



# PROVINCE NEWSLETTER

Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America  
A PROVINCE OF THE CONGREGATION OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERS

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*Merry Christmas  
Happy New Year*



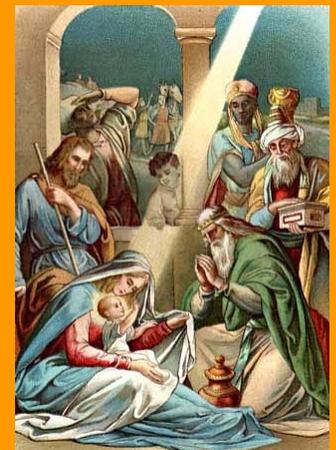
(l to r) Brs. Anthony Murphy, Dan Casey, Hugh O'Neill, Province Leader, Ray Verduyse, Barry Lynch, Kevin Griffith, Deputy Province Leader

To all our Brothers, Associates, Edmundians and collaborators in our life and ministry, the Province Leadership Team of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America sends Christmas Greetings and Blessings. May the celebration of the coming of Christ into our world and into our lives be a joyful and prayerful experience for you and for all those dear to you. May Christmas be a gift of love, a blessing of hope, and a promise of peace for you, and may it remain with you through the New Year.



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As a sign, God chose the Child lying in the manger ... and on every child shines something of the splendor of [God's eternal] 'today,' of that closeness of God ... It shines on every child, even on those still unborn.

Benedict XVI  
Homily, Christmas 2005

## PROVINCE LEADERSHIP TEAM Elizabeth, New Jersey

### Pastoral Visit to Latin America



**Br. Kevin  
Griffith**

In early November, Brother Hugh O'Neill, Province Leader and Brother Kevin Griffith, Deputy Pprovince Leader, had the privilege of journeying to the River Plate area of Latin America for a pastoral visit to our Brothers in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia. At each stop we were most welcomed by our Brothers and lay colleagues who were extremely gracious and hospitable. During our 16-day trek, we visited each community and ministry site in the River Plate area, and we are grateful for the warm reception we received by all we encountered.

Our first stop was in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where we spent two days visiting the Brothers' community and various groups from the Colegio Cardenal Newman school community. We were given tours of the school, Club Newman, the city of Buenos Aires, and several of the project sites where Newman students, parents, faculty, and alumni provide volunteer service for the poor and marginalized. The work being done was most impressive, as was the commitment of the volunteers to reaching out to those in need.

Next, we traveled to Montevideo, Uruguay, where we spent two full days at Colegio Stella Maris. In Uruguay, we again met with numerous school groups and visited the special projects on behalf of the poor coordinated by Stella Maris. In Montevideo, we toured the Old Christian Club and met up with Brother Clem O'Donnell who in his retirement has settled near Stella Maris.

At both Newman and Stella Maris, we were most impressed with the commitment and dedication of all school constituencies in reaching out to the poor and marginalized of their respective cities. Gospel values and the charism of Blessed Edmund are very much at the forefront of these special projects. Additionally, our gatherings with students who attended the Action Workshop in Jacksonville, FL, this past September, teachers who participated in the School Justice Network symposium in New Orleans last year, and the different groups from both schools who have participated in a variety of immersion experiences gave a strong sense of the connection and solidarity between the Latin American Region and the North American Province.

Following our jaunt to Montevideo, we returned to Buenos Aires to participate in weekend meetings of the Latin American Regional Leadership Team (Brothers Juan Casey (Latin America Regional Leader), Pablo Keohane and Kevin Bernard). We were delighted to hear about the many good things happening throughout the Region, as well as the struggles and challenges being faced.

At the start of our second week in Latin America, we flew to Asuncion, Paraguay, where we would spend four days visiting the Novitiate community, el banado (flood zone) where Brother Chuck Fitzsimmons resides and ministers in neighborhood programs for impoverished youth, and the youth prison where Brother Miguel Lynch serves as Assistant Director. The work of our Brothers in Paraguay is extremely impressive and is certainly much appreciated by the people being served.

