

Visions of the “margins”: Profiles of Edmund Rice Christian Brothers of North America

Brief Lives is a volume containing a synopsis of the life of each deceased Brother who has served in North America. Faithfully updated, and rendered accessible by Br. H.P. Dilleuth, it serves as inspiration from the giants on whose shoulders we seek new vistas of where the Spirit is leading our Brotherhood. Perhaps at this point in our emerging story it will be useful to focus attention on those currently addressing the challenges and opportunities of a new era.

For many years we were identified as the Brothers of the Christian Schools of Ireland. These schools were, and many continue to be, communities of Christian concern, vibrant contexts for proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, building His Church, promoting her mission of evangelization and inspiring new generations of students and educators. The Edmund Rice Christian Brothers of North America nurture this rich heritage through the Office of Educational Services. While some Brother continue in roles of teachers, administrators and board members, a primary involvement has become that of assuring that the school communities, now administered by lay associates, are faithful to the Essential Elements of an Edmund Rice Christian Brothers Education.

We challenge ourselves, and those willing to accompany us, to seek out the poor, to be present to their current realities, to discern obstacles to growth and to work collaboratively in building the reign of God. This search has brought us to inner cities, border crossings, disaster areas, and migrant camps in North America and throughout the globe. It has also sensitized us to other forms of poverty found in the midst of abundance and often close to home.

Many Brothers now find ourselves bridging two or more worlds. We extend one hand toward those seemingly most in need, and the other hand to those whose need it is to be of service to their sisters and brothers. Mission and immersion opportunities are sought by educators and students. On return they continue to process the experiences in the light of the Gospel. They note that their own lives have been touched in ways that urge action here and now. Advocacy, prayer, and service, or even denial, are possible responses.

The 1996 Congregation Chapter in South Africa committed the Brothers to growth in four directions: growth through fragility, the Edmund Rice Family, internationality, and the call to people at the margins of society – all themes that were confirmed in the subsequent Chapters in Rome, Munar and Nairobi. Delegates were urged to define what was meant by the “margins.” It was decided that two teams of three Brothers would dedicate a good part of the next year exploring the needs of the Church in diocese that were poorly resourced and directly engaged in ministry to the poor.

The explorers returned with several proposals. Three were activated that year, one in Jackson, Mississippi, one in Phoenix, Arizona, and another in North Charleston, South Carolina. In addition a team of two Brothers was missioned to an area in Appalachia for a one year engagement of door to door visitations among people who had never met Catholics. In the spirit of going to the margins Brothers volunteered to serve migrant communities in Bonita Springs Florida and in New York’s Hudson Valley. In subsequent years a collaborative effort with the Marist Brothers and the Incarnate Word Sisters brought the Brothers to the Mexican border at Brownsville Texas; the devastation from hurricane Katrina elicited the establishment of a Volunteer community in New Orleans. Jericho House Youth Leadership, Justice and Spirituality Center in Wainfleet, Ontario in Canada, was built affording students a reflective context

for processing experiences in Christian Service. American Brothers maintained and extended involvement in the works of the Congregation in Dominica, Latin America and Africa.

High school and college students in the Edmund Rice Network find in the mission centers of the Brothers engaging opportunities for service, intercultural sensitization, and processing the social teachings of the Church.

Brief profiles of a few Brothers suggest where today they continue to seek out and be with those on the margins of society.

BROTHER TYRONE DAVIS, CFC



Pierre Toussaint Scholars gather in the Cardinal's Board Room, Archdiocese of New York, where Brother Tyrone Davis, CFC, encourages the college student-leaders as they assume roles of engagement, empowerment, ministry and leadership in the Church Community.

Brother Tyrone was a graduate of Essex Catholic, the Brothers' school in Newark, New Jersey. He went on to Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, OH to earn his bachelor's degree and begin a career of teaching and administration in public schools and Catholic schools. A few years later he joined the Brothers. His successive assignments included Power Memorial Academy in New York City, Essex Catholic, then in East Orange, NJ, Msgr. Farrell H.S. on Staten Island and Rice H.S. in Harlem. While teaching part-time at Rice, he completed a degree in law at Seton Hall University. Brother served for three and a half years as an assistant district attorney in Brooklyn NY (a first for a Christian Brother), before being recruited by Cardinal O'Connor to serve as Director of the Office of Black Ministry for the

Archdiocese of New York. Brother Tyrone continues in this position, now serving under Timothy Cardinal Dolan.

