

# Opening Day

*Opening Day* sets the theme for another set of Profiles of Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America. This series has cameos of five men. Brothers Jim DePiro, Raymond Philogene, F. Christopher Burns, and P. Dennis Dunne have been Brothers for several or more decades. Candidate Rob Droel is in the beginning phases of his path to commitment as a Christian Brother. Each is striving to carry forward a ministry characterized by *presence, compassion and liberation*.

In the stories of our brothers we become aware of the movement of the Spirit as we discern our role in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, advancing His Church and her mission, serving the men and women of our times, and giving new expression to the Charism of Blessed Brother Edmund Ignatius Rice.

Should the reader be in the process of discerning what to do with the rest of your life, or know someone in such discernment, you might consider the value of a conversation with a Christian Brother. We love to share the gift of our vocation. Religious life is experiencing a period of revitalization responding to the challenges and the excitement of a new day in the Church. Perhaps what you seek, echoing in the call that keeps coming, is what we have found as disciples of Jesus following the example of Blessed Edmund.

## Brother James DePiro, CFC



*Coach DePiro with the Under 17 "Football" Team in Dominica;*



*with school children in Haiti;*



*and with proud graduates of Archbishop Curley Notre Dame Prep in Miami.*

Jim DePiro graduated from Essex Catholic High School, then in Newark, New Jersey. His first assignments as a Brother brought him to Bishop Hendricken High School in Rhode Island and later Notre Dame - Bishop Gibbons High school in Schenectady, New York. Although an economics major with a Master's Degree in Religious Education, he soon found that his gift for teaching mathematics was most in demand. While comfortable with all levels of mathematics, he quickly acquired a reputation for reaching students who previously had decided they could not pass algebra or geometry.

In the classroom, Br. D' applied the techniques that he had developed coaching baseball, football and soccer. Students or players thrive once they know someone believes they can do what is needed and will not give up on them until they succeed. Failure is not an option.

Brother DePiro's gifts for organization were tapped in the roles of Department Chairman, Director of Athletics, Mentor of New Teachers and Principal. While a gifted leader, whenever an assignment concluded, he opted to return to his first loves of teaching and coaching.

During an extended period at Archbishop Curley – Notre Dame Prep in Miami, FL, Br. D developed a strong commitment to the Haitian teens whose families were challenged by issues of cultural adjustment and economic hardship. A short-lived voucher program had brought to ACND a number of students from failing public schools. The earthquake of 2010 swelled the Haitian population of the school. Brother had his students coach him in the Creole needed to make the new arrivals feel welcome.

He raised awareness among Brothers throughout the world concerning the plight of the people of Haiti and advocated action on their behalf. Today Brother is stationed in the Caribbean at St. Mary's Academy where again he is teaching a full schedule of mathematics and serving as deputy principal, as he continues to refine his Creole in Dominica and explore ways in which the Brothers might best work with the people of Haiti to realize the dreams of a better future for their children.

## Candidate Robert Droel

During his years at Brother Rice High School (Chicago, IL) and later at Iona College (New Rochelle, NY), Robert Droel had distinguished himself for untiring dedication to Christian Service. He worked on a team of student ministers to run dozens of programs and service projects which challenged students to explore and grow in their faith. He helped organize and contribute to weekly liturgies as well as special Masses involving the entire College community. He led a group of ten students on a two-week immersion experience in Zambia, Africa, to learn about global poverty and to witness the Christian Brothers' ministries there.

While serving as assistant to the Director of the Iona Spirituality Institute, he engaged college students in the activities related to Christian spirituality and ecological consciousness and was awarded a Robert E. Daggy Youth Scholarship by the International Thomas Merton Society.

Summer camps, midnight runs in service of the homeless, soup kitchens, and mission trips in the U.S. and around the world all nurtured a desire to dedicate his life to serving others.

Working closely with Brothers, Rob attended to the rhythm of their lives of prayer, community, teaching, and service. As a senior in high school, he shared with one of the Brothers who had become a mentor to him, that he was feeling a persistent call to explore a vocation to religious life. They agreed to stay in contact, to meet and to pray together periodically. In time Rob discerned a call to seek membership in the Congregation.

*As part of his coursework, Rob was able to spend several weeks in Greece and Turkey traveling in the footsteps of Saint Paul. Here he is in Laodicea.*



Upon graduating from Iona College as a Psychology and Religious Studies major, Rob moved back to Chicago where he continued in the Christian Brothers' Candidacy Program while beginning graduate studies at Catholic Theological Union and working at his parish as a maintenance assistant.

