



Epiphany 2018

Profiles of Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America

EVERYDAY BROTHER

Being brother is the familial reality of most male children. Being brotherly is a universal invitation. The men in this edition of Profiles responded, and, respond anew each day, to a call to follow Jesus Christ. Their lives as religious brothers attest to the joy of their individual and collective encounter with Him.

Brother Darcy is the senior member of the group and, in fact the oldest living member of our Province. Brother Nuanah, of Ghana in West Africa, and a recent graduate of Iona College, professed his final vows as a Christian Brother last month. Br. De Lorenzo is a Provincial Archivist; Brother Varilla, a former teacher and hospital chaplain, is directly engaged in service to the poor of Chicago; and Brother Valdes offers praise to God and inspiration to us all through his art.



While from a rainbow of cultures – Newfoundland Irish, New York Hispanic, New Jersey Italian, Mid-Western Filipino, West African – these brothers have found, among the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers, a way to be their best selves. They share their gifts in community, in prayer, and in service to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with special attention to those who are poor and on the margins of society. Their stories, like that of Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice, Founder of the Congregation of Christian Brothers, resound with real life, daily expressions of **presence, compassion and liberation.**

Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice

Artist Brother C. Michael Valdez, CFC
Province Center Chapel, Elizabeth New Jersey

Brother Joseph Bertrand D’Arcy, CFC



Brother Darcy resides in Mount St. Francis Monastery in St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada. He served many years as a teacher and administrator in the Brothers’ schools and later in roles of Provincial and Congregational leadership. Along the way he developed writing and composing skills that continue to produce music and literature that will nurture generations to come. Born in St. John’s in 1920, Brother is the senior member of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers in North America. He shares the following:

Recollections of my life.

When I think back on my long life, I am amazed at the changes that have taken place in the world since I, a young lad from the remote Island of Newfoundland, joined the Congregation in 1936 after completing high school. It took me five days by boat to reach New York; now it takes about five hours. On arrival, I remember being amazed at the lush vegetation in West Park compared with the rocky shores of my own country - Newfoundland was a separate country at that time, and I had a Newfoundland passport to enter the United States. My novitiate group was the first to be kept back from the mission because it had been decided to start a scholasticate year in the same building.

Then in 1940, I was part of the Iona Prep community when it was announced that Iona College was to be opened in the new science building – an unpopular move with the high school staff since it meant the loss of their new science building.

In the summer of 1949, as Fidelis Brennan and I entered the World’s Fair in New York, bells rang out playing “Adeste, Fidelis.” I claimed that it was in his honour. Later in the day we visited a tent where the new marvels of television were being displayed with, inside, people speaking and acting, and being shown on a screen outside

In the 1970s, when visiting Montevideo, I was made a honorary member of the famed Rugby team that was lost in the Andes for several months – the team was composed of ex-pupils of Stella Maris, the Brothers’ school there.

Then in Rome, I was privileged to be present in the Piazza when the white smoke announced the election of Pope John Paul II as well as to be on the dais at his first Mass. Then some months later, I was a member of the General Council group which was privileged with a private audience with the Pope and was presented by him with a rosary and the words: “mind, this is for use!”

I am equally astounded at the opportunities the Congregation has provided for me to learn the world-wide conditions: from the racial tensions of 1947 Harlem to the religious turmoil of Northern Ireland in the 1980s; from the spacious expanse of the Brothers’ schools in Australia to the dismal slums of Calcutta; from the glories of Rome to the stone-age culture of Papua New Guinea.

Now that I have reached extreme old age, I am grateful to have learned that, for a Brother, old age is not an age of retirement from the Lord’s work, but a time for concentrating on the core of our

religious vocation which, as the recent statement from the Congregation for the Religious Life reminds us, is "a response to the gift of love with which God comes to meet us...to be a witness and mediator of that same gift." (p.26)

Brother Alexander Eugenio DeLorenzo, CFC



Br. DeLorenzo in investigative mode as Archivist chronicling the story of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers in North America.

Brother shares his vocation story:

I was an 18 year old high school senior named Alex. It was in the 200's section of the Nutley, NJ Public Library in Cross Roads magazine, that I found the "Irish Christian Brothers." The product of an Italian-American family, with public school up-bringing, I had never met a brother.

When I joined, I was one of the few who had not attended a Brothers' school. I soon felt part of the group, thanks to the uniting presence of the staff. Six weeks later, clad in new habits and bearing new names -- I became and still bear the name Br. Eugenio -- we headed off to a "year and a day" in the Novitiate. I really enjoyed my time there. During the following years I completed my college and teacher certification work. I majored in history (my favorite high school subject and the reason I wanted to be a teacher).

