

# Servites Today



“The Order of Friar Servants of Mary is a community of men gathered together in the name of Jesus the Lord. Moved by the Spirit, we commit ourselves, as did our First Fathers, to witness the gospel in fraternal communion and to be at the service of God and all people, drawing abiding inspiration from Mary, Mother and Servant of the Lord. “

Servite Constitutions, #1

When you write or review your will, please consider making a charitable bequest. Your bequest to the Servants of Mary will help us spread devotion to the Blessed Virgin; serve the Church in parishes, schools, hospitals, and foreign missions; train future priests and brothers; and provide for the elderly religious. Your charity will be a lasting memorial that will grow and prosper in the minds and hearts of all who are touched by the work of the Servants of Mary.

For more information, please contact Fr. Lawrence at the Servite Development Office: 1439 South Harlem Avenue, Berwyn, IL 60402, 708-795-8885 or visit [www.servite.org](http://www.servite.org) (the Gifts/Giftshop link).

## From the Editor

The 1996 Servite document, *Servants of the New Magnificat*, the letter from the Order’s 210th General Chapter, prophetically states:

*“Encouraging for us Servite men and women should be the fact that since the 1970s we have taken on new evangelization tasks in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean... In an Order as small as ours, such a missionary and evangelizing effort could be considered imprudent, but as the Prior General, Fr. Hubert M. Moons, observes with confident generosity: ‘Despite a general crisis of numbers and aging, we are serenely putting our trust in the Word of the Lord, that by giving we shall receive, and by losing ourselves we shall implant the seeds of a new and unexpected Springtime.’”*

Though it seems odd to speak of the “unexpected Springtime” while it is autumn in the northern hemisphere, it is appropriate when one remembers that God’s grace and new life can spring up anytime and anywhere. Twenty years after the above quote was written, we are witnessing some of the fruits of the Servite dedication to the new evangelization, especially in Asia and the southern hemisphere. For some time now, these regions have been, and will be for the foreseeable future, the largest source of vocations to the Order. This is not just a boon for the local Church alone.

Regions that are experiencing aging and decline in number are finding benefit from the revitalizing presence of these young people through sharing and exchange. Their youthful zeal for faith, community, and ministry has reinvigorated the call to compassionate service, giving rise to the “new and unexpected Springtime.”

A special thank you to the friends, benefactors and donors who support us with their prayers, Mass intentions and gifts. You are remembered in the prayers, liturgies, and spiritual works of the Order. We pray you have a blessed Autumn.

*Cover: Statue of Our Lady of Lavang, The Grotto, Portland, OR. A special thanks to Larry Kirby of The Grotto staff for text and photos.*

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James Foerster, Editor

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## MEET THE VOCATION DIRECTOR - A CONVERSATION WITH FR. DONALD SIPLE, OSM

Fr. Donald Siple, OSM, was recently appointed Vocation Director for the USA Province, a ministry he originally served from 1996 – 1999. Since then, he has spent seventeen years in parochial ministry as pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows, Chicago, then Seven Holy Founders, Affton MO, and most recently at St. Philip Benizi, Fullerton, CA. Fr. Siple will work in conjunction with vocation minister Eddie Murphy to attract suitable and vibrant men for future compassionate ministry as Servite priests and brothers.

*What excites you about this new position?*

What excites me about being Vocation Director is that I get the opportunity to promote the Order that I absolutely, truly love. Our community has a deeply rich and vibrant spirituality that can assist all in finding a place in the heart of the Lord where love and mercy baths us in hope. God is faithful and as we respond in faith to the movement of God in our lives, as the Mother of God did, we experience the hope to be courageous in living our faith. As Servites we respond to God's faithfulness in community, as a community in service to others while keeping the example of Mary as our model in this task. On my love for the Order I experience God very deeply, very personally. As Vocation director I want to assist those attracted to our community to see how living the Servite charism and spirituality can help them fall in love with God and be the next generation of friars living in community and serving others under the patronage and in the example of Our Blessed Lady.

*What will be difficult about moving from parish priest to full time vocation director?*

The difficult thing about moving from parish priest to Vocation director is not having daily contact with a variety of people in the many different pastoral and sacramental moments that take place in parish ministry.

