



PROVINCE NEWSLETTER

Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America

A PROVINCE OF THE CONGREGATION OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERS

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Brother Jason Ford, CFC, Renews His Vows at Archbishop Curley Notre Dame High School



Brother Jason Matthew Ford, CFC renewed his vows at the Archbishop Curley Notre Dame High School chapel

At the ceremony, Br. Ford was surrounded by his family of Christian Brothers, ACND faculty, friends and students who participate in the Edmund Rice Community – a community service group that follows the example of founder Edmund Rice. In the initial formation process of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers, a Brother must renew his vows each year for six years before becoming eligible to profess his final vows. This year marked the beginning of Br. Ford’s sixth year under vows.

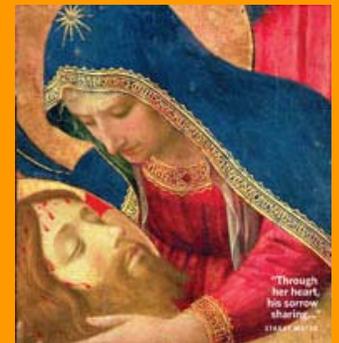
He remarks: “The time that leads up to requesting permission to renew my vows is a very sacred time, I review the events of the year, I receive letters of encouragement and support from the Brothers in my community, and through conversations with my formation director and spiritual director I go through a process of discernment as to whether or not I am still being called to serve God and the Church as a member of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers. These opportunities add greatly to my ministry as they help me to see my strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities God has placed before me.”

Jason was born in Boston, MA, on May 4, 1979, to Kevin (Boston Police Officer) and Marilyn (Mari) Ford. He has two brothers, Jonathan (34) and Jeremy (30). They lived in Roslindale, MA, within the boundaries of Sacred Heart Parish, where he attended school from 1st grade through 8th grade. Jason then attended Catholic Memorial School in West Roxbury, MA, where he first came in contact with the Congregation of Christian Brothers. After graduation from high school he attended Iona College in New Rochelle, NY, from where he graduated in 2001 with a degree in history.

In September of 2001, Br. Ford began teaching at Catholic Memorial School (CM), 7th and 8th grade theology. While a member of the faculty, he felt the call to religious life. After two years of teaching at CM, he entered religious life with the Eastern American Province of the Congregation of Christian Brothers. While in initial formation, he began ministering to students at Blessed Sacrament–Saint Gabriel High School in New Rochelle, NY; this assignment would last for the two years of residential candidacy (postulancy).

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“If you know how to forgive, you prepare for yourself many graces from God. As often as I look upon the cross, so often will I forgive with all my heart.”

St. Faustina Kowalska





Fr. Daniel Kent, ACND Spanish teacher, is celebrant at the vow renewal ceremony. He offers the host to Br. John Corcoran, ACND English teacher. Br. Thomas Armstrong, ACND Library Media Coordinator, stands in the background.

On June 25, 2006, Br. Ford was accepted into the North American Novitiate in Hyde Park, IL. The novitiate is a special time set aside to pray, reflect, and learn more intensely about the life of a Christian Brother. During his novitiate year, Jason took graduate-level theology classes at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

From August 2006 – June 2009, Br. Ford ministered in Salinas, CA at Palma High School as a 10th and 11th grade theology teacher, Director of Student Activities, and Director of Campus Ministries. During this time Jason began graduate studies at Santa Clara University in the Graduate Program in Pastoral Ministries.

After his three years in Salinas, Br. Ford was assigned to Cochabamba, Bolivia to study Spanish at the Maryknoll Language Institute. He lived and studied there for six months and completed his year ministering in Canto Grande outside of Lima, Peru.

Presently he is the Coordinator of Campus Ministries at Archbishop Curley Notre Dame High School in Miami, Florida.

Br. Ford likes to define his vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience in a positive light. He states, “The freedom from attachments and possessions allows me to be more present in my ministry. With the opportunity to listen to the will of God and the needs of the Province, I can ensure that the gifts and talents I have are used to their fullest potential.”

JERICHO HOUSE MINISTRIES Wainfleet, Ontario



On Sunday, May 29, under a brilliant sunny sky, a longtime dream of Br. Bill Carrothers, CFC, and Sr. Jacquie Keefe, cssf, came to fruition with the official opening and blessing of Jericho House in Wainfleet, Ontario. About 200 longtime supporters and friends, relatives, religious, government and municipal leaders gathered, mingled and greeted one another in an atmosphere of great joy, praise and pride in what has been accomplished by Sister Jacquie, Br, Bill and the members of the Board of Directors of Jericho House.

