



Mapping an Evolving Curriculum

The *Congregation of Christian Brothers* founded by Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice received Papal approval as *The Society of Religious Brothers*. The 1832 Constitutions specified:

The end of this Institute is, that all its members labor, in the first place, for their own perfection, and in the second, for that of their neighbor, by a serious application to the instruction of male children, especially the poor, in the principles of religion and Christian piety.

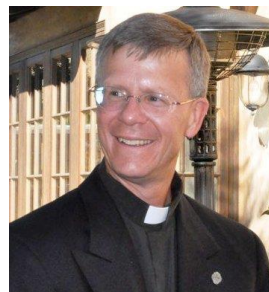
In time the members became identified with the institutions they established, first throughout Ireland, and later throughout the world, as *The Brothers of the Christian Schools of Ireland*.

Today, on six continents, the Brothers give ever new expression to our mandate: “to live as religious in consecrated brotherhood for the evangelization of youth within the mission of Church.”

As the mission stretches beyond the structures of school, a global perspective calls us to re-examine the synthesis of faith and life, life and culture, involved in the greater work of evangelization. We seek to map out a larger curriculum embracing the realities of our time and the aspirations of new generations of the People of God through community engagement, presence, compassion and liberation.

This edition of PROFILES features four Brothers from North America engaged in mapping the curriculum of Edmund Rice Christian Brother Education within and beyond borders.

Brother B. Sebastian Samp, CFC, teaches at Damien Memorial School in Honolulu, Hawaii. Brother Edmund Conti, CFC, coordinates innovative teaching strategies at Vancouver College in British Columbia, Canada. Brother Robert Novak, CFC, is Chair of the Physics Department at Iona College, New Rochelle, New York. Brother Kevin Cawley, CFC, is the Brothers’ man at the United Nations in New York City. Together they offer a perspective on the emerging map of an evolving curriculum.



Brother B. Sebastian Samp, CFC

“That far???” was not the comment Brother Samp anticipated. An accomplished cross-country coach, he had just finished presenting what he considered an easy, break-in, practice route to the cross country team at his new assignment, Damien Memorial School in Honolulu, Hawaii. He realized he had work to

do to bring these young athletes to potential. Teachers and coaches are ever starting anew. Some face the challenge reluctantly, others, like Br. Samp, delight in tapping a reservoir of spirit that ignites the enthusiasm and confidence of each new generation of students and athletes.

Thoughts before the race....



At Brother Rice High School in Chicago and Palma School in Salinas, California, Brother Samp honed his skills as an educator, a coach, and IT specialist. Damien Memorial asked him to lead the faculty in the complicated process of mapping the school curriculum aligning it with regional and national educational content, skills, and achievement levels. Side-stepping oft-repeated invitations to use his organizational and technological skills in the administration of the school, Brother requested and received a full schedule of mathematics classes. He experiences direct interaction with students as the most appropriate expression of his vocation. And so, it was in his spare hours that he gathered the information and mapped the master curriculum of the grade 7 – 12 school.

In helping teachers to identify the content and competencies sought in each subject and at each level, Brother strove to keep the faculty mindful of the larger mission of the school. At Damien Memorial, the curriculum map goes beyond state criteria to encompass the ***Essential Elements of an Edmund Rice Education***. Gospel values, global awareness, social consciousness, and advocacy on behalf of those on the margins of society, are to inform and animate the life of the school.

He believes that a life of prayer, community, and service, nurtures the presence and compassion that liberates the talents and energies of a new generation of leaders.

Asked what animates his vocation today, Brother Samp became uncharacteristically effusive, sharing the following:

I will be 60 this year in May, but I do not feel that way at all. I still feel like I am young and have lots of energy. True, I cannot do many things as I could years ago, but I keep myself in good shape.

I teach five classes of Algebra to freshmen and am the head coach of the Cross-Country team. I still run with the team, but not in the front. I am also the head coach of the Track and Field team. I mainly coach the distance runners and hurdlers and have a hand in all the other events.

I work hard at everything I do and I am mostly in the back background.

I am just the average kind of guy who likes to help where I can. I would not hesitate to assist others. I am sort of a handy man around the house, thanks to my father who taught me many things. I am decent cook if there is a recipe I can follow it. I am a neat freak and like things organized.