At the conclusion of the year, with the enthusiastic support of his family, Rob became a "residential candidate" at in the formation community of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers in North America, located in Chicago Illinois. During the year he worked as an assistant Campus Minister at Saint Laurence High School (Burbank, IL) and began taking Education courses while completing his Master's coursework.

While at Saint Laurence this year, Rob designed and implemented *Mission Madness*, a competition to raise money for the ministries of the Christian Brothers in Latin America and educate students about the Edmund Rice Network. Each religion class was given the team name and mascot of an ERN school.

New year.                      New game.                      Same mission.

# Let the madness begin!

*"Give to the poor in handfubs." -Blessed Edward Rice*

SCORES = (Total \$ / # Students) x100  
BONUS POINTS ADDED TO EACH WEEK'S TOTAL

[ CLEMENS A ] ▲+2.5	+0.4 [ HOWARD A ] ♣
[ CLEMENS L ] ●+1.4	+0.5 [ HOWARD B ] ♠
[ GRANNAN A ] ●+0.5	+0.5 [ HOWARD C ] ♣
[ GRANNAN B ] ●+1.3	+0.8 [ HOWARD D ] ♠
[ GRANNAN D ] ●+0.7	+0.2 [ HOWARD G ] ♠
[ GRANNAN E ] ●-1.2	+1.0 [ HOWARD H ] ♠
[ GRANNAN G ] ●+0.7	+0.9 [ HOWARD K ] ♠
[ GRANNAN I ] ●+1.0	+3.9 [ MAHONEY D ] ♠
[ GRANNAN J ] ●+0.7	+2.9 [ MAHONEY E ] ♠
[ GRANNAN K ] ●+1.3	+0.0 [ TEACHERS ] ♠

2015  
**MISSION MADNE**

Money collected in your religion class supports the Christian Brothers' missions to the poor in Latin America, Dominica, and Brownsville, Texas

Give **BIG** or go home ... Give Like **MAD!**

In a sequence of retreats, spiritual direction, and workshops he clarified his vocational intentions and asked to be admitted to the next step in the Christian Brother Formation Program, "residential candidacy in a mission community." He will join the Brothers' Community in Mississippi and teach at Saint Joseph's School in Madison. In the 1990's the Brothers had identified the Diocese of Jackson as one of the most poorly resourced and underserved regions of the Catholic Church in the United States. The presence of the Brothers in the school and their work at accompanying a growing Hispanic population in the diocese has been a source of rich blessing and a sign of hope for the emerging Church.

At the end of the year, Rob will have the opportunity to move to the Novitiate stage of the Formation Process. For now, he is focused on opening day with his classes at Saint Joseph's.

## Brother Raymond E. Philogene, CFC



Dominica in the British West Indies is rich in natural beauty. While its citizens struggle with poverty, they cherish a culture characterized by joy and neighborly concern. They welcome educational opportunity and have been most appreciative of the decades of service of the Christian Brothers. Brother Raymond Philogene is one who seems to be known to everyone on the island.

Brother has spent most of his years as a Christian Brother in Dominica. Studies and teaching assignments had brought him to the United States and Canada, from St. John's, Newfoundland to Vancouver British Columbia. Once back in the West Indies, he briefly served at St. Joseph's Academy in Antigua, and then began an extended commitment to the families of Roseau, Dominica.

As principal of St. Mary's Primary School, he had a major role in opening a world of educational opportunity to generations of students. Their achievements have enhanced the reputation of the school and contribute significantly to the development of the country. In 2004, Brother Raymond, after several terms as principal, was delighted to pass on the responsibility for the school to one of his former students.

“What next?” was the subject of his discernment during a sabbatical in San Antonio, Texas. Where might he now best direct his energies in response to his call as a disciple of Jesus Christ and follower of Blessed Edmund Rice?

Brother Ray returned to Dominica to assume responsibilities in the Diocesan Family Life center. Here he became fully engaged in the activities of the Alpha Center, providing educational experiences for children with mental disabilities and supporting their integration in the society. The Dominica Minister for Social Services, the Honorable Gloria Shillingford, recently noted that, “Traditionally children with special needs were neglected, hidden and deprived of the opportunity to attend school and socialize with their peers. It is institutions such as the Alpha Center which have opened doors for them and paved the way for their integration into society and a corresponding acceptance of them by said society.”



Mindful of the loving care Blessed Edmund Rice dedicated to his challenged daughter Mary, Brother Ray is one of a number of Brothers and Edmund Rice Associates throughout the globe who have enthusiastically accepted leadership roles in promoting special education characterized by Presence, Compassion and Liberation.

