

FRIARWORKS

FRANCISCAN MINISTRY & MISSION

THE FRANCISCAN FRIARS OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PROVINCE • FALL 2007 • VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1

Dancing in the Streets



Fr. Mark with a neighbor.



Block party guests.



A clown makes balloon animals.

Photos by Br. Scott Obrecht, O.F.M.

The music blared and the sun beat down on the crowd. A woman in a wheelchair held her arms high, swinging and clapping to the beat of the song. The fact that she had no legs did not stop her from joining in the festivities.

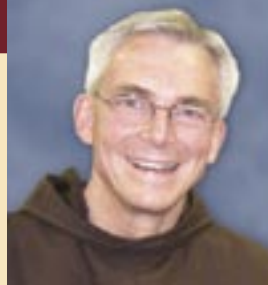
The line for hamburgers and hot dogs stretched for half a block. Children lined up to get their faces painted. A clown made balloon hats and animals. Ice cream stations were busy. Even the parish nurses had a line of people waiting for a blood pressure check or to ask questions.

The mixture of cultures, races, economic backgrounds and ages all celebrated what they have in common — being children of God. “The friars are not here to serve the parish, but to serve the poor,” declares Fr. Mark. “The parish is insistent about this.” When this Christian community gathers for Eucharist, we come together at the table of the Lord to be in communion with him and with each other.”

An elderly man, enjoying his hamburger, called one of the friars over to his table. The friar was asked, “What Order do you belong to?” The friar responded, “The Franciscans.” There was silence, a bite of the hamburger, then, with a toothless smile and a twinkle in his eye he said, “Thank you!”

St. Aloysius Parish, which sits in the middle of a depressed neighborhood in downtown Detroit, serves the spiritual needs of the local Catholic community and the physical needs of the many homeless, poor and elderly in the area. The friars also run the St. Aloysius Community Center. Friars Mark Soehner, Alex Kratz and Tod Lavery call St. Al’s home.

St. Aloysius Church, known as “Everybody’s Church,” hosted its annual block party on Father’s Day this year. The church has sponsored one each summer since 1998. When St. Al’s pastor, Fr. Mark, proclaimed, “The Mass is ended, go in peace,” the church doors flung open, the DJ started the music and the party began!



Fr. Jim

DEAR FRIENDS,

Fall 2007

As you know by now the Franciscan Development Office and Franciscan Missionary Union (FMU) have merged into **Friar Works/Franciscan Ministry & Mission**. The transition has been very smooth and Br. Scott and I are pleased with the results thus far.

I never cease to marvel at the wonderful work that my Franciscan community does, at the wonderful people with whom we work and minister, and at the tremendous love and support that so many folks show toward us. And in my marveling I am in awe of God’s terrific blessings on us and me.

In this issue you will read about the annual block party in downtown Detroit, another mission trip to Jamaica by some young adults, and more. This newsletter is our way of keeping you informed of what we do and how you help us to do it. We very much want to share with you the good news of our province and Order.

Br. Scott, the former director of the FMU, and I are counting on your continued support of our ministries and missions. We — all the friars — are keeping you in our prayers!

Sincerely,

Fr. James Bok, O.F.M., Director

Fr. Bob Bruno, O.F.M., has been a chaplain in the Air Force for 27 years. Fr. Bob started as a staff chaplain. He was promoted to colonel in 2000.

Last year Fr. Bob was appointed chaplain to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, D.C. "The job at the Pentagon is very exciting," he writes. There are many facets to his work at the senior levels of the chaplain services for the Army, Navy and Air Force, as well as the Archdiocese for Military Services and the Department of Defense. Fr. Bob was recently elected to the Presbyteral Council of the Military Archdiocese.

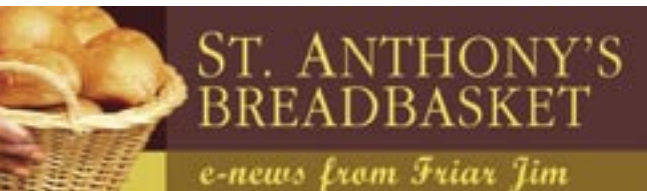
"My Italian grandmother once called me a gypsy," says Bob whose ministry has taken him to countries in almost every time zone. It has also equipped him to deal with nearly anyone in almost any situation which probably explains why he has been so successful. Bob sums up his thoughts about his ministry easily, "Service members and

their families endure a lot and contribute



so much to our Church and nation. They deserve our very best spiritual care and pastoral support."

