mission, Movement, and Network, have been put forward at different times. Perhaps it is this lack of unanimity on a name that has given fuller scope to the inspiration of the Spirit operating among us. We present here some of the formats for our engagement:

ER Communities



Edmund Rice schools and ministry sites have become the locus of faculty and/or student groups who meet regularly for prayer, community, and service. Each group develops a rhythm that is most appropriate for the members and the surrounding neighborhoods. The diversity and energy of these groups have been a blessing and inspiration for other Edmund Rice gatherings throughout North America. See the web site of the Edmund Rice School Network for illustrations. <http://edmundriceschools.org/>

Benefactors

In deed and in lessons to his Brothers, Edmund taught generosity: “Give to the poor in handfuls.” The Christian Brothers Foundation supports many of the ministerial and mission initiatives of the Brothers and the Edmund Rice Network. Our financial gifts, essential to sustaining the many good works, make us *Partners in Mission*. Contributions to the foundation are tax exempt. Contact Ms. Colleen Noonan, cfn@cbfoundation.com .

ER Mission Groups



Mission sites established by Christian Brothers have become the destination of students and adults seeking an intensive experience of life and service at the margins of society. Each evening, after a day of work, participants are engaged in gospel reflection on what is happening among us and those we seek to serve. One or two week sessions among the poor often inspire deeper appreciation for the blessings of our own homes and perhaps a desire for a more extended commitment in the future. Contact Brother Steve Casey, CFC, or ERNS Coordinator, Benny Rivera, for information. bennyriveracbi@gmail.com

ER College and University Campus Initiatives



As students inspired by the Charism of Edmund Rice, perhaps through earlier education in an Edmund Rice Network School, participation in the ACTION program, or an ERCB Mission Emersion Experience, we come together on college and university campuses to share our commitment to prayer, community and service. Formally or informally, in large or small groups, we encourage each other in promoting presence, compassion and liberation in the spirit of Blessed Edmund Rice. For information on joining or starting a group on your campus, again contact Edmund Rice Network Services Coordinator, Benny Rivera. bennyriveracbi@gmail.com

Edmundians



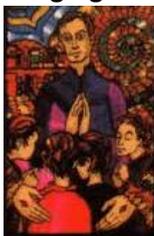
We are men who devoted some portion of our lives as members of the Congregation of Christian Brothers. Whether we left as postulants, novices, temporary or finally professed, a bond endures. While each individual's journey is unique, the time spent in the Brotherhood remains a major influence in one's life. The Edmundian Society is a fellowship whose principal expressions are spiritual vitality, mutual support, and social sharing. Our primary purpose is to better develop our spirituality in the vocation we are now pursuing. The common bond that was once our life has reunited us in collegiality, support and service. Contact: Robert Kman, President. rk1129@cox.net

Associates



Women and men with various roles in family, professional, church and community life, we seek to deepen our engagement in the charism, the spirit, and the legacy of Blessed Edmund Rice. We participate in a formation experience leading to a commitment to live the Gospel message through our present calling in life. We make time for prayer, seek opportunities to work for justice, and engage in charitable and educational efforts on behalf of the poor and marginalized. We renew this commitment annually, usually in the context of a retreat. Contact: Brother John J. McCarthy, CFC jjm@cbfoundation.org

Congregation of Christian Brothers



As members of the Congregation of Christian Brothers, we are vowed religious, in consecrated brotherhood, devoted to works of the apostolate, missioned by the Church for the evangelization of youth, and especially for the education and care of the materially poor. Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America encompasses our Brothers, communities and ministry sites in the United States, Canada and Dominica, West Indies. See <http://edmundricebrothers.org/> and contact Brother Jim McDonald, CFC bromaccfc@yahoo.com



The logo of the Congregation of Christian Brothers tells a bit of our story. The Celtic cross (wood) attests to the spirit of faith of our founder, Blessed Edmund Rice (the large E). A widower, father and businessman, he responded to the call of Jesus, "... sell what you have, give to the poor, and follow me." He and his fellow brothers, grounded in a heart-centered, Eucharistic spirituality (monstrance), came together in community, prayer and service. New growth (green sprouts) becomes evident as others (fresh leaves), inspired by the Charism of Edmund, emerge in a new era, giving practical expression to a message of Presence, Compassion, and Liberation.