My first mission was All Hallows Grammar School in the south Bronx. That first day of school will not be easily forgotten. At 8:15 AM I was proudly standing by the door of grade 6. At 8:25 the bell rang, so I entered the room, closed the door, looked out, AND froze: here were 35 sixth grade boys staring at me, and all I could say to myself was "What do I do for the next 6 hours?" But that fear did not last long. I

ploughed into my mission, often having to learn the ups and downs of the first year teacher: when to smile, when to listen, etc. The next 20 years I would teach history and religion in the Bronx; Rochester, NY (my first girls' classes); Schenectady, (first co-ed classes); and New Rochelle, NY. During this time I pursued graduate courses in Hunter College of the City of NY, Manhattan College, NY Theological College and Notre Dame University.

I developed a lifelong love for reading, for travel, the Broadway Theater, and ecumenical work. (They called me 'rabbi Jerry Lewis' in Rochester!) In 1987 I accepted the role of Archivist of the Province. It has been my privilege and honor to preserve and proclaim the story of Edmund Rice's vision as it developed in the western hemisphere. I have worked with Lay volunteers in Florida, Texas and Peru. I have journeyed with the Edmundians (former Brothers) as they developed into networks of support for the Brothers and former Brothers. Learning from our Associates, women and men, religious and lay, I have come to a greater appreciation for the gift that Edmund Rice has given to the church and the wider world.

I volunteered as an English As a Second Language Teacher with immigrant adults in New Rochelle and was an instructor in US Citizenship preparation. These were rewarding experiences for me. These activities also played a significant role in instilling a deeper meaning and devotion to my vocation as an Edmund Rice Christian Brother.

I recall words of wisdom I learned long ago from a young student in Rochester. It was Vocation Week. The subject of religious life was mentioned during a break from band practice. The usual emphasis on the negative aspects, what you can't do as a Brother or Sister, dominated the conversation. Agnes, an out-spoken senior, interjected words I will never forget: "Religious are running towards Someone not running away from something!" My life has been nourished, strengthened and rewarded by these words!

Brother Patrick Varilla, CFC

On graduation from DePaul University in his home city of Chicago, Patrick Varilla accepted a teaching position in an inner city parish school. After several years of encouraging his students to attend to life values as they prepared for high school and college, he found himself addressing the question, "What will I be doing the rest of my life?"

He loved teaching and experienced a call to a more total gift of himself to the Lord. As he discerned among religious groups he was particularly attracted to the Congregation of Christian Brothers. Their presence on the south side of Chicago at Leo, Brother Rice and St. Laurence High Schools distinguished them as skilled educators with a particular commitment to serving the poor.

He recalls:

What drew me to the Brothers was their commitment to service particularly involving the teaching of youth. The brothers also had a tradition of prayer and camaraderie. Though I never went to a Brothers' school, I found them both welcoming and convivial

Patrick joined the Brothers at the age of twenty-seven and made his first vows the following year. He made his final commitment nine years later.

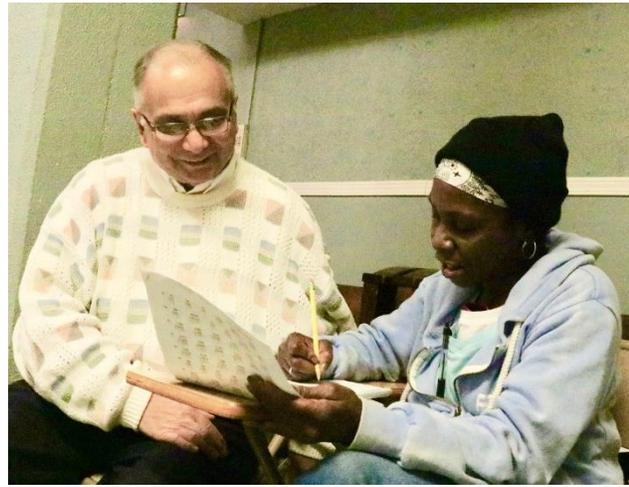
His assignments included St. Laurence and Brother Rice High Schools in Chicago and five years in Cantwell High School in Montebello, East Los Angeles CA.

As he urged his students to become engaged in the corporal works of mercy, Brother Varilla chose to live what he taught by devoting his spare time volunteering in a local hospital. In time, and with professional preparation, his volunteer work became full time ministry. He eventually served as the Director of Pastoral Services for Chicago's St. Francis Hospital, later Metro South Hospital.

Having reached the hospital's retirement age, he moved beyond the administrative role and embraced the privilege of devoting himself more directly to the poor of Chicago. Today, along with another senior brother, he serves at the St. Martin De Porres House of Hope tutoring disadvantaged students in an afflicted area on the south side of Chicago and assists with food distribution at Our Lady of Angels Mission on the west side of the city.