Our final stop was in Bolivia where we would spend four days at the Regional Center in Cochabamba. Here, we participated in the life of the local community and spent time visiting la cancha (the marketplace), the Drop-



**(l to r) Bros. Kevin Griffith,  
Paul Keohane, Kevin  
Bernard, Hugh O'Neill, Juan  
Casey**

In Center sponsored by the Brothers for street kids, the Maryknoll Language Institute where many of our Brothers have studied Spanish, and El Cristo de Cochabamba – a several hundred foot statue of Jesus that sits atop a mountain overlooking the city. Again, the work being done by our Brothers – American, Irish and Peruvian – in Cochabamba is much needed and appreciated by the locals.

Following our stay in Bolivia, we returned for a final day in Buenos Aires before traveling home to the Province Center in Elizabeth, New Jersey. It is with much appreciation and respect for our Brothers, their lay colleagues, and their mission that we submit this brief summary of our journey through the River Plate area of the Latin American Region.

## OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES New Rochelle, New York

### A Busy First Semester at OES



Sr. Ona  
Bessette

The calendar pages have rapidly turned and soon a new year will be on our doorsteps. This is a good moment to pause and share the many efforts of the Office of Educational Services these past months. Since early September, plans were in full swing for a busy and productive year of working closely with school leaders, boards, faculties, and students. Here are the highlights of programs offered and the vast array of participants.

**The ACTION Student Leadership Workshop 2010** was held outside of Jacksonville, FL, at Marywood Retreat Center. Sixty students and 25 moderators came together September 30<sup>th</sup> – October 3<sup>rd</sup> for activity filled days and nights. Participants from eighteen ERCBNA schools met companions from Colegio Cardenal Newman (Buenos Aires, Argentina) and Colegio Stella Maris (Montevideo, Uruguay). From the very first ice-breakers on Thursday night, a spirit of community and unity enveloped the participants. The ACTION Workshop was lead by a team of seven hardy and courageous souls: Br. Jim Hamilton, CFC (All Hallows HS); Br. Jason Ford, CFC (ACND HS); Mr. Doug Romanik (ACND HS); Mrs. Francesca Tambone-Puzio (Bergen Catholic HS); Mr. Thane Hall (Br. Rice HS – Bloomfield Hills); Br. Tim Smyth, CFC (St. Laurence HS); and Mr. Jim Ranieri (Trinity Catholic HS).

The ACTION Community welcomed Mr. John Zokovitch from Pax Christi USA as a presenter on Advocacy. Each school came to the workshop ready to explore ways to become advocates for justice and change in their school community. They left with a proposal to present to their school leaders on a program to address issues, such as how to welcome marginalized students into the school community; efforts to build a positive school community; and programs to reduce texting while driving.

Mr. Tomas Jose Nicholson, moderator from Colegio Cardenal Newman, captured the experience in these reflections:



Action Workshop participants

*It was a trip to a different hemisphere. It was an opportunity to think about our reality, about ourselves and about the world around us. A strong multicultural feeling opened doors, and made us realize that we are not all that different as we might have thought. We realized we had a lot in common, and in sharing Blessed Edmund's Spirit we discovered the amazing community we belong*

*to and created bonds that go beyond any physical boundaries, enabling us to learn more about ourselves through the interaction with others.*

*It was a workshop where we could dive into our inner world and explore and uncover the unique gifts and talents given to us by the Holy Spirit to share with others. We also had motivational lectures on Advocacy, and received tools for Leadership and Action to be able to make our dream, of making a change in our community. Advocacy means “Justice.” It is waking up from our blindness and seeing things the way they really are. To wake up to the reality we live in. It is questioning ourselves, asking about things, its means being compassionate, opening ourselves up to others so that we can change who we really are. Advocacy means letting another transform us and to speak for those who have no voice.*