Br. Tyrone's portfolio has expanded over the years to include issues of interreligious dialogue, celebration of diverse cultural traditions, addressing prejudice, cross-cultural conflicts, violence and tension, and finding appropriate worship space for the growing population of immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean Islands. Acting on behalf of and in collaboration with a Board of Commissioners for the Office of Black Ministry, Brother Tyrone has made the promotion of local leadership and community empowerment hallmarks of his ministry—a ministry that has become characterized as a multi-ethnic, multi-national, multi-lingual reflection of a very diverse Black Community in the Archdiocese of New York.

Brother serves on the Board of Trustees the College of New Rochelle, with special interest in their expansive city-wide, community-based, adult learner program—the School of New Resources. In connection with his Archdiocesan ministry, Brother was asked by Cardinal Egan to assume the directorship (Vice Postulator) of the Cause for the Canonization of the Ven. Pierre Toussaint (a Haitian-born slave, who lived & ministered in New York in the early 1800's)...and the Pierre Toussaint Guild. Recently Brother was asked to take on a major role in the Archdiocesan efforts to develop housing for low income and working class individuals & families.

Brother Tyrone's ministry has included collaboration with a poor, rural community in southwest Haiti in the development of a secondary school—College Pierre Toussaint (established in 2006) -- and the enhancement of the Pierre Toussaint Scholarship Program for college and university student-leaders of diverse backgrounds. Brother has built a community of benefactors & supporters, and at the same time mentored the Scholars toward assuming continuing leadership roles in the church and in their communities and personal responsibility for giving back in assistance to a new generation of Scholars.

Brother Tyrone locates the margins in the divisions among and between the peoples he is called to serve, in city neighborhoods, ethnic groups, races and socioeconomic strata.

BROTHER D. THOMAS LEJEUNE, CFC

Originally from New Orleans, Tom LeJeune had a tour of duty in the United States Navy before entering the Brothers. He completed his bachelor's degree at Iona College and later earned a masters in religious education from Seattle University.

Brother Tom's assignments have brought him to schools in Illinois, Seattle, Hawaii, California, and Arizona. As a member of the Brothers' community responding to the needs of Katrina hurricane victims in New Orleans, Brother Tom began a two year engagement with Catholic Charities' Operation Helping Hands. His ministry included the hosting of volunteer groups from around the country, and hands-on participation in rebuilding homes of families left homeless by the catastrophe.

Currently, Brother Tom is a member of the Brothers' Mexico-USA boarder community in Brownsville, Texas. As a teacher, a coach, and a mentor, his enthusiasm is a source of animation wherever he serves. His rich experience is being tapped to explore new ways of accompanying the growing number of high school, college and university students who seek opportunities to become engaged in direct services to peoples at the margins of society.



Smiling and behind the wheel of Guadalupe Regional Middle School's new bus, is Brother Tom LeJeune. He joins the Principal Kathy Stapleton and students in expressing thanks to the benefactors who make possible this tuition free school serving children from economically challenged families on the Mexico-United States boarder.

His locates the margins in the daily invitations from the Lord to be present, here and now, with whomever shares his day, calling attention to the joy of living and serving each other as sisters and brothers.

BROTHER WILLIAM SHERLOG, CFC

A Bronx boy, relocated to Washington Township, New Jersey, Bill attended Bergen Catholic High School. On graduation he entered the postulancy of the Brothers and attended Iona College majoring in History and secondary school education. His first teaching assignment was a fourth grade class at Iona Grammar School in New Rochelle. Subsequent assignments brought him to the inner cities of New York and New Jersey as a teacher and community leader.

He is a passionate teacher, ever ready to accept the classes that others might find challenging. He is also passionate about coaching baseball. He found himself fully alive at Rice High School in Harlem. The teaching, coaching, mentoring of new teachers, intervening and advocating on behalf of students facing family and neighborhood crises – all came together to fulfill what he understands as the particular mission of a Christian Brother. The closing of Rice touched the core of his life and vocation.



In the center of the picture, above the N and A, is Brother Bill Sherlog, accompanying a group of students from the South Bronx, New York, Cardinal Hayes High School at a pro-life demonstration in Washington, D.C..

He worked diligently on placing the Rice students in other Catholic schools. He moved with a large group of Rice students to the very welcoming Cardinal Hayes High School. Having once served on the Hayes faculty, Brother Bill's talents and dedication were well known and immediately tapped. In addition to picking up the classes others might have avoided, he was asked to take on the role of interim director of athletics. The next year saw him accepting the roles of chairman of the religion department and director of the religious activities of the schools.