Left to right: Fr. Bob, Gen. Peter Pace, Chair of the Joint Chiefs, Fr. Fred Link, O.F.M., Provincial Minister



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MEET A MISSIONARY

In many ways Fr. Anselm Weber, O.F.M., was a pioneer, serving in the Wild West among native peoples once regarded with fear and suspicion by many Americans. In 1898, at the request of Mother Katherine Drexel (now St. Katherine), he was among the first missionaries sent by the province to minister to the Navajos in Arizona.

Working with friars Juvenal Schnorbus and Placidus Buerger, Anselm established the first permanent Catholic mission at St. Michaels, Arizona. An inhospitable environment, it was made harder by Navajo distrust and fear of whites. Anselm often traveled to Washington to help secure Native American land rights and keep peace. He worked hard to preserve Navajo culture and learn the language, earning their trust.

This "Apostle to the Navajo" realized that bringing Christianity to Native Americans would take place over many years and continue after his lifetime. He was content to sow the seeds and let others reap the harvest.



Left to right: Friars Juvenal, Placidus and Anselm

DEAR FRIENDS OF FRIAR WORKS,



Br. Scott

Fall 2007

About three years ago, Fr. Jim began talking about combining the fundraising efforts of the Franciscan Development Office (FDO) and Franciscan Missionary Union (FMU). After working with benefactors, friars and others, his dream became a reality on July 1 with the new fundraising office, Friar Works/Franciscan Ministry & Mission.

During my 17 years with the FMU, I've been blessed to make dreams come true. I've seen the lives of people improve. I've seen the friars "in the trenches" with our less fortunate sisters and brothers. I've seen the smiles of those who have benefited from our good works. These dreams could not have come true without your support.

Our ministry and mission are unchanged. Our need for your support is unchanged. I will continue to work with our missionaries and with Fr. Jim as he seeks the funds necessary to support them. To the former benefactors of the FMU, keep supporting our missions. To the former FDO benefactors, don't forget our Franciscan missions. God bless you!

Sincerely,

Brother Scott, OFM

**Br. Scott Obrecht, O.F.M.,
Franciscan Mission Office Director**

We're Back and We're on a Mission...



The back of the t-shirts the Roger Bacon High School kids wore for the mission trip. This one shows the products of their hard work — it is sweaty and dirty!



A VBS student displays a craft.

include 17. Barb, a former elementary school teacher, was well-armed with crafts, Bible themes and fun activities.

I was assigned to assist in building a house for parishioner, Mr. Morris, along with Karen, Brad, Mike, Jay and Br. Tom from Mary Gate of Heaven. Br. Louie from St. Joseph in Savanna-la-mar organized the building.

Mr. Morris, evicted from his previous house, was given a small piece of land in a little junk yard to build his 12 foot by 12 foot house. It was hot, sweaty, dirty work, and I loved every minute of it!



Fr. Jim, in orange shirt, and others work on the frame.

Brad earned the “pet-name” (Jamaican for nickname) “Ty” when he suggested that Ty Pennington, host of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, had better take note. I’m not sure the real Ty has anything to worry about but Mr. Morris could not have been happier or more grateful.



Fr. Jim, left, blesses the newly-built house to Mr. Morris, center.

by Fr. Jim Bok, O.F.M., Friar Works/Franciscan Ministry & Mission director ...proclaimed their orange t-shirts. Last Easter, 13 students from Cincinnati’s Roger Bacon High School volunteered in our Jamaican missions. This summer six of them wanted to go back.

On Saturday, July 28, students Laura Brichler, Megan Gierhart, Chelsey Ahlers, Brad Evans, Jay Kearney and Mike Post, and Roger Bacon’s outreach director, Barb Coyle, and her sister, Karen, were met at the Montego Bay airport by Br. Vince and me.

On Monday we began our work — building the Kingdom and building a house. Barb, Laura, Megan and Chelsey oversaw Vacation Bible Camp at Mary Gate of Heaven parish. They started the week with ten children but it quickly grew to



Mario and Brad

None of us were untouched by our mission venture. Perhaps Brad’s blog captures something of what is in all of our hearts.

Today was bittersweet because it was the last day building Mr. Morris’ house. Paint went up and detailing took place. Glass windows went in and the slats below painted white. We encountered a fierce afternoon storm putting a halt to the outside work.