The building, set on a 17-acre site surrounded by forests and grasslands, is a magnificent new retreat and conference centre for youth leadership programs and workshops, youth and adult retreat days and overnights and for local, provincial and international groups who wish to use the centre for meetings and prayer. It is an ecumenical and inter-faith centre in the Catholic tradition, with eighteen ensuite bedrooms, a large dining and kitchen area, a Games Room, as well as a large, beautiful sacred space with windows that open out to the wonders and beauty of God's wonderful creation. It is indeed a place suited for contemplation and prayer.

Present for the official blessing were representatives of the two religious Congregations, the Christian Brothers of which Brother Bill is a member, and the Felician Sisters of which Sister Jacquie is a member. Representatives of the various religious Christian traditions in the Niagara area were also present. Bishop Gerard Bergie, Bishop of St. Catharines, in his greetings stated that Jericho House is indeed an oasis of silence and solitude in an increasingly hectic world. Iman Murtaza Najmudin of the Islamic Society of the Niagara Peninsula read a Blessing from the Koran, Emily House of Lakeshore Catholic High School read the Second Reading from Isaiah, while Rev. Brian Lofthouse, Pastor of Port Colborne Brethren in Christ Church, proclaimed the Gospel of the Good Samaritan. Following the Readings, Bishop Bergie, assisted by Father Peter Rowe, Pastor of St. Alexander's Parish, Sr. Jacquie Keefe and Portia Foti, a student from Lakeshore Catholic, blessed various rooms within the facility, including the Blessed Angela and Blessed Edmund Chapel. Father Paul Vellakunnathu from St. Elizabeth Parish, Wainfleet, and Rev. Gary Page, from the local Baptist Church, were also present. Brothers Terrence and Sean of the Good Shepherd Brothers in Hamilton brought greetings from their Brothers as well.



(l to r) Mr. Wayne Badawey, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Br. Bill Carrothers, CFC, Sr. Jacquie Keefe, cssf, and Bishop Gerald Bergie, Bishop of the St. Catharines Diocese.

The Mayor of Wainfleet, Her Worship, April Jeffs, and the Mayor of Port Colborne, His Worship, Vance Badawey, brought greetings and warm words of welcome from their local councils. Mr. John Crocco, Director of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, spoke eloquently of the need for Jericho House as a sacred place for all students to come for personal enrichment, growth in faith and leadership skill development.

Three students of the Kass Family, from Notre Dame College School, provided beautiful music throughout the Blessing and the reception which followed. Sandwiches, cookies and cakes were prepared and served by the wonderful women of St. Elizabeth's Parish CWL in Wainfleet.

It is the hope and wish of Br. Bill Carrothers and Sr. Jacquie Keefe that Jericho House will be a beacon of hope and joy for the whole area where all people of good will come together to give praise and honor to our God Who gives us life in abundance.



CHRISTIAN BROTHERS INITIAL FORMATION PROGRAM

Robert Droel was formally welcomed into the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America Initial Formation Program as a Non-Residential Candidate in a ceremony and reception at Iona College on August 24, 2011.

Robert Droel is a senior at Iona College (New Rochelle, NY) and a graduate of Brother Rice High School (Chicago, IL). He is an honors student majoring in Psychology and Religious Studies and is very involved with Iona College's Center for Campus Ministries, where he works as a Student Campus Minister. Through the College's "Iona in Mission" program, he has been able to spend weeks at the Brothers' community in Bonita Springs, Florida, and most recently in a life-changing immersion experience in Zambia, Africa.



(l to r): Br Jim McDonald, Br. Dave Lucas, Ron Droel, Br. Ed Pigott

He has an older sister and a very supportive family in Chicago. Rob is very appreciative of all the support, prayers, and well-wishes he has received thus far from friends, family, and many Brothers as he begins the Candidacy Phase of formation.

You can read more about Rob at <http://www.ionianews.com/features/campus-ministerwho-makes-an-impact-1.2044576>

OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES New Rochelle, New York



Sr. Ona
Bessette

We are very pleased to announce a new section on the [Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America](#) website called [School Resources](#). Please click on the link and make the page one of your "favorites." Here you will find new useful materials like [board development and evaluation materials](#) tailored for Christian Brother Schools and [prayer / reflection materials](#) to use at faculty and board meetings.

You and your staffs will have ready access to all [Essential Elements Evaluation](#) materials to review and download when your evaluation is on the horizon or in process. No longer will you have to search through old mails when you know that an Office of Educational Services retreat or workshop registration deadline is coming up! All announcements, invitations, travel information, and travel forms will be posted on the [Upcoming Events](#) page. In the future, rather than sending you materials via email or the US Postal Service, we will just send you the

link to the posted materials.

We have also included [links to sites](#) which contain a wealth of information about Christian Brother ministry around the world, including many resources on peace, justice, integrity of creation, and advocacy. Lastly, to facilitate networking and sharing among school administrators, faculties, staffs, and students, we have included links to all of our schools websites. We hope that you will frequently check out what other schools in our ERCB network are doing, and connect with other people engaged in Christian Brother educational ministry.