While at Rice, Brother Bill had devoted his Sunday mornings to the preparation of teens for the sacrament of Confirmation at St. Charles Borromeo Parish. To the delight of the Parish, the student and several generations of his former students, Brother Bill has been able to continue this commitment. The South Bronx location of Hayes is a short walk across the 145th Street Bridge to Harlem.

His sense of the margins is the gap between real and perceived capacity for success. He seeks to attune youngsters to their personal excellence as children of a loving Father. He affirms their willingness to stay in the batter's box, eyes open, to take the harder course, make better choices and to turn away from the voices that suggest they are reaching beyond their destiny.

BROTHER JOHN CASEY, CFC

Brother John also joined the Brothers from New Jersey. His varied career, primarily in inner-city settings, as a teacher, principal, and president brought him to the administrative offices of the Christian Brothers and then the National Catholic Education Association in Washington. Educators throughout the nation have delighted in the humor that enriches his speaking engagements, workshops and seminars. Following hurricane Katrina he gave up his Washington position to help develop a volunteer

community in New Orleans. His was the dual role of providing consultation services in the re-establishment of the Catholic schools of the city while working with other Brothers to establish a community that would serve as a space for reflection on Faith and its link to Christian Service for the many students from around the country eager to lend a hand in dealing with the aftermath of the storm. The Edmund Rice Christian Brothers Volunteer House in New Orleans welcomes a small group of residential volunteers who make a one year commitment to living in community, engaging in service, and sharing prayer.



After a day of service in New Orleans, building houses, teaching or coaching children, visiting with the homebound, or those in senior centers or prisons, Brother Casey gathers student volunteers from around the country in the Brothers' community room. He invites them to share their experiences and then reflect on Matthew 25: "I was hungry and you gave me food, ... thirsty, ... a stranger,... in prison and you visited me."

The living room of the community has become a gathering point for both volunteers and their coordinators. Here they welcome Brother John's gentle, yet insistent invitation to open their hearts to what they are seeing and hearing in those they are called to serve. As the daily events are re-viewed in the context of the Gospels, the volunteers begin to make connections.

Brother John identifies the margins as the connection between what the volunteers have seen among the homeless and poor in New Orleans and what they might be able to find on the edges of their own city, town or village. He asks if the Gospel might not be a personal invitation to take home what the poor have shared with them so abundantly. He feels that he and the other Brothers can be *brother* to the emerging Church: helping others to identify, as Edmund Rice did, Christ present and appealing to them in the poor and needy. He invites the volunteers to respond genuinely with the program of the Good Samaritan, the program of Jesus, with *a heart which sees*. This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly. (*Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI)

BROTHER EDMUND "TED" DAUSCH, CFC



Empowering young adults to take on parish leadership roles has become a primary focus of Br. Ted Dausch's ministry within the emerging Latino population of the Church in Mississippi.

Jackson Mississippi was one of the places first identified for the Brothers' project of establishing a mission in a poor diocese serving the poor. The Bishop was enthused about the opening of a Christian Brothers Community in the Jackson area. His top priority, that of Brothers teaching and doing guidance work in St. Joseph's Archdiocesan High School, was not that of the Brothers who sought very direct involvement with the many poor families of the area. A compromise was reached. Two Brothers would work in the high school, a third brother would serve at a struggling poor grammar school serving the poor in Canton MS. The brothers earning salaries would cover their living expenses as well as those of a fourth brother whose exclusive responsibility would be that of discerning the where and what of the Brothers' mission to the poor. Brother Ted Dausch was this fourth brother.

He too came with a full dossier as a successful teacher and school administrator yet was choosing to suspend judgment on what might be needed, to open himself to the voices and aspirations of the people as he spent time in under-resourced city and rural areas. Brother Ted initially did volunteer work assisting in school staff development and serving on the school board. He also co-founded, along with Brother Bob McGovern, the Thea Bowman Spirituality Center. During this time he taught English as a second language in peoples' homes gaining familiarity with the Immigrant reality. In the year 2000 he was hired to be the Director of Hispanic Ministry for the Diocese. This was a completely new experience for him.

Within the first couple of years, with the help of Catholic Charities, an Immigration Clinic was established at Catholic Charities. This would help to respond to the issues that undocumented immigrants face. Becoming more aware of the issues that the undocumented face, he was one of the co-founders of MIRA (Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance) -- a voice informing the non-immigrant population and the state legislature concerning these issues. The group was able to block some of the anti-immigrant legislation now doing damage in other states.