*You were vocation director a number of years ago. What has changed in the intervening years and how will you address that?*

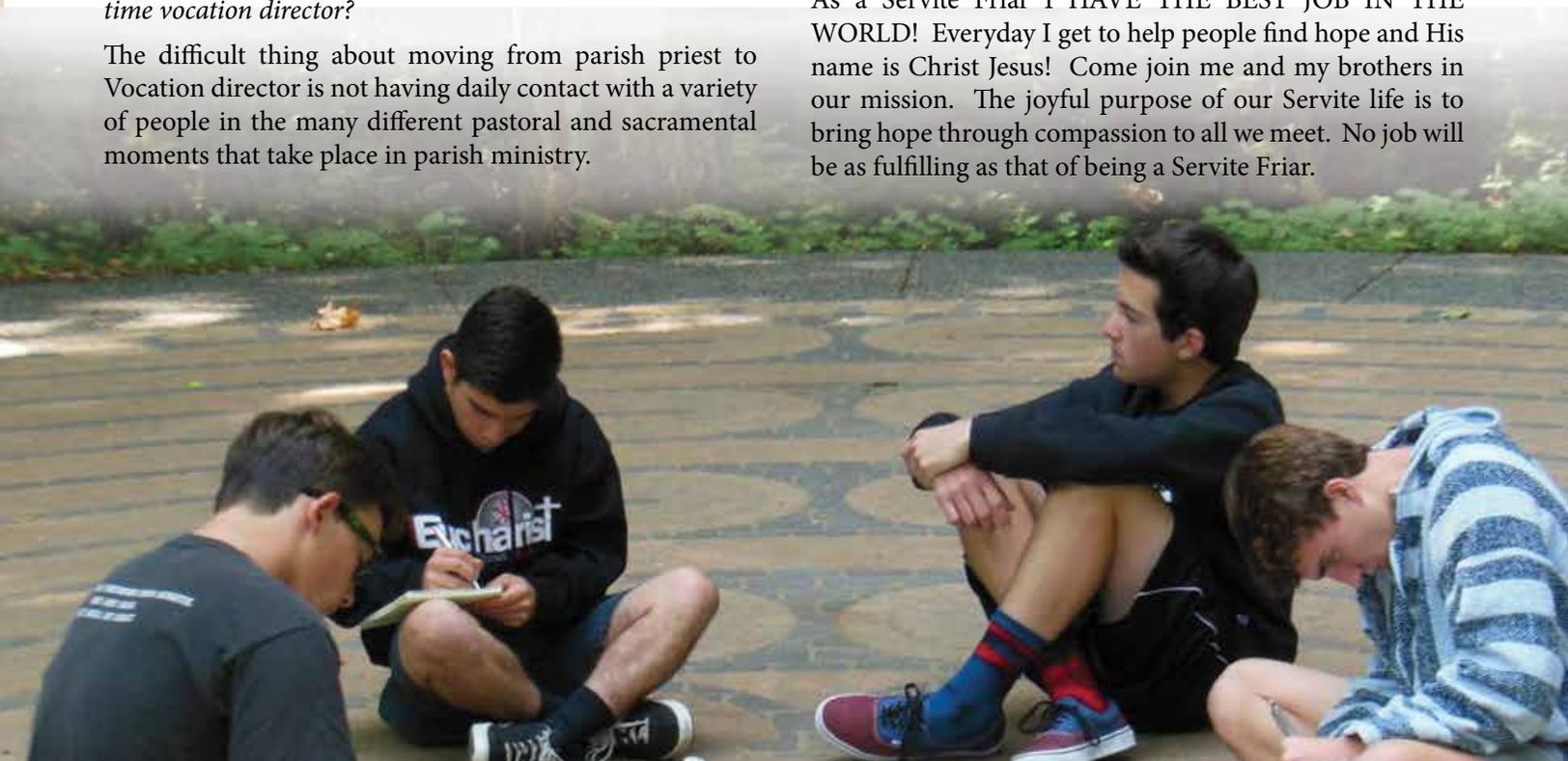
What has changed is that those seeking entrance into religious life now desire a strong, vibrant communal life to support their commitment to search for God and serve Him in others. This means that we religious need to continue building a communal life that is regular in common prayer and the common life, with a willingness to serve others in traditional and non-traditional ministries. It seems that those seeking entrance into religious life seek a communal life that offers the support, guidance, and challenge of other religious as they seek to grow closer to Christ.