We are very grateful to Brother William Harris, CFC, at Iona Preparatory School, New Rochelle who is providing the technical expertise needed to execute this new project.

The Office of Educational Services (OES) School Resources page is a work in progress. If you have any suggestions, including new resources you'd like to have, please let Sister Grace D'Amico know by email at gda@cbinstitute.org, or by phone at (914) 636 6194 X132. Special thanks to Sr. Grace for initiating and coordinating this project.

Sister Ona B. Bessette, CND, is the Director of the Office of Educational Services for the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America

HORN OF AFRICA 2011

The following reflection is offered by Brother Francis Hall, CFC. He is a member of the Congregational Leadership Team of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers, headquartered in Rome.



**Br. Francis
Hall**

As I watch the tragedy in the Horn of Africa unfold I wonder: 'What can I do?' What does living with the inspiration of Edmund Rice and being a radical disciple of Jesus mean for me today, knowing the situation of people there?

There are always possibilities:

Find out more about what the situation is like for people on the ground ... by following news broadcasts, newspaper articles and aid agency websites.

Send some money to an aid agency with staff on the ground.

Meet someone from the affected region ... Malik Osman and Adam Omar are based at the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice, Sydney. Both Somali students, they are working hard to raise funds which will go to WARDA, an Islamic relief agency operating inside Somalia.

Find out the perspective of our Edmund Rice people in Kenya ... Gerard Ellul, District Leader based in Nairobi, writes: *Yes, the horror of this famine is devastating and more and more die. The local news as well as world news keep it on the agenda of peoples' consciousness. The CB District made a sizeable donation via the Sisters Justice and Peace Group. Other non-church groups have rallied and Kenyans in general have been marvelous at donating a lot of money.*

Then pray to share something of the spirit of the people there, trusting in our God who knows of their plight.

Prayer for East Africa

"Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy,

I will now arise," says the LORD.' (Psalm 12:5;NIV)

Lord God, creator and giver of all that is, defender and protector of those in need, we ask you to bring the peoples of East Africa beneath your loving care. Their children are hungry and their land is dry.



Lord God, bringer of hope, your love brings water to flow in the desert and light into the darkness of despair. Show us how to be witnesses to your love and bearers of your light, alongside our sisters and brothers, who face the urgent challenges and terrible fears of lasting drought.

OFFICE OF PROVINCE LIFE AND RENEWAL

This past July seventeen Brothers met at Jericho House in Wainfleet, Ontario, to participate in a retreat directed by Brother Mark McDonnell, CFC, from Dublin, Ireland.

This retreat was entitled *An Introduction to the New Cosmology*.



Kneeling l to r: Brothers Tony Hempenstall (Oceania Province), Mark Murphy, Mark McDonnell (Presenter), Robert Novak, Rick Fowler, Sean Whitty.

Standing l to r: Brothers Jim van Koolbergen, John Gale, Ray Vercruyssen, Hugh O'Neill, Bob Koppes, Raph McDonald, Alan Ralph, George French, Jim Fagan, Charles Avendano, Ron MacKenzie



Participating in a Cosmic Walk

Jericho House Youth Leadership, Justice & Spirituality Center is an ecumenical and interfaith retreat center in the Catholic tradition. An ideal location for retreats, meetings, conferences, and seminars.

Info: Jericho House 10845 Rathfon Road, Port Colborne, ON L3K 5V4;

P: 905-834-0533, F: 905-834-5230

www.jerichohouse.org

The Jericho House Team:

Sister Jacque Keefe, cssf, Brother Bill Carrothers, cfc, Mr. Gary Bowron

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www.edmundrice.net

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OFFICE OF PROVINCE LIFE AND RENEWAL

Team Members are Brother Seán Whitty (Chair) Brother Peter O'Loughlin (Vancouver College Community), Brother Jim DePiro (ACND Community), Brother Jim Hamilton (All Hallows Community), Brother Tom Collins (Brother Rice HS Community), Br Barry Lynch (PLT Liaison)

Directions for 2011 – 2012

Province Survey

The Province Life and Renewal Survey was very gratified with over 51 Brothers responding. Thanks to all for taking the time to fill out the survey and sending it to Sean. The Timely Topics section gave some clear indications of topics of interest and we will attempt to honor as many of them with Days of Reflection/Sharing in different places at different times throughout the coming year.

Major Concern: Financial Restructuring and Its Effects on Us

The major concern on many people's minds is the effect that the financial re-structuring will have on us personally, communally and congregationally. What is the future? What is happening? What will be our vision? Hopefully, the Province Leadership team and our PLR committee will work together to assemble Brothers for sharing information, insights, thoughts, feelings, fears, vision and hopes. Where and when will have to be decided? We felt that it would be very important for Brothers to meet and support one another during this coming year.

