



EDMUND RICE  
CHRISTIAN  
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PRESENCE COMPASSION LIBERATION

# Province News

Edmundo Rice  
LATINOAMÉRICA  
PRESENCIA COMPASIÓN LIBERACIÓN

*SPEAK, LORD, YOUR SERVANTS ARE LISTENING*

VOLUME 18

NOVEMBER 28, 2023

ISSUE 5



*As the days get shorter for some and longer for others, we are reminded that we have much to be thankful for during these turbulent times throughout the world. We hold in prayer all those who are suffering due to war, famine, and injustices of any kind. We are reminded of the constant beauty that surrounds us on this our home: Planet Earth*



Edmundo Rice

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## From the Office of Educational Services

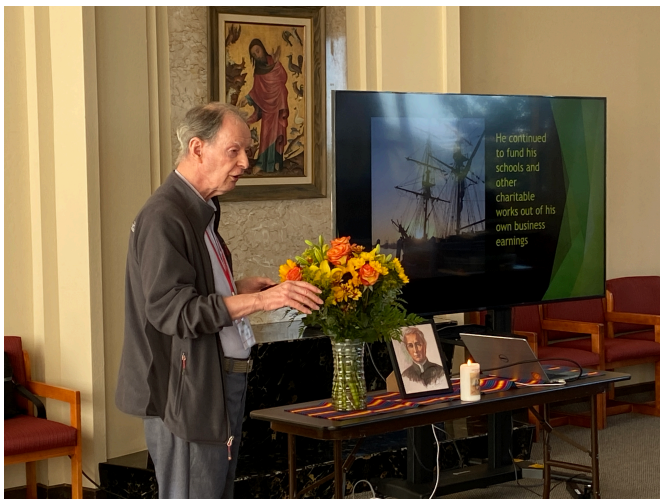
The following articles have been provided by Dr. Cristiana Ritchie-Bonomo, Director of the Office of Educational Services.

### School Leaders Retreat 2023

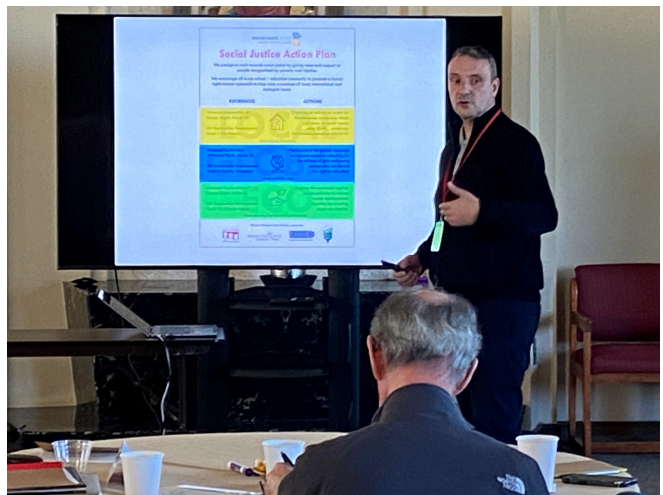


**Dr. Cristiana Ritchie-Bonomo in conversation with the school leaders.**

The annual School Leaders Retreat for school leaders from across the province was held at the Mercy Center, Burlingame, California, October 2-5, 2023. The leaders gathered for a spiritual retreat focused on connecting with the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice, and the Leadership of Moses. The retreat provided an opportunity for leaders to reflect on their call to serve and to deepen their relationship with Christ. Brother Peter Zawot, CFC, Provincial Leader provided opening remarks and thanked each school leader for their commitment to the mission of our consortium of Schools. Retreat Highlights:



**Brother Dennis Gleason**



**Mr. Cormac McArt**

Aidan Donaldson and Brother Dennis Gleason shared from their new book, *Beauty Through Broken Windows* and renewed our connection to the charism of Blessed Edmund; they framed it by sharing stories of modern applications of Blessed Edmund's mission to serve the poor and marginalized. Aidan and Brother Gleason were followed by Cormac McArt, Director of the Westcourt Centre in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Cormac shared the work he and his colleagues do with schools and with the homeless. School leaders were challenged by the Belfast Brigade, to look through their own windows and address the needs in their communities.



On the second day of the retreat attendees explored the Leadership of Moses as a framework for viewing their own leadership. The retreat was developed by Sr. Catherine Powers, CND, but facilitated by Dr. Ritchie-Bonomo when Sr. Catherine was unable to attend.

Participants engaged in some guided spiritual reflections, small group discussions to share their experiences, challenges, and aspirations as Catholic school leaders. In addition, participants celebrated Mass together, uniting in prayer and fellowship. The liturgy was celebrated by Father Robert Sullivan, brother of Palma School Principal, David Sullivan.