**The Annual School Leaders Retreat** was held October 11 – 14, 2010, at the Dolce Hayes Mansion in San Jose, CA. **Br. David Gibson, CFC**, presented to the school leaders a program entitled *A **Healthy Self, in Relationships with a Healthy God***. The relaxing accommodations of Dolce Hayes Mansion provided a welcoming environment to reflect on the dynamics presented by David and share these reflections with colleagues. The school leaders left the sunshine of southern California enriched and strengthened for their ministry of leadership. High praise and gratitude were expressed by one and all for the opportunity to take time away from the busy pace of the school to nourish heart, mind, and soul for a few days. One school leader reflected:

*“I am grateful to have time to reflect about deeply personal matters and share as much as I felt comfortable with. I liked the blend of the psychological with the spiritual. I seek to become closer to God through a deeper understanding of intimacy. In so doing, I hope to come back to the school as a better person more in touch with God, myself and with those I work.”*



**Sr. Grace D'Amico, SSND**

Each year a specialized workshop is held for a particular group in the schools. This year a **Dedicated Workshop for ACTION Moderators** was held at University of St. Mary of the Lake / Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, IL, on November 1-4. Sr. Grace D'Amico, SSND, OES Associate Director, facilitated the three-day workshop for 17 moderators and team members who work with student leaders in schools in North and South America. The rich experiences of the schools were shared in a *Best Practices* session. Mr. Tom Gambardella (Bishop Hendricken HS) presented information on service immersion trips; Mrs. Francesca Tambone-Puzio (Bergen Catholic HS) outlined the service projects undertaken by her students; Br. Tim Smyth, CFC (St. Laurence HS), discussed the process of selecting student leaders to attend ACTION; and Mr. Andrew Ciesielski (Br. Rice HS - Bloomfield Hills) provided resources for praying with adolescents.

Mr. Ben Brzeski – Director of Tyme Out Youth Ministry and Retreat Center outside of Milwaukee, WI – was the guest speaker for the workshop. He helped the participants to look at ways to sustain student leadership in the school. Ben offered many helpful suggestions and activities to use with young people.

On the last day of the workshop, participants traveled to **Lakeland County PADS Crisis Services** to meet with community advocates working with homeless individuals and families. Riding the shelter bus from the intake center to the family shelter gave everyone a brief glimpse of the experience of our brothers and sisters who depend on the services of this agency. At the family shelter, Ms. Cathy Curran, Executive Director, introduced the group to two advocates who provide support and services to the residences. These men spoke from their heart and from their experiences of being homeless. They modeled the strength of *walking the walk and talking the talk* as advocates so that others might have the opportunity for a better life.

The ACTION Moderators left the workshop with a personal goal to bring back to their school in order to work closer with student leaders in the advancement of their advocacy projects. A participant shared, *“The workshop helped us to recommit to our advocacy plans and to network with adults who have similar objectives.”*

**Essential Elements Evaluations School Visits** were held at Vancouver College (British Columbia) and Trinity Catholic High School (Ocala, FL) this fall. Teams of educators from ERCBNA schools traveled with Sr. Grace and Sr. Ona to the schools. The team for Vancouver College was composed of Ms. Laura Cassel (Guadalupe Regional Middle School), Ms. Susan Natale (Iona Preparatory School), Mr. Mike Oliver (St. Laurence HS), and Mr. Mike Venos (Br. Rice HS - Bloomfield Hills). The team at Trinity Catholic included Mr. Tom Reidy (Tampa Catholic) and Sr. Mary Elena Sabalausky (Br. Rice – Bloomfield Hills).