*What is the biggest obstacle you anticipate facing in your new work?*

Finding effective ways to promote all that is great about the Servite Order: our Charism and spirituality and our mission; our devotion to the Mother of God; our devotion to being a communal compassionate witness to those suffering, especially through Mary and St. Peregrine.

*What would you say to a young man who is considering becoming a religious priest or brother?*

As a Servite Friar I HAVE THE BEST JOB IN THE WORLD! Everyday I get to help people find hope and His name is Christ Jesus! Come join me and my brothers in our mission. The joyful purpose of our Servite life is to bring hope through compassion to all we meet. No job will be as fulfilling as that of being a Servite Friar.





The Servite Sisters of the Mother of Sorrows have been a presence in Myanmar (formerly Burma) since 1924, originally ministering to the population of Tamil Catholics. There are presently around 120 sisters in twenty-three communities. In September of 2007, two friars of the Indian Province (then a Vicariate) opened the first priory for Servite friars in Yangon, Myanmar. In 2012, a student house was built for the formation of future generations of Servite friars to serve the Church in Myanmar.

This past summer, I had the opportunity to visit both St. Mary's Home, an orphanage for young girls, and the recently established Servite Formation House in Kyauktan, Myanmar. Since most readers are not familiar with either place, this will primarily be a pictorial description of the places and people who live and work in this part of God's vineyard.

St. Mary's Home is run by Servite sisters of the Madona Province; and Sr. Salette is the prioress of the community. The campus itself is about 50 acres with many buildings, including those for aspirants, novices, professed sisters, orphans, retreat houses, and employees. The picture below is a view from the guest house overlooking a man-made lake with a Marian shrine at center, and chicken houses on the other side of the lake. The orphanage is not in view;



it's located behind the buildings in line with the Marian shrine. The partial view of the green-roof building is the chapel.

*Myanmar is a religiously diverse country: 89% are Buddhist; 4% Muslim; Baptists 3%; Catholics 1%.*

# SERVITE FOUNDATIONS IN MYANMAR

Fr. Joseph Cheah, O.S.M., a professor and Chair of the Philosophy, Theology, and Religious Studies Department at the University of St. Joseph, recently visited some of these Servite foundations and shares his travelogue with us.



The relatively new Servite Formation house for friars is about 20 minutes' drive from St. Mary's Home. It's a much smaller property with beautiful palm trees lining the driveway to the house. There are 13 students in formation with Fr. Emmanuel as their director. The students are all aspirants or postulants beginning their maiden journey in the Servite way of life. Like the sisters, the friars and



the students were very hospitable. The students put on a cultural show, displaying their talents in songs and dance. In my brief conversation with them in class (see right), they all acknowledged that fraternal living was important to them. They were curious about the Servites in the US. Many were surprised to learn that the average age of the US Servites is around their grandfather's age! Below, you will find a picture of Fathers Soosei, Emmanuel, myself, Jessie, and Alex.



The picture above is an open space area between the orphanage buildings used as a temporary multi-purpose place; including that of an outdoor eating space for the orphans.



Above is yours truly teaching the orphans the ancient art of self-defense. There are about 20 sisters altogether at St. Mary's. They work very hard to support 125 orphans under their care. They used every plot of land to grow a variety of vegetables, as well as papayas, jack fruit and other kinds of fruits. Besides chicken, they raise pigs, goats, as well as those living under the water.



Mass at Our Lady of Fatima, Thongwa, Yangon, Myanmar



in a grove of trees, the shrine reflects the ancient practice of raising shrines on the waysides along roads.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa was made possible in large part through the support of the local Polish community of St. Stanislaus Catholic Church and was dedicated the year of the parish's 100th anniversary in 2007.