The Renewal Team and The Local Community Working Together

We felt that the local community always takes the lead in developing community plans and goals for every new year. It was suggested that each community meet at the beginning of the school year (as many communities do already) to discuss the community goals/plans for meetings, weekly, monthly, yearly retreats, reflection days and workshops of interest to them. If the community decides to do their own facilitation, that would be great. If, on the other hand, the community would like assistance from the Renewal Committee re facilitation, then the Community Leader could contact Sean for help in securing a facilitator.

If any individual community would like to have a Reflection Morning or Day just for their own community members and would like someone from the Renewal Team to help organize and facilitate it, then all they have to do is contact Sean.

The Province Life and Renewal Office will continue to offer Reflection Days during the liturgical seasons throughout the province for Brothers to come together for contemplation, community building and prayer. A large number of Brothers stated they would attend such days which is very encouraging. Sean will contact the different communities in the geographical areas to see what the Brothers would like to have.

Edmund Rice Network

It was felt by the majority that where appropriate the men and women who share Edmund's charism ought to be invited to events. We can mutually inspire, share and support one another in Edmund's charism. As one Brother said, "We need to lower the drawbridge! What are we afraid of?" So, some of our reflection days will be open to the Network during the year.

Community Prayer Services

There was a mixed reaction to the prayer services that are prepared and sent out by this Office. The message that they are too long was duly noted. Leaders will be sent the PDF and Word Document in the future so that the prayer services can be changed or adapted. It was also noted that many of our Brothers devise prayer services for their communities. We would encourage Brothers to send a copy of these services to Sean by e

mail, fswitty@hotmail.com, so we can share them throughout the province and put them on our web page. Some Brothers said they have never seen a prayer service sent out by this Office while others did not know that prayer services are on our province's web page www.ercbna.org under Spirituality.

Community Leaders' Meeting in November, 2011, Jacksonville, FL.

Brother David Gibson, CFC, from Dublin will be present for two of the four days to help community leaders hone their personal and communal communication skills. Further details will be forthcoming on this at the Leaders' Meeting in November.

Proposed Summer Retreats for 2012

A **Preached Retreat** will hopefully be offered in July or early August, 2012. No date has been set yet. I have been in consultation with Father Fintan Sheeran, a priest of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. He is a wonderful Scripture scholar, deeply spiritual man, a great teacher with a wonderful sense of humor. He is very familiar with and has a fondness for the Christian Brothers. Fintan lives in Washington, DC. A brochure will follow when details are worked out.

A **Directed Retreat** will also be offered in July or early August. We hope to secure three skilled directors, possibly a Christian Brother, a woman and a priest. Any suggestions of possible directors from you would be greatly appreciated. Let Sean know the names as soon as possible. Location and date are not yet decided. This retreat could be done privately by any Brother who desires silence without meeting a director.

A **Cosmology Retreat**. We hope to follow up Mark McDonnell's Introduction to the New Cosmology with another retreat with a Cosmological focus. Who, where and when are not decided yet. Any suggestions from Brothers let me know.

An Invitation To All Brothers

We ask all our Brothers to consider doing one of these retreats next summer. All details will be sent out in a Brochure early in September. Believe it or not, it is very difficult to get directors and retreat places that are reasonably priced so time is of the essence.

Reflection Days Planned already for the autumn

When: Saturday, October 1, 2011
Venue: Iona Prep, New Rochelle, New York
Time: 9:30 am - 4:00 pm
Facilitator: Br. Cornelius Habbuch, cfx
Topic: Some Aspect of Aging Gracefully (to be decided)

When: Sunday, October 2, 2011
Venue: St. Joseph's Care Residence, New Rochelle, New York
Time: 10:00 am - 12:00 noon
Facilitator: Br Cornelius Habbuch, cfx
Topic: Some aspect of Aging Gracefully (to be decided)

When: Saturday, October 15, 2011
Venue: Vancouver, British Columbia
Time: 9:30 am - 5:00 pm
Facilitator: Br. Cornelius Habbuch cfx
Topic: Some Aspects of Aging Gracefully (to be decided)

When: Saturday, November 19, 2011
Venue: Vancouver, British Columbia
Time: 9:30 am – 5:00 pm
Facilitator: Brother David Gibson, cfc
Topic: Community Building Skills (to be decided)

An Offering To Communities

If any Brothers' community would like to have a Weekend Retreat or a Reflection Day facilitated by Brothers Barry Lynch and Seán Whitty during the year, please let Sean or Barry know and we can arrange time, date and topic. (fswitty@hotmail.com).