Brother comments:

... being a chaplain allowed me to open up the compassionate side of my personality. It gave me the opportunity to see how those who suffer both physically and emotionally can be graced through the efforts of others. As a tutor at a shelter, I have also been given the opportunity to help others develop their abilities to the fullest. A person of hope, I believe " In Christ all things are possible."



Preping for a test, finding a right answer, Brother Pat Varilla delights in the success of his students at St. Martin De Porres House of Hope.

Brother Clyde Michael Valdes, CFC

Community, ministry, and art, have each had a significant role in the discernment of Brother Michael Valdes, CFC. As a young man, the attraction of living in brotherhood in a shared ministry of bringing good news to children and youth on the margins, nudged his creative urges into the background. He



continued his sketching and watercolors when time permitted, but was most fully engaged in the lives and energies of the students he taught in a series of the Brothers inner city schools.

While Brother was teaching at Rice High School in Harlem New York, some of his paintings were brought to the attention of a leading patron of the arts. She recognized his gifts and offered him full sponsorship – others who accepted her offers have become the major artists of our era. Appreciative of the affirmation and the opportunity, he declined her offer. His teaching community and the students remained his top priority.

Summers he studied art at Catholic University in Washington, ever returning with a resolution to work more art time into his busy schedule. Sabbatical experiences including the Christian Brother Tertianship in Rome and a decade later a renewal program in San Antonio TX, heightened his awareness of a need to give greater expression to his gifts. His retirement from full time teaching

opened a flood of creativity and productivity. Brother's residence became a veritable gallery of art.

His work earns awards. Exhibits in Bergen County, Connecticut, the ACND Gallery of Art in Miami, and the Brother Kenneth Chapman Gallery at Iona College, New Rochelle, NY, drew very favorable reviews, and large groups of admirers. Brother delights to see his water colors capture attention, stir emotions, and evoke appreciation of the beauty that is the abiding expression of the God among us. His art has become ministry and an instrument for building community.

Brother Patrick Nuanah, CFC

A young teacher and active in his parish as a music minister, Patrick Nuanah came to know of the work of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers in West Africa and its ministries in his home county of Ghana. As

a young boy he had to leave his village to pursue a quality education. He now sought to open educational possibilities to the children of his country. He obtained his teacher certification and taught the next three years in a Catholic junior high school in a poorer area of the city of Tamale.

He wrote: *As a teacher, it was always my desire to teach pupils in the rural communities in order to help them have the same opportunity as their counterparts in the urban or well-endowed schools. This desire was greatly enhanced when I came into contact with the Christian Brothers whose main charism is evangelizing and liberating youth through quality education.*

Patrick was also experiencing a call for a more total commitment to Jesus Christ. He discerned among the Brothers the intersection of his professional and religious aspirations. He applied and was accepted into the Brothers' formation program. His family came to embrace his decision and encouraged him through the years of candidacy, postulancy, and novitiate.



Brother Patrick Nuanah with some of his seventh grade students.

After his first profession of annual vows he was assigned to St. Martin's School, Gbarnga in the neighboring country of Liberia.

Recognizing Brother Patrick's proficiency as an educator and potential for administration, the Brothers' Regional Leadership Team, offered him the opportunity to advance his education in a program of environmental studies at Iona College. His research on water ecology earned him a role in an international gathering in the Vatican in anticipation of the publication of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*.

On his return to Africa Brother Patrick was delighted to return to the classroom and share with new generations of students the basic skills that will open to them and others the wonders of an emerging understanding of our universe. This past June, having completed his years of annual vows, Patrick made his final profession, adding the word "forever" to his promises of poverty, chastity and obedience.

His new assignment came soon after. He has been asked to join the staff of the African Province Novitiate in Zambia to assist in the formation of those who will carry forward this great work. We can be sure that music and ecology will be an integral part of their experience.

Having read a draft of this profile, he added: *I experience joy and gratitude to God for being close to me, following all my ways and giving me the opportunity to render service daily as a Christian Brother.*



Br. Patrick Nuanah, CFC, pronounces and then signs his final vows, witnessed by the Congregation Leader of the Christian Brothers, Brother Hugh O'Neill.



Brother's parents join in the cutting a ceremonial cake for the guests at the profession feast.

Epiphany



*A change we could never imagine
will happen.
It is His presence we have been
waiting for.
There is no darkness where He is,
no violence.
Clouds fold their curtains and depart.
Darkness melts where He is seen.
He brings the gloom to light.
He will call us to Himself
and not scare us away.
He will let His face shine upon us.
Come, come now!
Do not delay. My heart is ready!
See He is coming with all His saints
and there will be endless days of
peace and love.*
By Brother C. Michael Valdes, CFC

May the light of Jesus Christ, our Brother, illumine our personal and collective journeys through the new year.



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:

For information contact:

Brother Gregory Timothy Smyth, CFC
Director of Young Adult Ministry
Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America

e-mail brtimcfc@yahoo.com

www.cfcvocations.org