Typical day:

*5:45 get up
6:15 Meditation and Spiritual Reading
6:45 Breakfast
7:10 Head to school
3:15 Start Practice of my own workout if not in season*

*4:30 – 5:30 (when not in season) Reading, Make-up work
5:30 prayers
6:15 Dinner – we each cook I have Wednesday and Saturday
7:00 – 9:00 classwork, watch television
9:00 retire*

Weekends: Track and cross country meets, chores around the house, help at ACT and SAT testing, see a movie now and again, visit a Brother in a care facility, and do shopping for the week ahead.

When there is time I relax, read, watch DVD from Netflix with the community, watch television; Summer time – teach summer school, visit family and friends in Chicago and Salinas, do bigger jobs around the house

Hobbies: golf, weight lifting, walking, running, reading and watching science fiction, computer games, Star Trek and Star Wars fan, and like going to Renaissance Fairs

Favorite Sport Teams: All Chicago teams Cubs, Bears, Bulls, Blackhawks. Couldn't believe it when the Cubs won. Have been listening to them on radio and television all the time when growing up as a kid.

Other trivial facts: I am the first of 8 children. Worked in a circus before joining the Brothers (Circus Vargas). Was one of the hosts of a radio show program called the SixSiders. The show specialized in science fiction and fantasy. We did movie reviews and interviewed authors and actors and actresses from movies and television shows.

Brother Edmund Conti, CFC

Originally from Montreal, Brother Edmond Conti has spent most of his teaching career on the east and west coasts of Canada, in Newfoundland and British Columbia. His specialty has been the 5th grade. Currently at Vancouver College, a K to 12 school, he is recalled by a number of the graduating seniors and their finest teacher.

His classroom is a launching pad for virtual as well as actual adventures in transformation. For part of the year it may be a Native American village, with a central teepee large enough to host the regular class *pow-wows*. As the year progresses, it is transformed into a planetarium, a zoo, or an aquarium. Constellations appear on the ceiling, gerbils or laboratory rats run between feeding stations and play areas in transparent tubes, larvae transform into butterflies to be released into the school gardens, salmon roe is hatched and, during a class outing, rejoin the river paths of their ancestors.

As the year approaches its finale, his class becomes the Globe Theater. Senior teachers are invited to share their insights and to critique the fifth graders' recitations from *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. And then it is time to anticipate the joys of summer.



Recently Brother Conti changed roles. He now co-teaches with each of the primary school teachers of the school, encouraging and demonstrating his clever ways of entering the rich educational realms of fantasy, curiosity, and creativity, evoking the unique giftedness of each child.



And then... and then.... The young scientists detail for Brother Edmund Conti, CFC, their observations of seed planting, gestation, and development of new life.



Brother Robert Novak, CFC



Br. Robert Novak, CFC, with one of his Iona College Physics students outside the entrance to the NASA Infrared telescopes at the summit of Mauna Kea, Hawaii.

Brother Robert Novak, has been on the Iona College Faculty since 1976. Originally from Newark, NJ, where he attended Essex Catholic High School, he joined the Christian Brothers in 1967. After graduating from Iona in 1972 with a major in Physics, he went back to Essex Catholic where he taught Physics and coached soccer. Meanwhile, he pursued a Master's Degree in Physics at Stevens Institute of Technology. After completing that degree, he began teaching part-time at Iona College while studying for a doctorate at Columbia University. Upon receiving a Ph.D., he became a full-time faculty member at Iona in 1980 and is currently Chair of the Physics Department.

In addition to his teaching, he has been the faculty moderator of Iona's Men's and Women's Rowing teams. He has also been active in scientific research. For the past twenty years, he has been a collaborator with NASA's Astrobiology Institute located at the Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt Maryland. They study the composition of comets and the atmosphere of Mars using ground-based telescopes. Br. Novak, along with several of his students, has made several trips to the NASA telescope located on Mauna Kea on the Big Island of Hawaii. These trips have resulted in over forty scientific publications where Br. Novak is either the primary author or a co-author.

In the early 1990's, he became an active member of "Cosmos and Creation," a group of active scientists who are also very active in their religion. Their pursuit of science is seen in the larger picture of obtaining a better understanding of God's Creation, and likewise, a better understanding of God. In 2008, Br. Novak and twelve other members of this group took an eight day trip to Beijing China where

they visited location where the Jesuit Paleontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, lived, worked and wrote. His writings are among the most influential spiritual writings of the twentieth century.



Br. Novak and Iona College students on top of Mauna Kea, Hawaii with telescopes in the background.

