



The Chronicle

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No ordinary voyage

By Father Kevin Murray, C.Ss.R.

There is a ferry boat service from St. Lucia to Dominica. Having lived and ministered in St. Lucia for the past six years, I have been to the ferry terminal in the capital city of Castries many times. Normal departure for the boat is 7 in the morning; check-in time begins two hours before leaving. The usual scene at the terminal includes a line of 75 or more people with a reasonable amount of luggage ready to make the trip.

On the morning of October 3, two weeks after the destruction caused by Hurricane Maria in Dominica, the scene for ferry boarding was anything but usual. More than 100 people waited in the queue. I arrived at port with parish worker Lambert Charlemagne, and we immediately noticed not only the larger number of people waiting to be checked in but also the amount of luggage—what seemed to be tons of baggage, including boxes, parcels, cases upon cases of water, a generator, full backpacks, duffle bags, and roll-on suitcases. All of it stood as testimony to the care and concern of those making the journey that morning.



This photo of the dining room of Holy Redeemer Retreat Center in Roseau, Dominica, shows a sample of the devastation Hurricane Maria caused to the island.

Once the boat company staff accommodated everyone and everything, which seemed nothing short of a small miracle, the ferry pushed off at 8:45 a.m. The nearly two-hour delay was accepted by all as necessary for our purpose. Onward we traveled to our first stop, Martinique. There a similar scene to that in St. Lucia ensued. Many people boarded, and additional relief supplies could be seen ready for tow. Clearly this trip was no ordinary voyage but a humanitarian mission by passengers and

crew alike.

Two hours after we left Martinique, Dominica came into full view. At that point the lush, green look characterizing the Nature Isle would usually come into focus—but not that day. The barren trees were striking. Brown sticks and mud from landslides replaced the usual vegetation. In place of the colorful landscape, we saw ripped roofs, displaced houses, debris from overflowed rivers, torn-out docks, and fallen timber

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Many of Dominica's roads were heavily damaged by the recent hurricane. Flickr photo by The Commonwealth, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/comsec/>

seemingly everywhere.

When we arrived in Roseau, Dominica's capital, we were not able to dock at the usual port as it too was damaged. We landed farther down at the freight docks, which seemed in relatively good shape. Upon entry we saw a bustling scene: containers being offloaded from cargo ships, relief volunteers and persons from various militaries near and far, dock workers, government personnel, backhoes, trucks, and a helicopter hovering overhead.

Gathering our duffle bags filled with supplies for the confreres at two communities, we moved off the dock to a meeting place under a large tent. Greet-

ing us was the friendly presence of Brother Gerard. He came with a borrowed vehicle since the road to Holy Redeemer Retreat Center, where he lives, was still blocked by felled trees and landslides. Our first stop would be to the community in Belfast.

The ride there would usually be rather simple, but again, nothing was ordinary. Most striking along the route were clothes drying on wind-torn rooftops, upturned vehicles, broken tree limbs, and shattered buildings. Yet rising above the destruction were deeper images of people moving on, doing their best to rise above the tribulation, and through it all to find new life

and hope.

Arriving in Belfast, we were happy to visit with the confreres. Although signs of the storm were everywhere, they acknowledged their good fortune and gratitude for the gift of life. Supplies were gathered in the garage for parishioners and would soon be collected by and for persons in need. From there we moved on to Eggleston for a visit and overnight stay with the Retreat Center community.

The road up the hillside, usually enveloped with lush greenery, was now lined with barren trees. Without the shrouding of leaves, our view of the valley revealed many homes in various states of

disrepair. We reached the entrance to the Retreat Center road, normally about a 10-minute drive, in twice the amount of time. Yet the blockage mentioned earlier allowed passage only on foot. Over tree limbs and brush, loose dirt and mud, dry patches, and a fresh spring offering respite, we made our way to the community.

Once we arrived, the greeting was worth the walk. A warm embrace by confreres and a local family given shelter spoke of the fact that we were home. A tour quickly revealed the destruction of buildings: in many places, roofs, windows, doors, and walls are gone. Yet again a spirit of gratitude and fraternity marked the welcome, and great fellowship soon followed.

Under the moonlit sky, over drinks and popcorn, we listened to harrowing accounts of the storm, the brutal winds and rains, and the movement of materials heard crashing through the night of Maria. To a person, each one who lived through the event said, “Hopefully, never again!” Transcending the dread of another, though, was a deep sense of faith and joy in communion with God and one another.