Thank you to all Brothers for your prayers, support and affirmation.

EDMUND RICE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS ON THE WEB

Check out some information on the Christian Brothers on YouTube at:

http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=edmund+rice+christian+brothers&q=f

The link below will take you to a You Tube video that Br. Chris Burns put together on the Brothers' ministry sites in North America.

This line, <http://youtu.be/MNISEyoykD8>, will take you to a You Tube video on the Christian Brothers' ministry sites in North America. It was put together by Brother Chris Burns, Tampa Catholic HS Community in Tampa, Florida. You can contact him at: Brochris2645@aol.com

Are you on Facebook?

If so click "Like," the new "Edmund Rice Network North America" community. Follow the link below or when you are on Facebook, search for: Edmund Rice Network North America. Be sure to click on the "Like" button.

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Edmund-Rice-Network-North-America/120375644703385>

Also, look on the left for the "Share" link to share the "Edmund Rice Network North America" community page with all your friends.

The purpose of the Edmund Rice Network North America Facebook community is to share news and information about and with all members of the Edmund Rice Network in North America. This includes, but is not limited to Brothers, Edmundians, Associates, colleagues, students, alumni, and friends. In essence, anyone in North America (and around the world) touched by the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice.

The Edmund Rice Network North America Facebook community is a project of the Edmund Rice Network Office of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America. The Edmund Rice Network Coordinator is Brother Jim McDonald. You can contact him by e-mail at: bromaccfc@yahoo.com.



ERCBNA

Justice Peace Integrity of Creation

Promoting social justice and eco-justice



<http://edmundriceinternational.org/jpic/>

ARCHBISHOP CURLEY-NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL

Miami, Florida

International Elite, including former HUD Inspector General, Visit Archbishop Curley-Notre Dame 6 to 12 Prep, as first integrated secondary school in the State of Florida; Principal Brother Sean Moffett, PhD, is keynote speaker



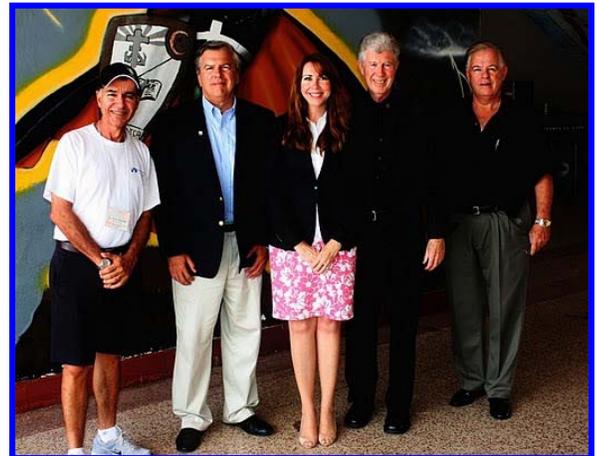
**Ms. Lisa
Morales**

On August 10, 2011, former HUD Inspector General and Reznick Government Principal, The Honorable Kenneth M. Donohue, and U.S. Congressman, Mike Fitzpatrick, were among an international delegation at the 29th Annual Conference of the International Council for Innovation in Higher Education (ICIE) held at St. Thomas University in Miami, a private university celebrating its 50th anniversary; at Miami Dade College, the largest institution of higher education in the United States; and at Archbishop Curley-Notre Dame 6 to 12 Prep, the first integrated secondary school in the State of Florida. The Council chose the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Miami as its hotel venue. It was the first time in more than a decade that the Council chose the United States as the conference host country.

In attendance were more than 60 scholars representing more than a dozen countries from around the world, seeking innovative strategies and new perspective to achieve excellence in teaching and learning. The International Council for Innovation in Higher Education, founded in 1980, is a growing international network of academic, government, civic and industry professionals dedicated to the advancement of innovation in higher education.

Brother Sean Moffett, PhD, principal of Archbishop Curley-Notre Dame Prep, provided the keynote address at ACND, speaking about his 15 years in Rome welcoming the annual "Convegno Nazionale dei student esperti nel computer" at the Boys' Town of Rome. He discussed how the Boys' Town model of self-governance related to technological advances in the teaching/learning process. Brother Moffett served as the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Boys' Towns of Italy, Inc. for ten years. He is also a former Associate Professor of Psychology at Iona College in New York, where he also held several key administrative posts.