In the diocese there are approximately 50,000 Hispanics. Many are undocumented, with limited education, and treated as outcasts. The people in ministry are limited in numbers, age, experience in this area and most are not bi-lingual. In an area of 37,600 sq. miles, there are one hundred churches and missions of which twenty seven serve the Hispanic community

In order to bridge this gap Brother Ted and his collaborators place emphasis on evangelization, formation, and lay leadership within the Hispanic communities. In cooperation with the Southeast Pastoral Institute, over one hundred people have participated or are participating in these basic courses in theology, pastoral ministry and leadership.

Brother Ted sees himself as a bridge between people and communities in the Diocese. He is an advocate and educator for social justice. Even at a "mature" age, he speaks of himself as being passionate and very grateful to accompany his brothers and sisters on this journey. "I try to be a bridge for them in this world and they are a bridge for me into the next. -- I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

The margins for Brother Ted would appear to be the many points of potential integration and mutual appreciation as the Catholic Church of Mississippi comes to know and embrace its new reality.

BROTHER ANTHONY MARK MURPHY, CFC

The gymnasium at Vancouver College in British Columbia, Canada, was pulsing with the enthusiasm of the whole student body. Stirred with the sense that the pep rally was coming to a climax the students' attention was directed to the opening of the side entrance. A Harley Davidson Motorcycle roared through the doors and circled in front of the packed bleachers. The driver in an Elvis Presley disguise came to an abrupt stop, dismounted and walked slowly toward the microphone in center court. As he dramatically removed his helmet the crowd erupted in sudden recognition of the school principal, Brother Anthony Mark Murphy.

Today after a series of roles as teacher, administrator, and elected member of province governance, Brother serves as the Chairman of the Boards of Trustees or Members for nine of the separately incorporated schools in the Consortium of Edmund Rice Christian Brothers Schools in North America.

Brother Mark sees the margins as the horizons of excellence in scholarship, spirituality, and community service to which each of these schools is called. He delights in his journeys throughout North America. While his entrances are usually less dramatic, he continues to find joy in encountering the dedicated faculties and enthusiast students who advance toward these horizons.

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BROTHER KENNETH CHAPMAN, CFC



When the Vatican sought art that might be used in programs for Catholic-Muslim interreligious prayer services, it turned to this American artist. Brother Chapman's work, rich in texture, color and inspiration, does not contain distinct human and animal figures that would be unacceptable to the Islamic community. Here Brother works in an attic studio on the campus of Iona College in New Rochelle, NY, USA.

Artist in residence at Iona College, New Rochelle, NY, Brother Ken Chapman brings to his canvases a lifetime of teaching, community leadership, spirituality, prayer, and deep sensitivity both to the joys and pains of those he has taught and served and to the splendors of the earth and cosmos. He challenged generations of high student to open themselves to the affective realms of feelings and imagination. He delighted in the playful, the unique, the flight of fancy, the clash of colors, the explosion of light and shadow. He spent several years on the Western Province's missions to Native Americans, awakening children to the rich tribal art forms of their ancestors, cultivating skills in the making and decoration of jewelry, allowing the art and inspiration of his students to take root in his own work.

Brother Kenneth Chapman seems to locate the real margins at the edge of human creativity. There in the tension between thoughts and feelings, holding on and letting go, opening to the possible, cherishing the eternal, a child, grown adult, opens anew to the movement of the Spirit.

OUR WAY INTO THE FUTURE

The Congregation of Christian Brothers is committed to a pastoral plan called "Our Way into the Future." It prioritizes depth of spirituality, quality of community life, collaboration, direct engagement with materially poor, advocacy, vocation promotion and the development of the Edmund Rice Network. The plan calls for new openings in the developing world following a model of community engagement not unlike that which has animated the past three decades of mission developments in North America.

The number of new members entering the Congregation each year in Africa, India, and South America, gives added confidence in the possibility of realizing these new openings. Such is not the case in the developed nations of North America, Australia, and Europe. Here the Brothers are encouraging

members of the Edmund Rice Network to join with them in renewed prayer and vocation promotion activities inviting a new generation to be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Brothers such as those profiled above, and many others, find themselves at margins where the harvest is plentiful but the laborers few. We have been advised in such a situation to ask, to seek, and to knock, with insistence. We have, and we will continue, trusting in the One who made the promise of receiving, finding and making all things new.

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The logo of the Christian Brothers is a Celtic cross with a sprig of leaves embracing a rich tradition and reaching out in forms of new life.

