

FRIARWORKS

FRANCISCAN MINISTRY & MISSION

THE FRANCISCAN FRIARS OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PROVINCE • SPRING 2008 • VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3

23,196 Miles of Fraternity and Good Will

By Jim Bok, O.F.M.

On December 28 Fr. Fred, my provincial, and I left Cincinnati on a fraternal visit to Franciscans in Asia. Three weeks later, after immersion in different cultures, eating different food, sometimes bathing out of a bucket, and forever changed, we returned home.

Mumbai (Bombay), India

We arrived in Mumbai in the wee hours of December 30. After a cold beer and 22 hours on the road, we went to bed. Awaking to roosters and Christmas carols in the church next door, we found buckets of water outside our rooms as the pump had failed. Nothing like a cold bucket-bath to get you over jet-lag!

Br. Joseph Karimalayil, the Superior General of the Missionary Brothers of St. Francis, and a friend, was our host. The work of the Brothers is impressive; an orphanage with 140 boys, a school with 7,500 students—to mention two of the eight operations on the campus. Fred and I enjoyed the food, but stuck with the familiar fork and spoon rather than fingers.

Karachi, Pakistan

Fred and I arrived in Karachi on January 2, after much discussion about Benazir Bhutto's recent assassination and our safety. Because of the civil unrest, the assembly of the friars had been postponed and our visit shortened.

The Muslim call to prayer at dawn, amplified from a dozen surrounding Mosques, hundreds of cawing crows, our brother roosters doing their thing, and the dog bay-

ing, made sleeping past 6 a.m. impossible. Morning Prayer and Mass, with the seven young friars in post novitiate formation and four novices,

were touching in the lovely little chapel—no kneelers or chairs—sitting on the floor is the custom.

A great fraternal gathering with singing, dancing, and food concluded our visit which was uplifting and supportive; we

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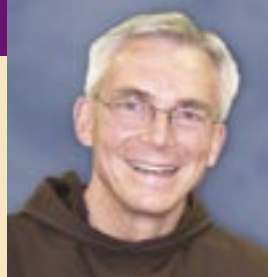
Friar Louis, right, welcomes Friars Jim and Fred to Karachi.



Friar George presents Fred with a quilted image of St. Francis made by the novices.



Friars Jim, left, and Fred, center, and Br. Matthew with some orphans from St. Francis Boys Home, Mumbai.



Fr. Jim

DEAR FRIENDS,

A key reason my job is so enjoyable has to do with those with whom I work. One such person is my next door neighbor, Br. Scott Obrecht, O.F.M.

Br. Scott has directed our Mission Office for 18 years. We worked closely together regarding fundraising for and promotions of the missions. Scott has raised millions of dollars for missions of the province and the Order, and he has been a great animator of missionary evangelization to God's people and the friars.

I believe Scott's greatest contribution to the missions, however, has been his personal care for each of our missionaries. He stays in touch and is solicitous of their needs all the time. When they have their "home visits," Scott is right there to welcome them, assist them and care for them.

Br. Scott will be leaving the Mission Office in mid-May. After a sabbatical year he will receive a new assignment. Thanks to Scott for his faithful and generous service to our missionaries and the province. I want to thank him, too, for his wonderful cooperation over the years. I will miss his joyful spirit and enthusiasm. We, in Friar Works, wish him every blessing!

Sincerely,

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



Br. Norbert

Protector, sentinel, custodian and warden: that pretty much sums up the everyday duties of Br. Norbert Bertram. In his role as Local Minister (Superior) of St. Clement Friary

in St. Bernard, Ohio, “No two days are alike,” says Norbert, whose organizational skills and jack-of-all-trades abilities serve him well in one of the most demanding positions in the Province. The upkeep of our largest friary is in itself a full-time job, but Norbert is also responsible for the well-being of its 18 residents, most of whom are retired. “The Local Minister has to be in tune with the physical and spiritual needs of the senior friars,” he says, and that includes anything from fixing a leaky faucet—he’s also a carpenter, plumber and electrician—to tracking the many doctors’ appointments. During days that border on chaotic, Norbert keeps his cool by doing one task at a time and maintaining a lively sense of humor. “Living in a community with guys,” he says, “there’s always something to make you laugh.”

From an article by Provincial Communications Director Toni Cashnelli that first appeared on the provincial website.

Br. Scott visiting Kenya in the 1990s.



Above: Br. Scott hosted Mother Theresa in Cincinnati in 1982.

Right: Br. Scott and friend, Lillie, at the 100th anniversary of the Franciscans at Chinle.