One participant noted, “The Networking is the absolute key to this experience for me. Every moment I get to spend with the others school leaders is cherished. Just being around this group of amazing people, all of whom are dedicated to the same goal, to the same mission, to the same charism, and to the same vision, fills my heart. When we are together, I truly feel like our leadership has ONE heartbeat. I’m proud to be able to call myself a colleague to these fine people. Michigan football coach, Bo Schembechler said, “Once a person has made a commitment to a way of life, they put the greatest strength in the world behind them. It’s something we call heart power. Once a person has made this commitment, nothing will stop him short of success.” Simply put, this group has Heart Power “The small group discussions were incredibly insightful. I was able to learn from the experiences of my colleagues and gain new perspectives on leadership.”

### **ACTION Student Advocacy Workshop**



Students from fourteen schools from across the province gathered at the John Paul II Retreat Center in Kearny, New Jersey on October 12-15, 2023 for the annual ACTION Student Advocacy Workshop designed to train them to become advocates and ambassadors as part of Edmund Rice International’s Ambassador program. The Ambassador program is aimed at uniting over 250,000 Edmund Rice students from across the globe to speak with one voice through the Edmund Rice non-governmental

organization located at the United Nations in Geneva Switzerland and New York City.

The workshop, hosted by the ERCBNA Office of Educational Services provided students with the tools and resources they need to create three projects throughout the year around sustainable development goals. Guest speaker, Cormac McCart from Westcourt Centre, in Belfast shared learning modules to help students understand a variety of topics and how they can advocate. In addition, Br. Tim Smyth, CFC, who organized the workshop, shared a history of Blessed Edmund as a means for understanding Blessed Edmund's advocacy and offered insights around advocacy. Iona Prep students shared how they advocated for their ACTION project last year.

In addition, the workshop helped students in the following areas: understanding different types of advocacy, identifying and addressing issues that are important to students, developing effective communication and presentation skills, building relationships with key decision-makers, strategies for taking action and creating change, viewing a grassroots environmental change effort at the Meadowlands Nature Center, in New Jersey.

Students participated in interactive activities and discussions throughout the workshop. They also had the opportunity to hear from inspirational speakers who shared their own experiences with advocacy. One student stated, "I discovered the long path I had to take to become a leader, but I also learned so much about myself, such as the gifts I've already been given, my role as an ambassador, and the reality that is possible in being a determined leader."

The workshop closed with a beautiful liturgy celebrated by Father Justin Cinnante, O Carm, chaplain at Iona Preparatory School. Ms. Lilian Vernier, from Vancouver College prepared the students for the liturgy and engaged the student in song. Mr. Dennis Figueroa, moderator from All Hallows sang "You Raise Me Up" for students at the close of the liturgy. Each student was commissioned to advocate and make change.



**Dr. Wayne Tinsey talking with the students**

In keeping with their commission as advocates during the workshop, Ambassadors named at ACTION met with Advocacy Coordinator Dr. Sean D'Alfonso and Cormac McCart to discuss future steps. As a result of ACTION students will continue to meet with Dr. D'Alfonso and are responsible for creating three advocacy projects on the topic of their choice but linked to United Nations sustainable development goals. Many are working on homelessness, and Laudato Si projects. As a result of ACTION, please expect to hear their voices in school administration offices, faculty meetings, and in the community!



## **Brownsville Immersion**

For the first time in my three-year tenure at OES, I was able to join students from Brother Rice, Chicago, Brother Rice Michigan, O'Dea High School, St. Laurence, and St. Thomas More Collegiate in the annual Brownsville Immersion program. The program was designed to give students a firsthand look at the complex issues facing the border region, including immigration, drug and human trafficking, poverty, and the difficult path to residency and citizenship.

The students spent a week in Brownsville and the surrounding area, where they met with residents, visited Guadalupe Regional School, met with leaders from Aspire, a program of Advocacy begun by the Sisters of Mercy, but now ran by lay people who at one point came to the United States from Latin America. They also visited the respite center in McAllen, Texas which is sponsored by Catholic Charities.

The immersion program was a valuable experience for the students. It helped them to gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the border region. It also helped them to develop a sense of empathy for the people who live there.

Here are some of the things the students learned during their immersion program: they connected through their own family stories of migration to the United States; the border region is a complex and ever-changing place; there are many different perspectives on the issues facing the border region; the people who live in the border region are resilient and resourceful.

