



Autumn 2018

## Profiles of Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America

LIFE AS A CALL -- listening to youth

Life, as the unique vocation of each person, emerges as a central theme in the preparatory documents for the October 2018 Synod on Youth. His Holiness Pope Francis made it clear from the outset that he was asking the People of God to attune ourselves to the emerging voices of youth – those in the pews, those who have moved away, and those who never asked, or were asked, where God is in their lives.

The responses of youth from around the globe, on social media, on-line, in assemblies, and in person, have been gathered and shared with the Church Fathers as matters that need attention even, and perhaps especially, when they call the Church to task for failing to be inclusive, to be “catholic”, and to live the good news.

The five Brothers chosen for this edition of Profiles have made listening to youth, a wellspring of mission, spirituality, and life. Their current assignments have them scattered from coast to coast across the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North American Province. Brother Dominic Sanpietro, CFC, is a counselor at Tampa Catholic on the west coast of Florida. Brother Arthur Williams, CFC, teaches in southern border city of Brownsville, Texas. Brother W. Owen Cassidy, CFC, ministers in the north west coast city of Burnaby, British Columbia. Brother Thomas Collins, CFC, serves populations on the south side of Chicago, and Brother John Johnson, CFC, teaches psychology at Iona College in the east coast city of New Rochelle, New York. Each has been called to open his heart to Christ present and appealing to us in those we are called to serve.

### Brother Dominic Sanpietro, CFC



*I saw you coming. There is always time to listen. The desktop can wait.*

Brother Dominic Sanpietro's ministries have bridged the continents with significant engagements in both South and North America. Missionary, teacher, counsellor, and administrator, his life has been and continues to be

one of generous service. While in Peru for almost 30 years, one especially important ministry for him was the opportunity to help mentor post-college volunteers as they accompanied the Brothers in developing apostolates in some of the poorest sections of Peru.

He combined gentle patience and genuine interest, listening as these young women and men explored the depths of their motivations, fears, conflicts, and concerns about life and the choices offered to them. He often comments that he has received much more from them than he ever gave. In fact, he is still in contact with many of them after all these years.

Upon his return to the States in 2003, he ministered in Brownsville and San Antonio, Texas; in Burnaby, British Columbia, before coming to Tampa, Florida in 2009. Recently he considered leaving his role as a counselor at Tampa Catholic to return to the missions. Students at Tampa Catholic who find him a peaceful presence in their lives and welcoming listener, succeeded in convincing him that their needs are as real as those of the missions.



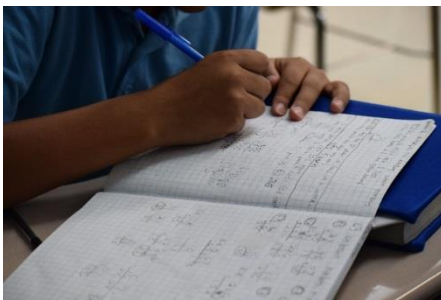
*A little bit of Christmas is welcome at any given moment. Br. Don Sanpietro and students at Tampa Catholic.*

This fall he will begin his 10th year at TC as a fulltime member of the Guidance Department. Interestingly, this is the longest period of time that he has ever been in one assignment during his 60+ years as a Christian Brother.

## Brother Arthur Williams, CFC

Brother Arthur offers his own profile:

*Seventeen years ago I arrived in Brownsville for the opening of Guadalupe Regional Middle School. Our ministry is sponsored by the Marist Brothers, Sisters of Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament and ourselves, the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers. Located on the US side of the contentious Texas-Mexico border I have been acutely aware of the tensions surrounding our border and the families living here who are considered to be of little or no value in our society. Our presence here has been modest yet a uniquely successful bridge to higher education for children whose living situations leave them at risk. Attending individually to our students and their families, I share a commitment with many deeply concerned faculty and benefactors to support, challenge and encourage attainment of two goals: college and heaven.*



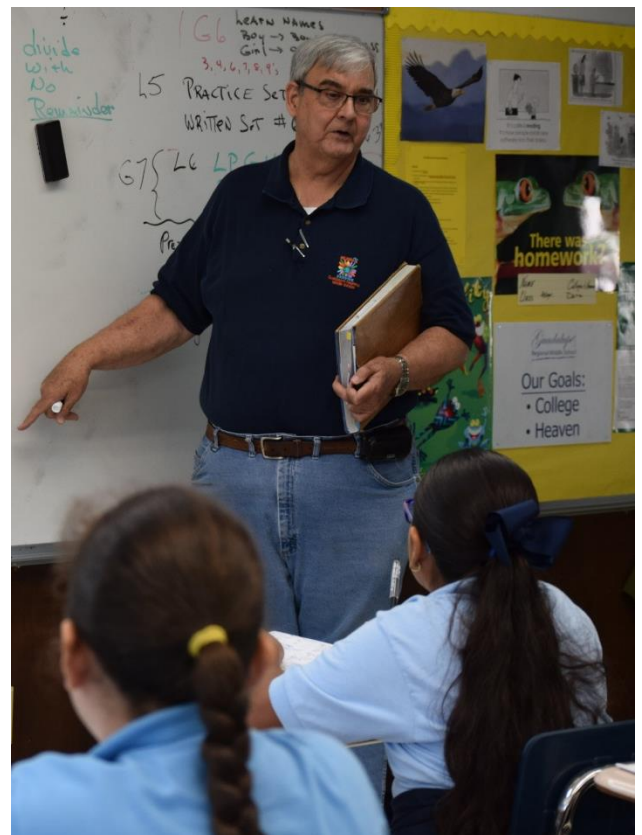
Guadalupe Middle School, Brownsville, Texas

### *Our Goal: College and Heaven*

I am both humbled and proud to be involved in a school which extends the evangelization that is occurring in many of the parishes our families attend. We attempt to provide a solid program to prepare our graduates for a successful academic high school experience.