Br. Novak was attracted to the Christian Brothers while he was a student in high school. As a high school student, he became very aware of his talents, especially in science and mathematics. His family and parish inspired him to use those talents in a way to help others. He noticed that the Brothers at Essex Catholic were very joyful people. He also noticed that they either had higher degrees or were pursuing higher degrees. Br. Power, who taught at Essex, had a Ph.D. in Biology. It gradually dawned on him that by joining the Christian Brothers, he could both pursue his God given talents and use them to help others.

In the 1980's, the Brothers at Iona College established a fund to support Brothers from other Provinces to study at Iona. Ten years ago, the Brothers Community decided to direct these funds to support the education of Brothers from Africa to attend Iona and finish their Bachelor's degrees and possibly stay for a Masters degree. Since then, eight have returned to Africa and one is currently studying at Iona College. Br. Novak has been coordinating this program for the past ten years.



Br. Novak is a welcome guest of among the students at the Changa Changa school in Mazabuka, Zambia, during a visit with Brothers in South Africa who had studied at Iona College in New Rochelle, NY.

Brother Kevin Cawley, CFC



Brother Kevin Cawley, CFC, represents Edmund Rice International at the United Nations in New York City. In his career as a teacher, high school administrator, and college professor, he became sensitized to the importance of expanding and deepening students' experience of interconnectedness with the whole universe and their role in promoting peace, justice and the integrity of creation.

In collaboration with Brothers at the United Nations Offices in Geneva and with input from the larger Edmund Rice Network, Brother Cawley lobbies for human dignity, raises awareness of the violation of basic rights, monitors efforts at sustaining the earth, and provides documentation to support the advocacy efforts of Edmund Rice teachers, students and associates, throughout the Network. As Main



Representing the International Edmund Rice Network at the United Nations, New York City

Representative to United Nations Headquarters in New York, Kevin works with many faith-based colleagues in civil society to keep the plight of those made poor in the forefront of conversations among member states. His monthly e-mail newsletter, ***Carbon Rangers***, with 500+ subscribers in 25 countries, presents regular reports on the multiple challenges facing our human species and our fragile planet.

Kevin is a co-founder of The Thomas Berry Forum for Ecological Dialogue at Iona College. With his colleagues at the Forum, he works to bring the insights of Thomas Berry to the college community of faculty, staff and students. In addition, the Forum sponsors events for the public on the issues of concern to those working at care of the Earth in these times. One of the great challenges has been to raise awareness of the precarious state of the planet. The Forum presents regular programs in local parishes on the encyclical of Pope Francis, ***Laudato Si, On Care for Our Common Home***. The encyclical echoes a foundational insight from Thomas Berry who for many years called on the world to develop a mutually beneficial human-earth relationship.

Kevin reports his initial attraction to the Brothers also came at Essex Catholic HS in Newark, New Jersey. He found the Brothers to be enthusiastic teachers, demanding coaches and completely interested always in the success of their students. They clearly loved their work and presented a generous model of service to the world in a life committed to prayer and teaching. The vocation showed how to be wonderfully useful to a larger mission in an energized, inspiring, prayerful and challenging atmosphere with like-minded partners.

Brother Cawley notes:

These original attractions still hold deep truths that draw grace into our daily lives. Living in community as Brothers means we have daily evidence that the Creator works in an always evolving universe. The structures of common life remind us of our dependence on others and our common prayer and meditation deepens these supports as we respond to grace.

A concluding thought:

In mapping and re-mapping the gospel story as the curriculum for all ages, we do well to attend to an admonition Jesus gave His disciples. In the concluding days of their three-year internship, He alerted them to a labor shortage. Perhaps Jesus had in mind the needs of the young we teach, the poor we empower, and the marginalized for whom we advocate. May they keep us mindful of His solution: *Pray the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His harvest. Luke (10, 2)*

Please join us in prayer, discernment, and thanksgiving for the richness of His calls to each who would follow Him.

PSM



We introduce the Religious Brother within the Church-Communion, as part of the one Chosen People, in which each one is called to radiate the richness of his particular vocation. the heart of the identity of the Religious Brother, namely fraternity, is a gift that is received (mystery), a gift that is shared (communion) and a gift that is given away (mission)

Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church
Vatican Document approved by HH Pope Francis, Oct. 4, 2015

The logo of the Congregation of Christian Brothers: The Celtic cross (wood) attests to the spirit of faith of our founder, Blessed Edmund Rice. 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. The promptings of the Holy Spirit continue to bring our message of Presence, Compassion, and Liberation to youth, especially the poor, throughout the world (green sprouts). Visit our website to fill in the rest of the story:

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