## Brother F. Christopher Burns, CFC



*Brother Chris Burns with ACTION Student Leaders from Tampa Catholic.*

William Butler Yeats once said: “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” Br. Chris Burns has spent the past fifty years of his life as a Catholic school teacher lighting the fire in the hearts of his students, reminding them of the words of Jesus that they are to be “light for the world”.

Br. Chris grew up in New Jersey, was deeply inspired by the Christian Brothers that taught him at Bergen Catholic HS, and at the young age of 17 joined the Congregation, and began the ride of a lifetime. He is currently teaching Speech at Tampa Catholic HS in Florida, as well as ministering to his students as Director of Campus Ministry.

Br. Chris claims that the Christian Brothers were responsible for bringing to light the gifts and talents that he never knew resided in him. He was asked to assist in a province wide program known as “Action”, which he joyfully did for 25 years. The goal of that program is to train student leaders to return to their schools and help their individual school community put into action the gospel teachings of Jesus, particularly by serving the marginalized. Another program that he became involved in is named “Called and Gifted”, which he has been part of for the past thirty years. The program helps the lay teachers of the Christian Brothers’ schools understand and appreciate their God given talents, and reflect on the special vocation that they have been called to as they minister as educators in their catholic school community.

Looking back on his 50 years of ministry, working with students and teachers in the Brothers’ schools, he is immensely grateful to God for gifting him with his religious vocation.

Whenever he visits the brothers' cemetery in West Park, New York, he realizes he is literally standing on the shoulders of the Brothers who have gone before him, and is deeply aware of his responsibility to pass on to the Brothers and lay teachers that follow him the charism of our founder, Blessed Edmund Rice. As Br. Chris stands proudly on this sacred ground, these words of the singer and song writer Neil Diamond resound in his heart; "and each one here, has one thing shared...they have sweated beneath the same sun, looked up at wonder at the same moon, and wept when it was all done, for being done too soon, for being done too soon." Br. Chris is still enjoying the ride of a lifetime, has no regrets, and hopes for him it won't end too soon.

## Brother Patrick Dennis Dunne, CFC



Starting his 48<sup>th</sup> year of active ministry in an Edmund Rice Christian Brother school, Brother Patrick Dennis Dunne is currently serving as President of Palma School in Salinas, California, a post he has held since 2008. Prior to assuming the president's position, he was principal at the all-boys school, grades 7-12, for twenty-one years. Each August he stirs the teachers, administrators, and students to a thoroughly fresh welcoming of the new school year.

A native of Chicago and graduate of Br. Rice High School, Brother Dunne has served in several schools with a variety of duties and responsibilities. At St. Laurence High School in suburban Chicago, O'Dea High School in Seattle, St. Patrick's High School in Vallejo, California, Br. Rice High School in Chicago, and St. John's Indian Mission near Phoenix, Arizona, no two assignments were the same. He was given and/or took on teaching assignments (math, English, economics, geography, and theology) as well as a wide variety of after-school activities in

coaching or moderating (cross country, baseball, basketball, track, golf, yearbook, newspaper, missions, parents' club, alumni, tracking service hours and student mission contributions, marketing and development).

Ever mindful of the power of practical engagement in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, Brother has made the building of community within and beyond the school a hallmark of a Palma education. Campus Ministry is well resourced to carry out its role in fostering prayer, worship and Christian service. Students willingly share the challenges and joys they have met feeding the poor, visiting prisoners, advocating for justice, and building homes for poor families across the border in Mexico.



*“For I was in prison, and you visited me” (Matthew 25:36). Campus Ministry's latest adventure is working with the Life Cycle Team at Soledad Prison. The Chieftains are creating a literary journal on the theme, “Fathers and Sons: Brokenness and Blessings” with prison inmates, some of whom are serving life sentences.*

Brother Dunne’s rich experience has made his presence a welcome and vital contribution to national retreats and conferences of chief school administrators in the Edmund Rice School Network. He welcomes the opportunity to mentor those new to their supervisory role, to raise consciousness of what really matters, and to share insights on fostering a school community enriched by the essential elements of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother Education.

Brother is appreciative of the support and strength received from his Brothers in community over the years. He notes: “Common prayer and daily Mass contribute to making the work of being a *Christian Brother* more than just doable; they help fortify one’s commitment to the vowed life and to the call to service.” He often asks himself: “What would

Edmund Rice do in this situation - how would he find a way of making things happen, all for the betterment of the students and the greater honor and glory of God.”