MEET A MISSIONARY

Missionary work got into his blood at the beginning of his Franciscan life. In 1971, Br. Scott Obrecht, O.F.M. went to Tuba City, Arizona, on the Navajo Reservation, to help build a parish hall. And so began Br. Scott’s 27 years of mission work.

Next, Br. Scott was assigned to San Fidel, New Mexico, where he worked among the Pueblo Native American and Hispanic communities. In 1976, Our Lady of Fatima Church, Chinle, Arizona welcomed Br. Scott. He ministered there among the Navajo people until he volunteered to go to the Philippines. From 1978 to 1980 he was assigned to Kawayan, Leyte, where he did youth ministry and helped develop Basic Christian Communities.

In 1980, Br. Scott was asked to become Vocation Director for our province, a position he gladly accepted and in which he served for 10 years. Scott was then asked to serve the missions in a different

way as Director of the Franciscan Missionary Union and Mission Office. For 18 years he has attended to the needs of our missionaries and missions. His personal involvement and fundraising efforts, which generated necessary financial support for the missions, have been a gift to the evangelization efforts of our Province and the Order.

As Br. Scott leaves the Mission Office we wish him well. After his sabbatical year he will be given a new assignment by our provincial administration. Is Scott finished with missionary work? May God bless his discernment.

DEAR FRIENDS OF THE MISSIONS,



Br. Scott

A bumper sticker in my office reads, “Did you thank God today?” Over the last 18 years, this sign has reminded me to have a grateful heart. When I began in the Mission Office little did I know how blessed my life would be.

I’ve visited all of our missionaries at home and abroad. I’ve been part of three provincial administrations, worked with dedicated staff members, collaborated with many friars and met many of our wonderful benefactors.

In visiting so many people, places and cultures, I have been changed. The people of Kenya, the Philippines and Jamaica; the Navajo, Appalachian and African American communities have all blessed me. Now, it is time to move on.

After finishing mission appeals, cleaning the office and breaking in my replacement, I’ll begin a sabbatical year. I look forward to this time to renew and refresh myself. What will I do next? I’m not certain—but every once in a while I hear the faint whisper of the Appalachian mountains calling. I am sure I will end up where God wants me.

Thank you to everyone who supported me and our missions through the Franciscan Missionary Union and Mission Office. I was privileged to be in this ministry and blessed to have your support and encouragement.

Thank you and God Bless you!

Brother Scott, OFM

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



Fr. Max and students from St. Anthony Small Home for Disabled Children in Subukia stand in front of a truckload of maize relief food for the displaced people as a result of election violence.

The Friars in Kenya

Fr. Max Langenderfer, O.F.M. is a missionary in Kenya.

Greetings from Kenya! Despite the political and tribal violence following our disputed elections, our area has been relatively quiet. There were demonstrations, riots and chaos in the

Nairobi slums and downtown streets.

I am writing from Subukia parish, Nakuru district, Rift Valley, where I recently traveled with another friar. We arrived without incident. It is the beginning of the dry season at the end of the harvest. People are preparing their fields for the rains to come in late March.

VOICES OF PEACE

On Saturday, January 26, 120 Franciscan sisters and brothers, in brown, grey, and cream colored habits, gathered in Nairobi for a day of prayer for peace in Kenya.

The day marked the official opening of the Franciscan Family Association Office for Justice and Peace. Br. Gianfrancesco, OFM, explained the purpose of the office, "As Franciscans we want to handle conflicts, turmoil, hatred, and lack of unity differently than Cain.... We Franciscans must bring healing and reconciliation to the present violence in Kenya."

The Easter Candle was lit and shared by all. While holding lighted candles the Franciscans prayed for lasting peace in Kenya. The Franciscan Family, made up of many tribes and cultures, can and does stand as an instrument of peace, as a sign of hope.

There is still food available here which is a relief in itself.

The friars have been involved in peace meetings among tribal groups throughout the parish. Along with Kikuyu and Kalinjin elders and local police, they went on night patrols to keep violence from spreading to this area. Many Kikuyu who have been evicted from parts of the Rift Valley are coming to Subukia to resettle. The friars are working closely with the Catholic Diocese in relief and resettlement programs. The parish Lenten programs are also working to reduce the violence and animosity among different tribal groups and assisting new refugees.

Back in Nairobi, we continue to help students with fees, and others with rent and medical expenses. With the tribal violence some residents lost everything when their houses were looted and kiosk shops burned. We are assisting with transportation for displaced people to safer areas. Our newly opened Franciscan Family Association Office for Justice and Peace is quite involved in relief work.