The opportunity to visit the schools and engage all members of the school community in conversations about living the Essential Elements of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother Education is enriching for everyone. Team members return hope-inspired and full of new ideas to share with their schools. Members of the Vancouver College and Trinity Catholic school communities are proud of the many ways students and faculty members share in the spirit of Blessed Edmund. The vitality of their service of the poor witnesses to the continued outreach of Christian Brother schools into the local communities – Blessed Edmund would be very proud! Each school models a contemporary community of faith striving to enrich the education of young people, modeling a deep witness of their Catholic identity, and pursuing collaboration and excellence in all endeavors. **Bravo to Vancouver College and Trinity Catholic!**

## CHRISTIAN BROTHERS RETREAT Burbank, Illinois

### Advent Retreat



**Br. Seán  
Whitty**

On Wednesday, December 1, 2010, the Brothers of the 87<sup>th</sup> Street Community and the Callan Community in Chicago met together at 5:00 pm for an evening of Advent prayer, reflection and sharing. Brother Jerry Messick organized the evening and Brother Seán Whitty facilitated the sessions which revolved around two Advent themes: namely, the Cry of Advent and the Promises of Advent as experienced in our lives at this moment on the journey. For the ten Brothers who gathered there was time taken for contemplation and prayer. After each theme there was a time for personal sharing which was profound and moving. A bonus was an evening meal prepared and thoroughly enjoyed by all. The Brothers enjoyed the opportunity provided to enter into the Advent Season as a preparation for Christmas. It is hoped that we will have a Lenten Retreat for the Brothers in the Chicago area in the New Year. Thanks to Jerry and the 87<sup>th</sup> St. Community for their efforts.



**(l to r) Brs. Raph McDonald, Seán Whitty, Jerry Messick**

**(l to r) Brs. Mike Driscoll, Tim Smyth, Cassian Mahoney**

## EDMUND HOUSE Asbury Park, New Jersey



**Br. Bill Stevens with his award**

For the first time in its history, the New Jersey Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NJHPCO) has included Reiki in its annual awards ceremony. Practitioner and teacher Brother Bill Stevens, CFC, was listed as Reiki Practitioner of the Year, his name appearing alongside Nurse of the Year and Social Worker of the Year in a list of 25 winners. It's a fantastic recognition for his work and shows the huge impact the system of Reiki is having within the hospice community. President of the NJHPCO, Don Pendley, said they've found Reiki treatments can make an enormous difference, "Bill has become one of the foremost practitioners of Reiki in hospice; virtually a third of the patients request his services."

Bill Stevens has been working in hospice in New Jersey for six years, starting as a Chaplain for the Visiting Nurses Association and then moving over to become a salaried Reiki practitioner. When he got the job as Chaplain, the program manager hadn't even heard of the system of Reiki. Now Bill's services are so popular that they've had to hire two more Reiki practitioners. He travels sometimes 100 miles a day visiting people who have been told they have less than six months to live. They ask for Reiki treatments via their visiting nurse and when Bill gets there, close family members often receive sessions as well as the patients themselves.

The results can be quite profound. As well as relaxation and a reduction in anxiety, Bill says the treatments seem to help people let go. "One guy was a rough-edged contractor type; he just sort of put up with me at first but the next day he told the nurse he had never had such a spiritual experience. There was a real change in his resistance and acceptance." Another patient reconciled with his son, "He had a wonderful acceptance of death and was able to be with his family at the end. Reiki helps in so many cases and you don't even have to know the story."

Bill and his nurse colleagues have so many of these experiences they could talk for hours; they share in people's tragedies everyday and yet still remain calm and supportive of those they look after. Bill attributes this to his own Reiki practice, specifically daily meditation. He has now started to teach nurses so they can look after themselves as well. For Bill Stevens his award for Reiki Practitioner of the Year is an important boost for the practice, "I look upon it as giving Reiki some recognition as a complementary therapy."

There is little in what Bill says about the award which is related to himself and his own achievement in winning. As anyone who has met him through his work in hospice or with animals at SARA (Shelter Animal Reiki Association) events will agree, he is the embodiment of the precept, "Be humble." Others, though, are happy to champion what he has been doing in New Jersey. Vice President of Hospice and Palliative Care at the Visiting Nurses Association, Loretta Spoltore, says, "Bill has made a tremendous difference in our hospice program. He provides an unparalleled level of peace for those who may be afraid of dying." Bill's current teacher, Frans Stiene, of the International House of Reiki, says, "Bill is a real saint, always working hard to help others in their healing progress. Since I met Bill I have seen a tremendous growth in him spiritually, which means for me he is walking his talk, I cannot recommend him highly enough."