Prof. Maureen Sheehan Paparella, Director of the Information Technology Program at Monmouth University in New Jersey and Vice-President of the Board of Directors of ICIE, served as Executive Director of the 29th Conference and is a native Miamian. Prof. Sheehan Paparella, a 1976 graduate of Archbishop Curley-Notre Dame Prep, received the religion award upon graduation for the highest grade point average in the discipline over her four years. As a magna cum laude graduate of St. Thomas University, she also completed her teaching internship at Archbishop Curley-Notre Dame Prep. Prof. Sheehan Paparella also taught a 1984 alumnus of Curley Notre Dame, Mr. Doug Romanik, now Vice-Principal for Advancement, during her first year as a teacher at St. Rose of Lima School in Miami Shores. Mr. Romanik earned a Bachelor of Arts from Harvard College, a doctorate in Law from the University of Miami and a Master's in Educational Administration from Barry University. In reference to Mr. Romanik's high achievements, Prof. Paparella said in jest, "Seventh grade clearly provided a strong foundation!"



(l to r): Historian Dr. Paul George; Dr. Eugene Simko, President of ICIE; Professor Maureen Sheehan Paparella; ACND Principal, Br. Patrick Sean Moffett, PhD; and the Honorable Kenneth M. Donohue, former HUD Inspector General and Reznick Government Principal

Dr. Paul George, the presiding historian at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida and Professor of History at Miami Dade College, served as the historian-in-residence for the ICIE delegation by providing a bus tour of Miami, including a stop to ACND. Dr. George is also an alumnus of Archbishop Curley-Notre Dame.

Mr. Donohue, a 1969 graduate of St. Thomas University, spoke on "Operation Stolen Dreams" a nationwide effort to combat mortgage fraud, which he led with FBI Director Robert Mueller and Attorney General Ken Holder.

"For many attendees, the ICIE conference is a life-altering event that re-energizes and rededicates higher education professionals to their calling," said Professor Maureen Sheehan Paparella. "Having Brother Moffett there to speak was a great honor, given his vast experience and strong leadership at all levels of education."

Archbishop Curley-Notre Dame student, Mr. Joseph Froelich, Class of 2014, served as a student ambassador throughout the four-day event.

President of ICIE, Dr. Eugene Simko, expressed an interest in following the developments of ACND's Brother Rice Honors Academy and has invited Br. Moffett to be a keynote speaker at the ICIE Convention in San Paulo, in 2012.

For more information on this Council and event, e-mail Dr. Maureen Sheehan Paparella at mpaparel@monmouth.edu.

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS COMMUNITY Vanderhoof, British Columbia

Edmund Smiles in Northern British Columbia, Canada



**Br. Charlie
Hancock**

We live in a period when the world is preoccupied with differences, a time when faith, values, religious practices and customs often grate and clash, foment and spill over into turmoil, strife and even bloodshed. It is apparent that we are in an era of unprecedented suspicion and mistrust which is affecting many good people of differing philosophical and faith traditions. Even those whose belief systems share common roots often find themselves at odds with their neighbors.

How refreshing, how uplifting it is to discover that within the small Canadian community of Vanderhoof, British Columbia, there exists a group of people who have chosen respectfully to accept their differences while at the same time embracing that which they hold in common, building upon the Christian faith which they share, committing themselves to the greater good of their local community. For over ten years, volunteers have worked and endeavored to ease the burdens of their neighbors, seeking to improve their lives through an organization known as NeighbourLink. While accepting the uniqueness of each of their varied faith traditions, with the leadership of local coordinator Brother Louis Bucher, CFC, and the assistance of Brother Charlie Hancock, CFC, these dedicated individuals continue to invest their energy, their time, talents and resources to assist others who struggle with the harsh and often serendipitous challenges of life in this northwestern Canadian town of 7,000 residents.

These volunteers serve with the conviction that each of them is unique and special, of great value and worthy of dignity. And it is this core belief, this recognition of mutual worth and God-given dignity, which permeates the interaction among those who serve and those who are served.

Through the years, assistance offered by NeighbourLink has been adapted to address presenting needs more effectively. Recognizing that, at any given time, each of us is potentially vulnerable to events and crises in life, NeighbourLink attempts to coordinate and facilitate the distribution of available services and resources which are offered by the community through the generosity of church congregations, local organizations and groups, schools and individuals.

Outreach to those in need has taken many forms and presently includes volunteers who regularly distribute donated food through the NeighbourLink Food Bank as well as others who staff the Act II Thrift Shop making affordable goods and clothing available throughout the year. Food supplements are provided on an emergency basis and NeighbourLink regularly responds to requests from the government's Ministry of Human Resources by providing expedited assistance. The Community Kitchen program gives participants an opportunity to learn nutritional cooking and budgeting skills in a comfortable and respectful social environment. A furniture exchange initiative matches donated household items with people requiring particular furnishings or appliances.



Louis at the Food Bank

Vanderhoof itself is a complicated and socially disparate community. There is much money to be found among prosperous, family-owned lumber and logging companies. Vast farms and cattle ranches drape the banks of the Nechako River as it winds through town to join the mighty Fraser River on its way to the Pacific Ocean beyond. Tourism thrives in the area, with its endowment of mountains, rivers and lakes. Camping, skiing and hiking opportunities abound. As well, Vanderhoof is the home to over 21 different church congregations of varied denominations.