The St. Anthony Small Home for Disabled Children continues to house and assist 28 children with disabilities. The parish has also opened a kindergarten for 42 children.

Over the years we have received, from my Franciscan brothers in Cincinnati, financial and moral support. Thanks to all the benefactors who have made that happen.

Pray For Us

Our Provincial Chapter occurs every three years. About 150 friars from all across the province will be in attendance. We will be dealing with issues impacting our fraternal life, and also electing new provincial leadership; provincial, vicar provincial and four councilors. Your prayers for us during the week of Chapter, May 19 to 23, will be much appreciated.



Subscribe to St. Anthony's Breadbasket at: www.stanthony.org/donate/enewsletter.asp

CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB!

The Province: www.franciscan.org

St. Anthony Shrine: www.stanthony.org
- post a prayer request here

THANKS TO YOU

Your gifts help us Franciscans in many ways. Funds received in support of our missions are used for both domestic and foreign missions. Fr. Joe Hund, O.F.M., pastor of St. Joseph church in Sav-la-mar, Jamaica, is thrilled with the new church being built in one of his missions, St. Mark in Grange Hill. The parishioners are looking forward to moving into a "real" church. If you are interested, they are in need of additional funds to complete the project.



Above:
The new church.



Left: Friar Tom with local school children and Sr. Providencia who works at Grange Hill.

Photo by Scott Obrecht, O.F.M.

Photo by Urbani Kahn



Friars Jim, Fred and Bernardin in Tokyo.

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23,196 Miles

were told, at a difficult time for them and their country.

Cebu City and Manila, The Philippines

We returned to Mumbai to catch our flight to Manila and then to Cebu.

We missed our connection but—good news—the airline put us up in the Seoul Hyatt Regency. It was great to take a hot shower!

Br. Philip accompanied us to Cebu and St. Vincent Ferrer Friary and Church. We met with Friars Harold and Roger, and visited with the administration of the new Custody of St. Anthony — our granddaughter province.

Returning to Manila, we stayed at San Antonio Friary, visiting Our Lady of the Angels Seminary and Rieti House, where Fr. Bertram is retired. The seminarians honored us with songs and a folk dance. We visited the Provincial House of our daughter province, San Pedro Bautista, and enjoyed a festive dinner in our honor.

Tokyo, Japan

Arriving in Tokyo on January 16, we visited Fr. Bernardin Schneider (90), who has been in Japan for 57 years doing Biblical work. Bernie, confined to a wheelchair and walker, saw to it that we saw some sites. Visiting a Shinto Shrine and Buddhist Temple was not unlike visiting a Church. Worshipers prayed using familiar gestures, and donated funds for the care of the shrine and the poor. It was cold in Tokyo and we were grateful that we dragged our winter gear through toasty Mumbai and Manila.

Spending time with friars from other cultures and nations, and calling them “brother” is wonderful! Our brotherhood crosses race, language and nationality and, in a way, makes us an example of what our human family can become! This was a special blessing for Fred and me.

For more information and photos of the trip visit:
www.franciscan.org/M&M/FriarJimsScrapbook.asp



PILGRIMAGE ANYONE?

Join Fr. Jim in early October on a pilgrimage to Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires. Visit Mary's Shrine of Aparecida, Iguassu Falls and more. The itinerary, cost and dates are not yet finalized. For detailed

information when available, return the form below or call or email us. Contact information is noted on the right.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ Email _____



Br. Al with some friends of Canticle Cafe - Detroit.

It's Just Beautiful!

Br. Al Mascia, O.F.M. began his assignment at St. Aloysius in inner-city Detroit in August.

They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. St. Aloysius Community Center may not be the first place that comes to mind when thinking of beauty, but, trust me, there's a lot here!

The other day one of our regular guests, Dominic, asked to have a word with me. “I just had a stroke and don't have a walker. Could I get one with a seat, please?” he asked. I told Dominic I wasn't sure we had one but that I'd check our supply room.

Expecting to find nothing more than a cane, imagine my surprise when I found what Dominic had asked for—seat and all. All that was missing was a ribbon and bow! Dominic exclaimed, “Br. Al, it's just beautiful!”

Beauty and joy, along with care and compassion are truly in abundance here at St. Al's. In addition to food, clothing, health care, counseling and education, a new ministry, The Canticle Café, Detroit will soon offer beverages and pastries to anyone seeking refuge from street corners or abandoned buildings. Thanks to a recent grant, new computers and free internet access will also be available!

We are grateful to all our benefactors. You are in our prayers.

FRIARWORKS

FRANCISCAN
 MINISTRY & MISSION

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