**JoAnne Reifsnyder (r), NJHPCO Awards Committee, and Br. Bill Stevens**

# ARCHBISHOP CURLEY NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL

Miami, Florida



**Ms. Lisa Morales**

On Friday, November 19, 2010, Archbishop Curley Notre Dame High School hosted its annual Leadership Workshop for Middle School students. Elected by their school principal and teachers, 33 middle school students participated in a full day of leadership training conducted by ACND student leaders and members of the school's faculty.

Some of the ACND student leaders who helped moderate the Leadership Workshop were attendees of this year's ACTION Workshop - a high school Leadership Training Program sponsored by the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers of North America.

The ACND team, represented by Shannon Macourek, Megan Romanik, Randy Schutt, Celine Wassaf, Christina Blanchard, Jesus Vazquez, Alexa de la Cruz, and Calantha Senat, had an opportunity to practice their acquired skills and develop a mentoring program that would allow younger students an opportunity to gain practical experience in communication, motivation and group dynamics – skills they knew would be important part of their high school education.

ACND faculty members, Br. Jason Ford, CFC, Campus Ministry Coordinator, and Mr. Douglas Romanik, Dean of Students and Vice Principal of Student Services, served as the faculty moderators for the Leadership Workshop.

“Goals of the Leadership Workshop were to help the middle school students realize that they have gifts,” said Mr. Romanik. “We hope the students also know that they are called by God to use them for the benefit of others, and that they must utilize others’ gifts to accomplish tasks.”

The event culminated with a gathering in the ACND Chapel where the young leaders gave thanks for the gifts and opportunities that bless their lives and committed themselves to sharing the experience back in their own schools.

“It was a great day to promote unity in our middle schools,” concluded Mr. Romanik.

This year the workshop also welcomed the first group of student leaders representing ACND's grades 6-7-8 from Brother Rice Honors Academy.



Students from Immaculate Conception (Hialeah), St. Mary's (Miami), Blessed Trinity (Miami Springs), St. Hugh's (Coconut Grove), St. John the Apostle (Hialeah), St. Rose of Lima (Miami Shores), St. Lawrence (North Miami), St. Patrick's (Miami Beach), Our Our Lady of the Lakes (Miami Lakes) and ACND's 6-7-8 Brother Rice Honors Academy join ACND student leaders at their annual Leadership Workshop.

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On Sunday, December 12, 2010, student leaders who represented Archbishop Curley Notre Dame High School's Edmund Rice Community (ERC), hosted "A Children's Walk to Bethlehem." With help from ACND students, children who ranged in age from four to eleven participated in an interactive Christmas pageant which included activities such as creating their own costumes, making gifts to be presented to Jesus, decorating a Christmas tree, and decorating cookies.

Four groups named "Shepherds," "Angels," "Magi," "Innkeepers," and "Holy Family" - led by Ena Urbina (junior), Jose Nino-Domond (senior), Celine Wassaf (junior), Jessica Blanchard (junior), and Alejandra Cadena (senior) - organized and supervised each activity station. Jesus Vazquez, an ACND junior, served as event coordinator. The day culminated in a procession through the monastery gardens, past the Bethlehem Inn that had no rooms for the young couple, and into the Chapel where the children staged the Christmas story for their parents. After the children presented their gifts to the Infant, word came that there was now a welcome and cookies to be found in the Inn.



Children ranging in age from four to eleven participated in Archbishop Curley Notre Dame High School's "A Walk to Bethlehem" – an interactive Christmas pageant where student leaders and children prepare costumes and props before staging the Christmas story.

ACND Campus Ministry Coordinator, Br. Jason Ford, CFC remarked: "I am very pleased how this theatrical excursion helped our visiting youngsters imagine the time just before the birth of Christ. I am grateful for the ACND student leaders, the children and their families for making it such a memorable event."