A calm night passed, and morning followed with rain. The journey back to the road on foot was a bit challenging yet fulfilling. A great night was spent with all present and the boost from the visit enlivened our steps. Over trees and limbs again, this time slipping in some

mud and going down knee deep! But it was a small consequence in the midst of greater suffering.

On the open road ahead, Father Alistair Elias stood waiting for us with borrowed bus. He graciously transported us to town but not before a change of clothes to shake off the dust and mud.

At the port we witnessed many of the same passengers preparing for boarding. The line was long, but this time the number of bags and parcels was noticeably less. Mission accomplished—not only for the Redemptorists but for many others who answered the call of service to others in need.

The sail back to St. Lucia was smooth. Going through Customs in Castries, I was asked if I were in transit. “No, I live here,”

I responded; “I am the parish priest in Vieux Fort.”

“Did you take relief supplies over there?” the officer asked. I took comfort in the fact that his question linked the Church with service. The answer is yes on the part of so many people.

The need is great, and the response continues on many levels. We left Dominica with a promise to return with more supplies. Through the generosity of many parishioners and the Baltimore Province, that promise was fulfilled the following week with a private vessel loaded with priority needs. Please God, the efforts will continue. ■

For more coverage of hurricane relief, turn to page 8.



Most roofs were damaged or destroyed in the storm. Flickr photo by The Commonwealth, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/comsec/>



A homecoming Mass was celebrated October 28 in the lower church of the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Father Patrick Woods was the main celebrant, and Father John Murray was the homilist.

125 years for OLPH Basilica in Brooklyn

This year marks 125 years of service to the people of God in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, through the venerable gray lady, Our Lady of Perpetual Help. On Saturday, October 28, as part of a yearlong jubilee celebrating the Redemptorist presence here, the parish welcomed back alumni of the parish and school. More than 500 people returned home to OLPH, including one woman who graduated from eighth grade in 1957.

“Home is where we belong,” said Father John McKenna, C.Ss.R., class of 1965. “Home is the place and the people who have loved us, who have shaped our lives, who have given us a

solid foundation for the rest of our lives.”

The homecoming celebration began at 3 p.m. with tours of the upper church. Having spent their adult years in other parishes and neighborhoods, many of those coming home said they had forgotten how glorious the Basilica was.

Margaret Tyndall, the current principal, was on hand at the school to welcome visitors home. A small desk from the '50s was used to remind former students what things looked like when upwards of 70 children stuffed the classrooms. Revealing how valuable the school and the parish facilities remain, the Regina

Opera Company practiced in the auditorium as children led tours of the school.

What followed was the real reason so many people felt refreshed, healed, and spiritually nourished at OLPH: the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the lower church. Father Patrick Woods, C.Ss.R., class of 1963, was the main celebrant for the Mass, and Father John Murray, C.Ss.R., class of 1961, preached.

Also attending the Mass were a number of Sisters of St. Joseph, Brentwood, N.Y., who taught at the school for many years, as well as a few Mercy Sisters. Both Father Woods and Father Murray emphasized how the church,

community, and school shaped and profoundly affected the lives of those who have been part of OLPH.

What is clearly seen, both then and now, is how proud, distinct immigrant and ethnic groups built and maintain this church. In the early days of OLPH they were Irish, German, and Italian immigrants; now they're Dominican, Mexican, and Chinese families and individuals searching for a spiritual home. Weekend Masses are celebrated in four languages.

If you went door-to-door, traveling just a few blocks north and south, east and west, you would encounter families from many countries. Their languages, food,

music, homes, and values are as diverse as anywhere you will find in the world. Yet the communities come together, unified and integrated, at Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Mary Beth Brolly, one of the main organizers, emigrated from Ireland. "This parish means everything to me," she said. "It's where I fell in love with God. It's where I learned to be kind to other people. It's where I learned to give back to the community. It's where I learned about family."

The celebration of 125 years of the men and women of Our Lady of Perpetual Help goes beyond nostalgia and sentiment to witness. OLPH continues to be a place of encounter with our Sav-

ior and his glorious mother!

As you stand on the corner of 59th Street and 5th Avenue, looking up at this magnificent church named for the Mother of God and in your mind's eye seeing the past century, you can truly say, "I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9).

For more information about the homecoming, see Marie Elena Giossi's article in *The Tablet*, the newspaper of the Diocese of Brooklyn: <https://thetablet.org/alumni-reunion-helps-olph-celebrate-its-125th-anniversary/>. ■



Flags from many nations fly in front of OLPH Basilica, showcasing the many cultures that make up the parish community.



Sunrise at San Alfonso Retreat House, Long Branch, N.J.