However, the community is also tinged with a sordid history of racial mistreatment, bigotry and injustice, much of which was supported by government policy and Church implementation of that policy. The Indian Residential School system, which existed through most of the 1900's throughout British Columbia, has left a legacy of broken lives, poverty and despair. First Nations cultures, which had been a source of strength and pride for their people, were systematically obliterated in the name of "progress," and, yes, in the name of Christianity.

To the south of town there exists the village of Saik'uz, a First Nations community of approximately 500 people and it is there that one can visibly see and feel the effects of more than a century of cultural exploitation and mistreatment. Housing conditions are abysmal, family and social structures are in disarray, drug and alcohol misuse permeates the fiber of the community, creating an environment of fear, violence and abuse. As one would expect, these problems, issues and tensions flow freely with the people into the broader Vanderhoof community, leading to irritation, cultural chafing and sometimes hostility.

And so it is within the context of this very complicated sociological mix that NeighbourLink endeavors to function as advocate and enabler for those who are poor in spirit and in means, those whose burdens have become too heavy to bear alone.

The weekly Wednesday Lunches, which are hosted by NeighbourLink and sponsored, alternately by local Church congregations, offer a respite from these tensions and difficulties. All are welcome and guests from differing racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds gather happily to enjoy comfortable interaction in a safe social environment, appreciating each other's company while partaking in a substantial meal prepared by volunteers.



The Best Moms Program is an initiative of NeighbourLink and has been operating and evolving for over two years. The participants are, for the most part, aboriginal and have come with a host of unresolved issues and problems including alcohol and drug dependency, abusive and victimizing relationships, poverty and malnutrition. These young Moms and Moms-to-be meet several times each week at the facility to participate in various activities, to engage and

to interact with each other, as well as to grow in knowledge and self-confidence. They receive support and gentle guidance towards making healthy choices for themselves and for their children. Opportunities for enrichment and educational exposure are provided, and the Moms enjoy outings and experiences which aim at promoting all aspects of healthy living. The young women are encouraged and guided to focus on the wellbeing of their children and they are appropriately challenged to accept the awesome yet joyful responsibility that accompanies Motherhood.

Brother Louis Bucher envisioned, implemented and presently manages the Best Moms Program which also has two facilitators and avails of the resources of seven additional local agencies. Asked how NeighbourLink is uniquely effective in addressing the needs and challenges of struggling people in the community, particularly the Moms in this program, Louis responds, "The uniqueness lies in the underlying Christian philosophy, in the assertion that every human being is special, different ... but equal, with a God-given dignity. The spiritual dimension is the power behind NeighbourLink. The attitude of those who serve and the behavior that must consistently flow from that attitude, is what makes the organization unique."

Louis continues, "To be a perfect disciple of Jesus, we must strive to view the world, all creatures, all people, through the eyes of the Creator. God and Jesus are at the center, and all values flow from that understanding."

When he was asked how he sees the spirit of the Congregation, the spirit of Edmund Rice, providing a special energy to the NeighbourLink ministry, Louis answers, "Edmund Rice was a man of God who sought to do the will of the Father, modeled on Jesus. He had a burning passion to help the severely disadvantaged in his midst. He attempted to reach out to those with the least hope, to nurture their self-esteem, to enhance their self-respect. Similarly, with the Best Moms Program, the focus is on those who are the poorest victims, those who are beyond reaching out themselves for help. This program exists for these Moms and for their children."

Continuing, Louis says, "Whatever we can do to help build self-esteem, a sense of self-worth, in these Moms is essential to giving their children a fair chance at life, something they have a right to expect. Edmund Rice knew that in order to relight the spark of education, the child had to be ready to learn. The Best Moms Program endeavors to set the scene for each child getting that fair chance at life. No matter how fragile, how challenged, the Mother is still the best person to nurture and prepare her child. For that, she may need help."

Louis adds, "I believe that Edmund would smile in approval."

Indeed.

Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America
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BROTHER RICE HONORS ACADEMY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Miami, Florida

Students Pioneer New and Unique Learning Experience. A Celebration of the First Graduating Class was held on Thursday, June 9, 2011.



**Ms. Lisa
Morales**

The Brother Rice Honors Academy at Archbishop Curley Notre Dame High School held its first middle school graduation ceremony on Thursday, June 9, 2011 in the chapel at Archbishop Curley Notre Dame High School.

Along with a year of academic achievements, four young scholars were celebrated as the first students to experience a learning environment unique to South Florida. The Academy provides a 'combined grade classroom' experience where no more than 30 students representing grades 6 through 8 will be admitted.