## CARDINAL HAYES HIGH SCHOOL Bronx, New York

On Saturday, November 13, 2010, Cardinal Hayes High School's 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Hall of Fame Dinner Dance took place at the Marina del Rey. The "Distinguished Faculty Award" was presented to Brother Patrick B. O'Toole (All Hallows Residence).

The citation read:

Brother Patrick B. O'Toole, CFC, entered the Congregation of Christian Brothers in 1954 and observed his Golden Jubilee as a Christian Brother in 2004. Brother O'Toole taught in Christian Brothers' schools in both Canada and the United States, primarily in the Archdiocese of New York, for over 40 years. Brother has dedicated almost 20 years of his 50-year plus teaching career to the students of Cardinal Hayes High School. In addition to teaching Math, Brother O'Toole was the highly successful coach of the school's Bowling teams for fifteen years. During his tenure the Bowling teams consistently ranked #1 or #2 in the Catholic High School Bowling League.

On this happy occasion we take the opportunity to salute Brother Patrick B. O'Toole, CFC, a faithful son of Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice, Founder of the Christian Brothers, a loyal and dedicated educator, a devoted Religious Brother, and a great friend to many faculty members and students of Cardinal Hayes High School. Brother O'Toole is in the long line of Christian Brothers who have served so faithfully at Cardinal Hayes since 1941. God bless the work and the workers!



(l - r) Mr. John Fontana, Cardinal Hayes '76 (Hall of Fame Chairman), Br. O'Toole, Father Joe Tierney (President of Cardinal Hayes)

## AWAKENING THE DREAMER: CHANGING THE DREAM SYMPOSIUM



**Br. Seán  
Whitty**

On Friday, November 19, 2010, at The Presentation Sisters Lantern Centre in St. John's, Newfoundland, Brothers Seán Whitty (Province Life & Renewal Committee), Bill Carrothers (Jericho House) and Sister Jacquie Keefe, cssf (Jericho House), facilitated a Symposium on *Awakening The Dreamer: Changing the Dream*.

The purpose of the Symposium was to present a new vision of living a sustainable, spiritually-fulfilling and caring presence on our Earth. Using a number of quality CD's provided by the Pachamama Alliance from California, the Symposium focused on dealing with four important questions, namely,

1. Where are we in terms of sustainability on the planet?
2. How did we get to this point in our history?
3. What is possible for the future?
4. Where do we go from here?

Ample time was given for small and large group sharing of ideas as well as opportunities for prayer and reflection. There were 30 participants who gathered for the day and all agreed that the material presented was extremely dynamic, challenging and provocative. Many voiced the opinion that the Symposium should be given again at a later date to a greater audience.

Bill, Seán and Jacque were very pleased with the whole day and were delighted to offer the Symposium in St. John's. They would be delighted to facilitate this Symposium in the future with our school staffs, with seniors in our high schools and with the Brothers' communities in North America.



## THE ASSOCIATES OF BLESSED EDMUND RICE



**(l to r) Mr. Jim Slaughter, friend; Mr. Mike Venos, Associate; Br. Gavin (Ireland); Mr. Thane Hall, Associate, at Edmund Rice's childhood home.**



**(l to r) Mr. Dan McCarville, Associate; Mr. Thane Hall, Associate; Br. Jim Glos (Canto Grande Community, Lima); Mr. Andrew Ciesielski, Associate; and friend, Mr. Bryan Linton, on Brother Rice High School Bloomfield Hills mission trip to Peru.**



**(l to r) Br John McCarthy; Associates Jay Louis-Prescott and Thane Hall; Br. John Dornbos. in New Orleans for Schools Justice Network Conference.**

*Today too, Christ needs apostles willing to sacrifice themselves for the Gospel.*

Pope Benedict XVI

Who have you spoken with about becoming a Brother?



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.

[www.edmundricebrothers.org](http://www.edmundricebrothers.org)

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

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