

Celebrating
2008-09



friends

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STEPPING UP AND STEPPING DOWN

Dear friends,

This New Year is a time for change both for the country and The Society of St. James. As the current director I will be handing over the baton to the Director-elect, Fr. Kevin Hays, at the Annual General Meeting to be held from the 9th to the 12th of February in Lima, Peru. Fr. Kevin will be the twelfth director in the fifty-first year of the Society's history.

I hand over with mixed feelings and emotions. On the one hand I feel grateful for having had the privilege and opportunity of serving the Society for the past three years and communicating with you, the many "friends", who continually support us with your prayers and donations. On the other hand change is never easy. I will miss the camaraderie of our loyal and hard working staff, the generosity of the board of directors and fundraising committees, friends of St. Stephens Church, and the support of the Archdiocese of Boston. A special word of thanks goes to His Eminence Cardinal Seán O'Malley and Most Reverend Robert Hennessey for their many acts of kindness. To express my sense of gratitude there is only one word in the Catholic faith which covers it adequately, viz the word "Eucharist" which means thanksgiving. As the Lord's humble priestly servant I will be pleased to offer you His gift of thanksgiving for all you have given to the Society, and to me personally during these past three years.

Directors come and directors go but the work of the Society continues. It is my great pleasure to introduce to you your new director, Fr. Kevin, who hails from the Archdiocese of Chicago. Indeed, Chicago is by no means a "mean city" that can boast of two great men coming out of there this year, one to serve the country, the other to serve the Society. Fr. Kevin was born and raised on the west side of Chicago, the youngest of a family of five. His parents, the late James and Waonita Hays, hail from Sedalia, Missouri. Having attended primary and high school in the neighborhood he became an undergraduate at Loyola University, Chicago, securing a B.A. in English studies. Afterwards he



Director Msgr. Finbarr O'Leary and Director-Elect Fr. Kevin Hays

entered St. Mary of the lake Seminary, Mundeline, Illionis, where he studied theology for a Master in Divinity degree. He was ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Chicago on the 11th of May, 1977.

From the beginning of his ministry he was concerned for his need to learn Spanish and get to know something about the Latino culture. To this end he took a course in the study of the language at the Instituto de Lenguaje Cuanahuac. He spent the early days of his priesthood ministering to the Latino community. Six of these years were spent in a Puerto Rican parish and thirteen years in two different Mexican parishes as pastor. Before he joined the Society on the 23rd of June, 1997, he served for one year as co-pastor in one of the archdiocesan mission outreach parishes in Quechultenango, Guerrero, Mexico. His first placement in

Peru was in Moquegua where he founded the new parish of San Francisco together with a pastoral plan of developing small Christian communities.

Fr. Kevin is no stranger to Boston, having spent a year as assistant director to Msgr. Joseph Sheilds in 2000, working mainly in the fields of recruiting and fundraising.



Fr. Kevin, following the ruins of the earthquake.

Afterwards he returned to the missions and served for an additional eight years in Moquegua, Peru. There, on June 23rd, 2001, a day never to be forgotten, he was called upon to deal with the aftermath of an earthquake registering 8.4 on the Richter scale which leveled 80% of the city. This involved providing immediate emergency relief services and in the long term the supervision and administration of reconstruction projects. With funding from personal friends and the “friends” of the Society, 280 prefabricated wooden homes for homeless people were constructed and eight community dining centers were built to provide immediate relief. At the level of the parish Fr. Kevin took responsibility for the construction of a new parish church on a difficult site that involved the building of retaining walls. On the same site he also built a rectory and a parish meeting hall, which means that the native Peruvian priest who replaced him will have no concerns about the infrastructure of the parish.

Fr. Kevin also concerned himself with the care of abandoned children. One of the casualties of the earthquake was the structural damage caused to the local orphanage, which made it impossible to continue on the site. He took responsibility for the construction of temporary facilities on the farm owned by the orphanage as well as the building of a bakery and a retreat house. Following the request of the Bishops’ Conference to implement a continent wide permanent mission, with the help of his trained home visitors he conducted a demographic analysis of 34% of the population. With his mission complete he celebrated his final liturgy on the 5th of October, 2008. All in all he has spent ten years on the Peru mission with the St. James Society.