The students also had the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences of the border. They thought about the impact of the border on their own lives. They considered how their own actions could help to make the border region a better place. They talked about ways we all bear responsibility for one another. However, for me most impactful experience during this immersion experience was meeting the Silva family at the Respite Center. Julio Silva, his wife and two sons, aged sixteen and nine, spent five months walking from Venezuela to McAllen. Julio and his wife are both nurses. When they reached McAllen, their plan was to take a bus to Washington DC where Señora Silva has family. However, they were unable to reach her family for quite some time, and when they finally did, they learned there was no more room in the home to take in Julio and his family. Without an address and support the most likely result is deportation.

That is when Sr. Mary Therese Giblin a School Sister of St. Francis of Christ the King and a theology teacher at St. Laurence took a leap of faith. She called her provincial and convinced the community to house the Silvas at their retreat center in Chicago. She then connected with a local group of Deacons who immediately jumped into action and will help the family relocate to an

apartment for migrants and assist them with navigating the complex system to legally work and live in the United States.



**Meeting at the airport ...comings and goings!**

Several of the moderators donated some funds and we were able to get a hotel room for the Silvas. Brother Tom Lejeune from Brother Rice Michigan, and I drove to the respite center, and amazingly and easily collected the Silvas and took them to their hotel and got them a taxi for the morning to take them to the airport for their flight to Chicago. At the Southwest gate, they met students from St. Laurence, Brother Rice, Chicago and Brother Rice, Michigan.

Today, the Silvas are in Chicago, learning English, figuring out the mass transportation system, seeking work, and schooling. While we left thousands more behind at the respite center, because of the quick action of Sr. Mary Therese and the support of all the team in Brownsville, one family has a start.

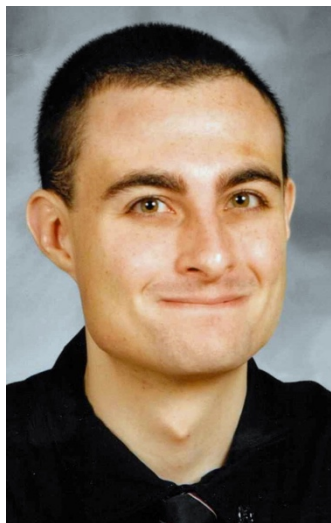
Students were deeply moved by this experience, and several students who came from families who crossed the border left with a deeper understanding of their parents hopes and dreams for them, and a respect for the sacrifices their parents have made to ensure their future is successful.

One student said, "All of these people just want a better life for their kids."

After we left, a new group of students from Vancouver College began their immersion experience in Brownsville, and they will learn and grow just as we did. Thank you, Brother Stephen Casey for your guidance and good work on border!



## Brother Robert Droel in India



Brother Philip Pinto began his first talk on *Emerging Spirituality in Religious Life* with a poem by Henry Nouwen...

You have an idea of what the new country looks like. Still you are very much at home, although not truly at peace, in the old country. . . Now you have come to realize that you must leave it and enter the new country, where your Beloved dwells. You know that what helped and guided you in the old country no longer works, but what else do you have to go by? You are being asked to trust that you will find what you need in the new country. That requires the death of what has become so precious to you: influence, success, yes, even affection and praise.

- Henry Nouwen (*Enter the New Country*)

Fresh from his six-month Immersion in Perú, Brother Robert Droel now finds himself on another international adventure in a new country: India. Since mid-October, he has been taking part in a six-week program with 20 Religious Brothers and Sisters who are discerning and preparing for their Final Profession of Religious Vows.



The international group consists of Presentation Sisters, Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Loreto Sisters, and Daughters of the Cross from India, Singapore, and Sri Lanka, as well as five Edmund Rice Christian Brothers. In addition to Br. Rob, Brothers Jerry Ekka and Vinod Topno are from the Indian Province and Bro. Desmond Taboeya and Francis ToLiman hail from

Papua New Guinea (Oceania Province). Br. Philip Pinto (former Congregation Leader) is in charge of the program, along with Sr. Alba Rodrigues (Presentation Sister), and Andrew Pinto (Edmundian). The schedule consists of a diverse lineup of weekly presenters covering a range of topics such as Community (Nonviolent Communication), Ministry (Community Engagement), Mission (Advocacy & Rights Based Education), Prayer (Journaling & Dream Work), Spirituality (New Cosmology & Feminine Energy), and Vows (Wellness & Human Sexuality). The program, which lasts until the end of November, will conclude with a seven-day retreat.

The setting of the program is the 12-acre, sprawling green campus of St. Edmund's College (est. 1924) in Shillong, where the local Brothers' community has provided outstanding hospitality. Shillong, in Northeast India, is a city of about 50% Christians in a country where Christians are only about 2% of the population. Compare that to Perú, which is over 90% Christian and 75% Catholic. That being said, there are 20 million Catholics in India!