An update from San Alfonso Retreat House

By Father James Wallace, C.Ss.R.

Another year has passed at San Alfonso Retreat House in Long Branch, N.J., and this year almost 12,000 came for a retreat or a day or evening of prayer. The theme of our 2017 retreat weekends was *Walking in the Dark, Living in the Light*, given by the San Alfonso Redemptorist preaching team: Fathers John Collins, John McGowan, Kevin O’Neil, and Jim Wallace and Sister Gerrie Muller, S.S.J.

In addition to these weekend retreats, given to groups of women, men, and couples, we held other weekend retreats, including a dozen Matt Talbot retreats given by Father Gerry

Chylko and Sister Bruni, Serenity retreats, a movie retreat, and an upcoming silent Advent guided-retreat weekend.

But it is not just weekends that

*Sunrise, sunset,
sunrise, sunset,
swiftly fly the years,
one season
following another,
laden with happiness
and tears.*

—From “Sunrise, Sunset,”
lyrics by Sheldon Harnick

offer an opportunity for sustained prayer and reflection. At our beautiful site we also give week-long and day retreats for religious

sisters and priests, silent directed retreats, individual private retreats, a clergy institute, and retreat experiences for other groups.

Our retreatants this year came not only from the East Coast and Southern states but also from as far away as Ohio, Illinois, California, and Hawaii. We frequently welcome retreatants from Redemptorist parishes. This year we were especially delighted to have a busload of 36 women come from OLPH Mission Church in Boston for the final women’s retreat in November, accompanied by parish priest and OLPH novena preacher Father Philip Dabney, C.Ss.R., and Father Thawee Cook Suwannasin, C.Ss.R., of

Thailand, in residence at Mission Church while pursuing a doctorate.

Although we do offer a certain number of scholarships and partial discounts for those who cannot afford to pay our suggested stipend (\$220 for a weekend), we would ask every Redemptorist parish or one or more organized groups in a parish or individuals who can afford to do so to (co-) sponsor a retreat.

Next to the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, the most beloved image of Mary at San Alfonso is a bronze statue near our prayer garden of Mary holding her infant son. A retreatant captured its beauty at sunrise.

Work has already begun on our team retreat for 2018 under the theme Living From the Heart. Weekends begin February 23-25. For a schedule of what 2018 has to offer, visit <https://sanalfonso retreats.org/>. ■



Top: A retreatant captured this statue of Mary and Jesus at sunset. Middle: Three dozen women from Mission Church in Boston came for a retreat in November, accompanied by Fathers Dabney and Cook. Bottom: Begonias line the path to San Alfonso's crucifix, flanked by brick panels bearing the text *Into your hands I commend my spirit*.



From Trinidad and Tobago to Dominica with love

By *Frater Ako Walker, C.Ss.R.*

On September 22, 2017, a few days after Hurricane Maria battered Dominica, the parish of St. Theresa in Barataria held a historic meeting of Dominicans living in Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting was chaired by Father Elton Letang, C.Ss.R., Father Cornelius Phillip, FMI, a Dominican priest working in Trinidad, and other prominent Dominican/Trinidadian citizens.

The main item on the agenda was how Dominicans living in Trinidad could help their family, friends, and other loved ones back home. Nearly 100 Dominicans were present along with other well-wishers from the parish who were in solidarity with our sisters and brothers from the Nature Isle.

Before strategizing, participants were given a chance to update those present about whether they had heard from their families and the status of their homes, etc. Many of the stories were very painful to listen to since at that time many people had not been able to receive information from their families. One woman said she had lost three members of her family who had been swept away by the raging waters. Even the Redemptorists had

no knowledge as to whether the communities of Belfast and Eggleston were still standing.

After careful deliberation, it was decided that the parish would be a collection point for tinned food, baby items, medicine, water, and other non-perishable materials. In the ensuing days the generosity of those in the parish and other citizens was evinced by the quantity and quality of items donated.

The parish was able to make two trips of a large truck filled with donations and at least two more trips with a smaller vehicle. We partnered with St. Finbar Parish in Diego Martin to ship the stuff across to Dominica. Many parishioners also made financial contributions to the cause. Even as this article is being written, donations are still being delivered to the parish to send to Dominica. A Facebook page was also created to disseminate information about the parish activities.