Each and every director brings his own gifts to the Society. The miracle of the loaves and fishes teaches us the message that the Lord uses whatever gifts we bring, and He provides us with the shortfall. These are difficult economic times in which we live. Everyone in one way or another is affected, not least the poor who depend almost entirely on the Society’s priestly services of evangelization and charitable works. This situation may tempt some of us to say that we can no longer afford to donate to the Society. Yet our faith in the Word of God tells us that whatever is given in God’s name returns to us in the measure of a hundredfold.

In writing my final issue of the “Friends” I would ask you all to continue to provide my successor with the same help and support you gave to me during my tenor of office. I will be returning to the ranks as a missionary in Santo Domingo de Los Colorados, Ecuador. There I hope to establish a L’Arche community for abandoned mentally handicapped people. Instead of saying goodbye let my parting greeting be *au revoir*, knowing that we will meet again, if not in this life certainly in the next.

Yours Sincerely in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Finbarr O'Leary".

Msgr. Finbarr O’Leary



Donor’s Corner

December, 2009

Dear Finbarr,

Thank you for your letter. So sorry to hear that you are stepping down. You have done such an extraordinary job as Director. You will be greatly missed by one and all.

May God bless you in whatever you may now do for the good of the Church. The Lord will bless you as you have blessed us.

Peace,

Fr. John Maddigan

Dear John,

Thank you for your kind letter and generous comments on my directorship of the Society.

Each of us by God’s grace contributes our “grano de arena” but it is the Lord who gives the increase. May I take this opportunity of thanking you publicly for all you contribute to the Society and its members.

Sincerely,

*Msgr. Finbarr O’Leary
Director*

NUGGETS FROM THE ARCHIVES

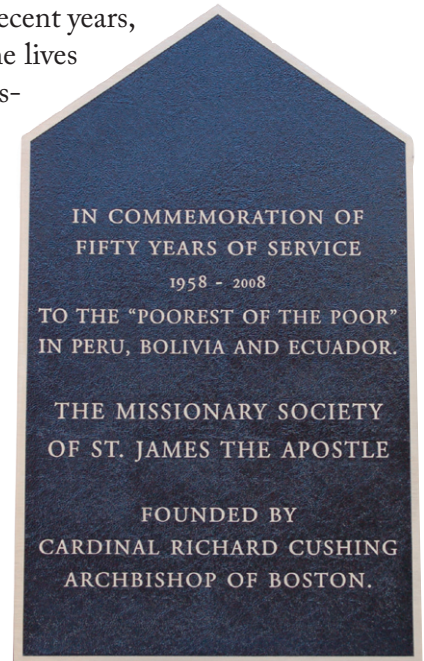
HISTORY IN THE MAKING

The history of the Society during the past 50 years, ever since its first members arrived in Peru, cannot be recounted in isolation but must be told in context of the socio political and religious reality of each of these countries at any given time. The missionary stepping on new soil needs to be aware that she or he is walking on holy ground where God has trod long before. Hence the policy that all new applicants are required to spend five months at the Maryknoll Institute in Cochabamba where they learn the language, the culture, and the history of the country in which they are to work as future missionaries. Faith, if it is to have deep roots, must be enculturated. The missionary soon begins to recognize that he has as much to learn as he hopes to teach. Some of the lessons the Society has learned over the years are the values enshrined in family catechetics, that faith must be linked to justice and peace, and the impact of globalization especially in the need to protect the environment.

The Society has pioneered the introduction of family catechetics. Thanks to the vision of Fr. Joe McCarthy in Peru, and Frs. Jim Cashin and Joe O'Riordan in Ecuador who, dissatisfied with the traditional practice of preparing children for the sacraments, looked for an alternative model elsewhere. They discovered family catechetics that had been developed in Chile for some years. It focused on the evangelization of the whole family. This approach served to combine adult education of parents in the faith as well as their inclusion in the evangelization of their children. This model, based on the power of bonding and attachment, serves not just the instruction of the child but also his formation in the faith. At last our members had found a medium for the message of the Gospel that complied with the expectation of the rite of Baptism that parents should be "the first educators of their children in the faith." While the Church in general is still rather slow to adopt this model of evangelization, the Fifth Conference of the Latin American Bishops held at Aparecida in Brazil in 2007 recommended the implementation of family catechetics.