Research has shown that combined grade classrooms achieve just as well academically as single grade classrooms; younger students benefit socially by observing older students; students benefit from the spirit of cooperation and mutual help; and whole-class strategies such as such as explicit instruction, cooperative learning, and subject integration support

improved learning.

At first, the change from a conventional school and often overcrowded classroom seemed strange, but eventually the students began to like the attention and the ability to make decisions about their school life at a daily assembly. Sam Echavarria, president of the assembly, played a key role in writing the Academy's first constitution. Some of the responsibilities the students decide on are food services, afternoon activities, social planning, and accounting of shares (a reward system). He speaks highly of his experience and says it has helped him to become more mature and responsible.



First graduates (l to r): Samuel Echavarria, Valentina Charris, Naika Imbert, and Bryan Llerandi



(l to r background to foreground) Bryan Llerandi, Samuel Echavarria, Valentina Charris watch fellow graduate Naika Imbert cut their graduation cake.

One of the most favored aspects of the academy was the opportunity to play sports and participate in all school clubs and activities with the ACND high school students. Sam played JV football; Bryan Llerandi, JV basketball; Valentina Charris, volleyball; and Naika Imbert, soccer. The students admit that sometimes fitting in with high school students wasn't always easy, but it challenged them to reach their full potential as athletes.

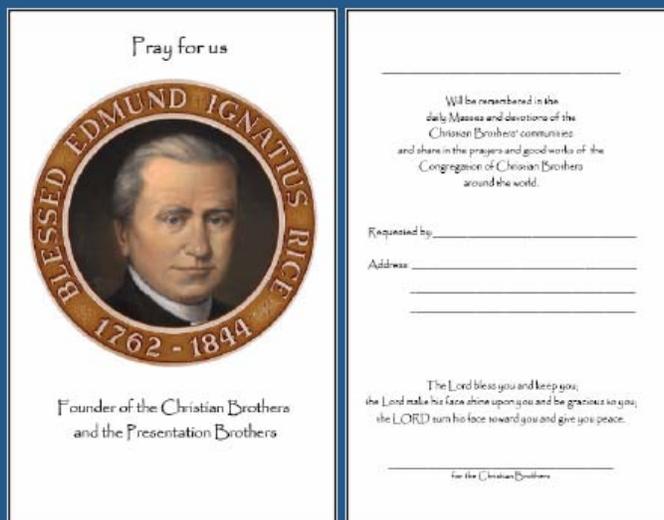
Naika has overcome many challenges. Born in Fort Lauderdale, but raised in Haiti, she returned to Florida with two of her siblings following the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Living away from her parents and youngest brother has been a challenge, but throughout the year she has discovered her many talents that include art, playing the violin, singing, and sports. She will receive an award for outstanding achievement in the study of Arabic. When asked what she most likes about the school, she shyly admits it to be the 'chicken bowl' lunch!

As part of their daily curriculum, all four graduates have learned to play an instrument, perform and are adjudicated along with members of the high school's Troubadour instrumental concert ensemble.

The curriculum of the Academy, while based on the Florida Sunshine Standards, is shaped to respond to the unique interests and capacity of each student. Students both individually and in small groups are encouraged to explore subjects in greater depth and to see unique applications of what they are learning. The curriculum features: an extended school day in which students are encouraged to develop skills in two world languages, learn a musical instrument, and participate in community service projects.

Students are offered individualized programming and small group engagement; advanced level courses in mathematics, science and languages; access to the full resources of the ACND Prep campus and activities; and, most distinctly, the commitment of the faculty and administration to nurturing a self-governing youth community.

Blessed Edmund Rice Prayer Cards



Blessed Edmund Rice Prayer Cards are a beautiful way to assure loved ones of your prayerful support. Our Prayer Card is a singular expression in honor of some special occasion or at a sorrowful time for a bereaved relative or friend.

The benefactor's donation to the Brothers benefits the ministries of the Christian Brothers.

If you would like a set of Prayer Cards, please contact:

Brother Robert Burke
Christian Brothers Foundation
33 Pryer Terrace
New Rochelle, NY 10804
914-712-7580, ext. 420
rdb@cbfoundation.org



In the tradition of Blessed Edmund Rice, the founder, the Congregation of Christian Brothers is an international community of vowed religious Brothers living and praying in community and missioned by the church for Christian education. The men the Christian Brothers seek to join with them are Catholic men who sense a call to live in fraternal community and who wish to minister in the educational apostolates of the church, especially to youth. They are men with the religious inspiration and dedication necessary to live a life of consecrated celibacy and who, through vows of poverty and obedience, place their gifts, talents, and possessions at the disposal of the community in order to meet the needs of God's people. Please contact one of the Brothers listed above.

More information on the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers at these links:

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