In addition to prayer, spiritual direction, presentations, and group discussions, the program has allowed for the building of a temporary international community of Brothers and Sisters for this month-and-a-half, during which the joys and struggles of community life are made real and the emerging spirituality of religious life is put into practice. It has been an experiment in synodality — journeying together as the People of God with deep listening to each other and to the Spirit.

Outside of reflecting deeply on their lived experiences as temporary professed, participants have shared countless meals together (lots of rice and curry) and have celebrated Catholic feasts such as All Saints (by visiting the cemetery where Brothers are buried) and Christ the King (which was celebrated weeks early, with a procession of tens-of-thousands of people from dozens of parishes) as well as the Hindu Diwali (Festival of Lights). Also, a very moving daytrip was made to a remote village, where Brother Vinod and two other Brothers started a “Journeying Together Community” in response to the 2014 Chapter Calls.

Rob is very much enjoying the collaborative nature of the peer program and the opportunity to again experience the internationality of the Congregation — to be brother to the world. After a thirty-fourth birthday and Christmas with family in Chicago, he cannot wait to return to Perú at the start of the new year and God-willing, to be a perpetually professed Edmund Rice Christian Brother by the end of it.

The Christian Brothers' Constitutions and Statutes call for “a period of special preparation for perpetual profession” “so that it can be celebrated with understanding, freedom, and joy.” Having made his first profession in 2018, Rob will be eligible to apply for final profession next year. He is grateful for continued prayers (for himself and his fellow participants) from members of the Edmund Rice Network as he journeys with Brother Kevin Bernard (87<sup>th</sup> Street Community, Burbank, Illinois) during this period.



## Community Leaders and Contact Persons Gathering



**San Alfonso Retreat Center, Long Branch, NJ**

The Community Leaders, Contact Persons and the PLT gathered at the San Alfonso Retreat center in Long Branch, New Jersey, November 10-12, 2023. 24 brothers from 17 communities spent time in prayer, contemplation, generative listening and sharing around four main areas: surfacing any issues; you and the Community; helps with the Community and what's the Dream. The gathering opened with a beautiful evening prayer followed by opening remarks from Brother Peter Zawot – Province Leader. The weekend was ably facilitated by Brothers Ed Bergeron and Michael Colasuonno from the Province Life and Renewal Team. The Province Leadership Team is grateful to Sean Whitty and the Province Life and Renewal team for crafting a meaningful experience for all the participants and for Ed and Michael facilitation. We thank the Brothers who made the effort to travel long distances to share and experience Brotherhood. The PLRT will be continuing to search for ways to help

communities to enhance their lived experience.



**Brothers Spencer Tafuri,  
Hugh O'Neill, Peter Zawot,  
Sean Moffett**



**Brothers Ben McDonough and Barry Lynch in conversation. Brothers John Gale and Mike Segvich indulging the photographer!**



**Province Leader Brother Peter Zawot giving his opening address to the gathered brothers.**

### **Province Website**

We invite readers to visit the Province Website. The website is constantly updated to reflect the many and diverse aspects of the Province.

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

### **Calendar of Events**



November 28, 2023  
 November 29, 2023  
 November 30, 2023  
 November 28 - 29, 2023  
 December 06, 2023  
 December 11 - 15, 2023  
 December 15, 2023

St. Laurence – Annual Meeting  
 Brother Rice, Chicago – Annual Meeting  
 Brother Rice, Bloomfield Hills – Annual Meeting  
 Brothers Think Tank Meeting via Zoom  
 Iona Prep – Annual Meeting  
 PLT Meetings – Elizabeth, NJ  
 OES Meeting



### **Please Pray For**

- Our Brothers at St. Joseph's Residence in New Rochelle, NY and in other care facilities across the Province.
- Sandra Schurla, Aunt of Brother Michael Segvich (Mt. Sion Community)
- Amy Mahoney, spouse of Dr. Brian Mahoney, President of Bergen Catholic.
- All those affected by war: the Ukraine and the Middle East
- The victims of natural disasters around the world.



### **Repose of the Soul of...**

- + Brother Louis Stanich, RIP (St. Joseph's Residence Community)
- + Brother Patrick Donatus McCormack, RIP (St. Joseph's Residence Community)
- + John Casey, the brother of Brother Larry Casey (All Saints Community, New Rochelle).
- + Edmundian Terence (Brendan '62) Shanley.
- + Former Brother Brian (Ron '68) English.
- + Recently departed Damien senior, Damien Memorial School, Honolulu
- + Philomena Rice, longtime friend of the Brothers.
- + Joseph Francis Mahoney, father of Dr. Brian Mahoney, President of Bergen Catholic.
- + Veronica Dewey, first lay female teacher to minister at Brother Rice High School, Bloomfield Hills, MI.
- + William Reinckens, brother of Edmundian Bernie (Justin '56) Reinckens