Our graduates “do us proud”! Beyond our commitment to attend to preparing students for college preparatory programs, we also attend to “heaven”. Not only receiving instruction in their religion classes our students participate as a school in the celebration the sacraments especially of weekly celebration of the Eucharist.

Beyond the classroom some of our students also participate in a biweekly experience serving food at a shelter, collecting tabs from soda cans for Ronald McDonald house, and clothing for poor families. Once or twice a year we, as faculty, have helped students organize a ‘march’ around our neighborhood and downtown Brownsville. I was proud to see the positive spirit with which our students participated in a ‘protest’ in support of “Right to Life” and against “Gun Violence”, and willingly engaged in outreach to the poor. The list can go on. We do attempt to be of service to the local Church in the tradition of Edmund.





*As in most of our schools we have attempted to create a climate centered on “Gospel values.” I try to bring it to a level of their language – “we may not like one another, but we are called upon to be nice to each other.” Perhaps the most important part.*

*Please continue to pray for us and our ministry along the border. And especially pray for families who arrive at our borders seeking a safe place for their children. Many of these immigrant families do not make it to our doors.*

*And yes, there is also Math!*

*Blessings to all,*

*Arthur*

Students in Brother Arthur’s math classes know he will not allow them to settle for less than complete mastery as well a flare of originality in responding to his witty challenges.

## Brother W. Owen Cassidy, CFC

Brother Owen Cassidy came to his first mission with enthusiasm for teaching and a passion for coaching. Senior year teachers of literature reported that Br. Cassidy’s students distinguished themselves. Paragraphs assigned, corrected, and returned daily in Brother’s ninth year English class had honed their writing skills.

His assignments, including Vancouver College, Pius X in Montreal, St. Louis College in Victoria, and Holy Cross High School in St. John’s, gave full vent to his energies both as a teacher and a basketball coach. His teams earned championships from Newfoundland to British Columbia.

At one point in his career, he was asked to move into the role of mission and vocation director for the Canadian Province. Students, again from coast to coast, came to delight in his visits relaying the stories of the missions in the West Indies and inviting discernment on ways of making a difference in life.

Retired from formal teaching and coaching, Brother “Cass” and his camera are omnipresent in the halls and at the activities of St. Thomas More Collegiate High School. Prints of his pictures are everywhere throughout the school.





*I find it enjoyable and energizing to go into the school each day and interact with the students and teachers. The young people in particular react so positively when you show an interest in their lives and activities. Photography is a terrific hobby because it gives a doorway into every activity and allows you to record happy and life-affirming events. It preserves memories for the students and is also a lot of fun. Brother "Cass"*

The girls and boys understand that he has a keen eye for their moments of joy and achievement. Fist bumps with Brother Cass are a daily means of celebrating what students like best about their high school experience at St. Thomas More.

## Brother Thomas J. Collins, CFC

Brother Thomas Collins has set the standard for Advance Placement Chemistry at Brother Rice High School in Chicago, IL. His meticulous preparation, humorous presentation, and enthusiasm for the wonders of nature, launched the careers of generations of science students.

These days he is less present at school during the day but still quite engaged in the after school and weekend activities of the students.





Br. Collins and students on the last day of his Advanced Placement Class in Chemistry.

He too brandishes a long lensed camera as a ticket to whatever is happening at Br. Rice. From the day of entry as freshmen, though their years in class, sports, plays, concerts, and service work, students offer their smiles which he collects and then gifts to each as a graduation present.

Over the years Br. Tom nurtured relationships with community service projects on the south side of Chicago. Many of his students at Brother Rice found here their introduction to themes of giving back.

On retiring from full time teaching Brother became increasingly involved in the work of the St. Martin de Porres, House of Hope. Their mission: *Creating a safe, healing community where women and their children recover from substance abuse, address trauma and deal with mental illness.* Brother serves on the board of directors and teaches and coordinates the programs by which the recovering women complete their high school diplomas and qualify for career training opportunities. His willingness to attend to their stories opens doors to a new life.



## Brother John “Jerry” Johnson, CFC, Psy.D.



Brother J. J. Johnson, CFC, teaches general and child psychology at Iona College, and occasional courses on educational and health psychology. He brings to the classes a rich experience as a teacher, counsellor, and administrator at the schools of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers in New Jersey, New York, and in Peru.





Jerry was first attracted to the vocation of a Brother while at Bergen Catholic High School, where he encountered vowed men who were friendly people dedicated to education with a clear spiritual dimension. The lay members of the staff were also imbued with the spirit of an Edmund Rice Education and had a significant influence on Jerry and classmates. This influence was present, not only in the classroom, but also in the many activities that were developing in these early years at Bergen Catholic.



In recent years, Brother Jerry has become increasingly aware of the stress that descends on students, who, because of family situations, economic challenges, and uncertainty of their own abilities, are at risk of giving up.

On the first day of class, he invites students to add to the standard confidential information card anything else they would like to share with him. The response has opened ever more pressing calls for a receptive and listening heart. Presence and compassion, manifested in a willingness to be available, become the path to a dialog which is liberating for the students and an affirmation of the call to be brother.







*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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