Faced with appalling poverty, from the very beginning our missionaries felt constrained to provide relief for their people, from the pains of malnutrition and sickness to the ignorance of illiteracy. The context of family catechetics and base communities provided a useful context in which to raise awareness on the issues of human rights and social justice. In the eighties Frs. Martin Kelly and Tom Heneghan provided a skills course for women who were suffering from domestic violence. Lacking even a basic education, many Latinos believe that it is their destiny in life to suffer. This is particularly true of women who sacrifice themselves to provide food for their husbands and children. The incidence of death in child-

birth, while dropping in recent years, still continues to claim the lives of many women. Increasingly, through education, and economic independence through the provision of micro-credit, women's self esteem is growing and they are taking responsibility for their own lives as well as occupying positions of leadership in the community. The problem of violence continues to be a symptom of poverty, but many of these women are learning the skills of nonviolence and how to access the protection of the law as a peaceful tool to defend their human rights.



The 50th anniversary plaque.

Balancing the need to protect the needs of the poor and the environment, many of these problems require global solutions. The U.N. recognition of the rights of small nation states serves to protect a country's right to self government without outside interference. Nevertheless, some of the problems we face today, such as the protection of the environment, require world wide united action. There is a need to reduce our dependence on oil but the reliance of alternative fuels such as ethanol that is dependent on the production of maize has implications for access of cheaper food for the poor. Demand for more land for cultivation means putting at risk the rain forests of the Amazon and other parts of the third world. These are the lungs of the world without which we cannot live. No one nation should have to take responsibility for the resolution of these global problems, rather the brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind need to work together.

The Catholic Church, which is one of the most globalized institutions in the world, has on offer the valuable message of its social teaching based on the Gospel, but before it is lightly to be listened to she will need to convince by providing good example. Many years ago Fr. Pashby, on his arrival to his treeless parish in Chumbivilcas in the high Andes of Peru, began to sow trees that today adorn the hillsides. At an international level the Church has already begun to provide good example by declaring the Vatican an environmentally friendly city, placing solar panels on the roofs of its buildings.

PEOPLE OF THE MONTH

JOINING THE RANKS

The health and vigor of any religious community or society can be said to be judged by the admission of new members. Following this criteria the Society of St. James the Apostle can be regarded as strong and vigorous in that it has admitted to its membership seven new priests this past year. Three of these priests are what we describe as “retreads”, in that they had been members of the Society in previous years and are returning for another term of missionary commitment. They are Frs. Michael Ryan, Denis O’Brien, and Dominic Quinn. Four others, Frs. Geoffrey Adolfo, Heiko Junge, P.J. Hughes and Fr. Joseph Plumb, became members for the first time. However, one of these new admissions, Fr. Joseph Plumb has been on mission in Iquitos Peru for a period of eight years and throughout this time has been closely connected with the Society.

The Sending on Mission Mass has been a feature of the induction process of new members to the Society from the very beginning. The liturgy of the Mass provides the new members with a rite of passage of leaving their diocese of origin to join the Society for period of time to work in the missions.

Previously, when the Archdiocese of Boston was providing a number of priests for service on the missions, it was customary to celebrate the “Sending on Mission Mass” in the studios of Boston Catholic Television in the presence of the Cardinal Archbishop. In recent years these liturgical events have been celebrated in the diocese of origin in the presence of the local bishop, priests of the diocese, and family and friends. As Director I felt that it was one of my duties to attend. My presence aimed to provide a tangible link with the Society in accepting the new member into our ranks, and assuring both family and friends that we would look after their loved one while on mission.

Recently implemented policies on the care of new members during their period of transition from their diocese of origin to life on the missions serves to reduce the level of



From Left: Fr. Denis O'Brien, Msgr. Finbarr O'Leary, Cardinal Sean O'Malley, Fr. P.J. Hughes and Fr. Dominic Quinn (Photo: Credit to Neil McCabe, The Pilot)

stress involved in making that journey. The new missionary has to contend with the difficulty of learning a new language and coping with the demands of a new culture, and for this he needs constant support, especially in the early years. New members are required to spend a month in the country in which they are being assigned before going on to language school. During this time they are introduced to their mentor who accompanies them on their way through language school and receives them on their return to mission. There, the new recruit is accompanied for at least six months before he receives a permanent assignment.

Many people question the wisdom of allowing priests to go on mission when there is a growing shortage on the home missions. My experience as director tells me that some diocesan priests are called to be missionaries at least for a certain period of their priesthood. Missionary experience provides a priest with new skills that can be enriching to his priesthood. Many returning missionaries are equipped with language and culture, which have prepared them to assume the pastoral care of the Latino community. We are reminded by successive popes that the Church by its very nature is missionary, which means that we must not deny a priest who is called to serve on the foreign missions with the opportunity of fulfilling their missionary vocation.