While others painted, I explored the neighborhood. I quickly made friends with 10-year-old Mario. I am sure he was attracted to our worksite by the food because once offered a meal, he never refused! I gladly offered my lunch. We shared Doritos and stories about our lives. He lived down the road with his mother, aunt and grandmother where they run a guesthouse for tourists. Mario was fascinated to hear I would be beginning my first year of college in a month. He said college wasn’t for him, but I encouraged him to get an education and a good job.

Mario will be in the sixth grade this school year, and his least favorite subject is math. Wanting to help, I insisted we practice multiplication facts. Mario was discouraged at first, but after about an hour he seemed to catch on.

I then confessed I had never seen a cricket match, much less know how to play it. Now it was my turn to learn. Maria told me all about cricket, and I asked him to give me a demonstration. I gave him \$100 Jamaican (about \$1.50 in U.S. dollars) and told him to buy a ball. With help, I made a bat out of some scrap wood. When Mario returned with the ball, so did the rain. It didn’t bother us, and I savored the moment. We played cricket in an empty lot and got drenched! Later, I revealed the gifts I had brought from home for the neighborhood boys — squirt guns!

As we packed up the supplies and blessed Mr. Morris’ new home, it became clear to Mario and me that we would be parting soon. We talked again about the importance of doing well in school. I told Mario to keep the cricket ball and bat so he could play with his friends. I wrote our names on the bat so he could remember the day. We took pictures and hugged. As we parted, I saw tears in Mario’s eyes. I reminded him we would meet again next summer.

My time with Mario was almost as meaningful as my time spent building the house. This trip experience means so much to me. I love Jamaica and hold a special place in my heart for all the people there.

It's a Wonderful Life



In July we were privileged to welcome five postulants to St. Anthony Friary in Cincinnati. These men will live in our community and learn about the Franciscan way of life for the next year. Pictured, left to right, at a Fourth of July picnic are:

Roger Lopez (28), Pensacola, FL; Dan Helfrich, (32), Litchfield, IL; Tim Tran (26), Apple Valley, MN; Cliff Hennings (22), Richmond, TX and Josh van Cleef (22), Hazel Park, MI.



Richard Goodin, left, and Dennis Geib, postulants in 2006, have moved to Cedar Lake, Indiana, to begin their novitiate year. Pray for these men and all those in formation as they continue to pursue Franciscan life and prepare for ministry in the Church. And pray that more young men might consider our way of life.

Bad Boy to Brother

Br. Philip Wilhelm, O.F.M., is a missionary in the Philippines and is dedicated to helping folks with Hansen's disease (leprosy).

Fifteen year old Anselmo Ramirez, a street kid with leprosy, was always in trouble. He was eventually busted for stealing and sentenced to eight years in jail. With the urging of the warden and guards, a judge stepped in and entrusted Anselmo to Br. Philip.

"The Martinian Brothers arranged for him to live with them and be a patient at the leprosarium," writes Br. Philip. "With good medical care and doses of brotherly love Anselmo began to change," said Br. Phil. In time, Anselmo asked to join the Martinian community and was accepted as a candidate. On April 16, Anselmo entered the novitiate and received the Dominican habit. "I was probably happier that day than Anselmo was. Seeing this young man so transformed is almost a miracle," enthused Br. Philip.



Brs. Anselmo and Philip



by Fred McCarthy



Br. Andy, left, with Provincial Fr. Fred Link.

Welcome Br. Andrew

General Minister Br. Jose Carballo has appointed Br. Andrew Brophy as general visitor. Br. Andy is a member of the Assumption Province headquartered in Franklin, Wisconsin. As general visitor, Br. Andy will visit with each member of our province, oversee leadership elections, present a state of the province report and serve as president of the provincial chapter meeting in May, 2008.

IRA Rollover

No, this is not a command to my dog, Ira. It is an opportunity for you, though. The Pension Protection Act of 2006, passed by Congress, changed the rules for charitable gifts made from individual retirement accounts (IRAs). If you are 70 ½ or older, the Federal government now permits you to rollover (donate) amounts from your IRA to a charity without claiming any income and thus avoiding additional income tax. These tax-free rollover gifts can be any amount up to \$100,000 in one year. This is a great way, if you have an IRA, to make a gift to the Franciscans in 2007. Consult your financial advisor or the manager of your IRA account.

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