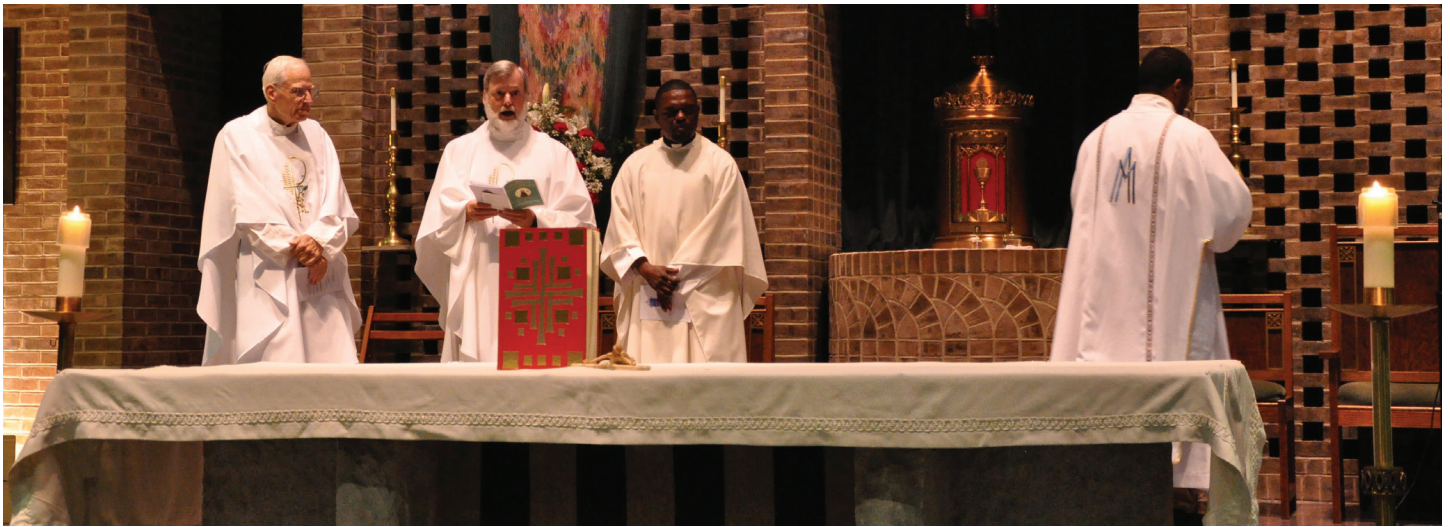
Another project the parish began entailed financial support to Dominican tertiary-level students studying in Trinidad and Tobago. With the blessings of Father Letang and Taihisa Hill-Guye, the sister of Father Peter Hill, we

were able to find donors who committed themselves to supporting some students until May 2018.

This initiative became necessary because many of the students depended on monthly remissions from their parents for upkeep, food, and other needs associated with their studies. After Hurricane Maria many parents were unable to work, and some lost their jobs.

Again, many parishioners were excited to be part of this effort, as they understood the pain of the students who were entering a period of uncertainty. Father Letang also approached the Redemptorists, who made a very large contribution to the fund, thus increasing the number of students who are receiving assistance. Further, we were able to get other corporate citizens to come forward and assist the students.

At various Masses after the Hurricane, Father Letang praised the parishioners and people of Trinidad and Tobago for their love, kindness, and unfettered generosity. He said he was happy to be a Dominican living in Trinidad and Tobago and invoked God's continued blessings on the country. ■



This year marks the 300th anniversary of the devotion to Our Lady of Aparecida, the principal patroness of Brazil. Father Charles Hergenroeder, C.Ss.R. (at left), recently took part in a celebration held at the Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida in Aparecida, São Paulo, Brazil.



His Excellency Auxiliary Bishop Neal J. Buckon (center), vicar for the Western Region of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, and Father James Dowds, C.Ss.R. (right of bishop), the Catholic priest at Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS), China Lake, California, joins 44 recently confirmed members of Our Lady of the Desert Parish on September 15. Father Dowds, along with Alicia Conliffe (not shown), instructed the students every week for more than a year. After the confirmation Mass, a reception attended by more than 300 parishioners was held at the East Wing of the station's All Faith Chapel.

News briefs

New books by Father Billy
 Father Dennis Billy, C.Ss.R., is the author of three new books. In mid-November *Jesus, the New Adam: Humanity's Steadfast Hope* was published by Wipf and Stock. *Going Beyond the Wound: A Spirituality for Men* was pub-

lished December 1 by New City Press.

Meeting Jesus on the Road to Emmaus: An Invitation to Friendship, Eucharist, and Christian Community will be published in mid-December by Twenty-Third Publications.

Father Kingsbury reappointed
 Father Jack Kingsbury was recently reappointed coordinator for the North American Conference of Redemptorists by the Roman General Council. The conference's website can be found at redemptorists.com. ■