The Dambana (Tagalog for altar) Filipino shrine is a pergola shaped like a traditional Filipino woman's head gear called salakot. Designed by Hermes Mallari, three sculptures occupy the center: San Lorenzo Ruiz, the first Filipino saint; the Blessed Virgin Mary; and the Santo Niño of Cebu. The Filipino Community of Oregon and SW Washington, in partnership with The Grotto, collaborated to build this shrine, dedicated in September 2008.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas, is nearly complete. The mosaics in this shrine will tell the story of Our Lady's appearances to Juan Diego which marked the beginning of Marian devotion in the New World. The Knights of Columbus of Oregon coordinated the construction of this shrine in cooperation with the Latino community. The shrine will be completed and dedicated this fall.



## NEW SHRINE DEDICATED AT THE GROTTA

On July 3, 2016, the Our Lady of Lavang Shrine was dedicated at the National Shrine of Our Sorrowful Mother, the Grotto, in Portland, OR. The dedication was a highlight of the 40th Annual Freedom Sunday at The Grotto. This annual celebration was begun by Vietnamese refugees who settled in the Pacific Northwest in thanksgiving for the freedom they found in this country.

The Our Lady of Lavang Shrine honors the apparition of Mary to those Vietnamese Catholics who took refuge in the jungle to escape persecution for their faith in the

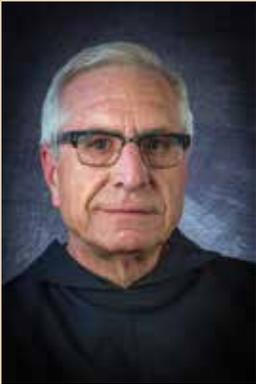
late 18th century. The Virgin Mary encouraged them and gave them hope and after the threat was over, they built a church in her honor. The construction of this impressive shrine was organized by members of the Vietnamese community and the Southeast Asian Vicariate of the Archdiocese of Portland.

This new shrine joins other culturally-affiliated shrines at The Grotto.

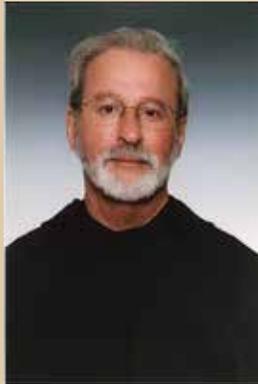
The Lithuanian Shrine was dedicated in 1963 to those who struggled for the freedom of that country fighting for liberty during World War II. Set



# PROVINCE JUBILARIANS



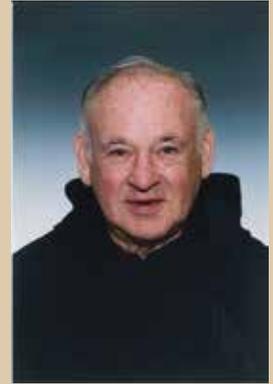
**Fr. Michael Pontarelli, OSM**  
35 Years Solemn Profession  
September 8, 2016



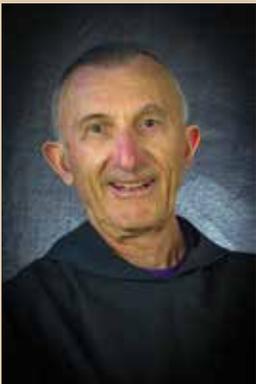
**Fr. Christopher Ross, OSM**  
65 Years Solemn Profession  
September 16, 2016



**Fr. Gabriel Ramacciotti, OSM**  
70 Years Solemn Profession  
September 21, 2016



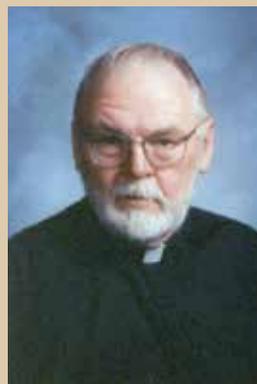
**Fr. Damian Kobus, OSM**  
70 Years Solemn Profession  
September 22, 2016



**Fr. Mark Franceschini, OSM**  
60 Years Solemn Profession  
September 29, 2016



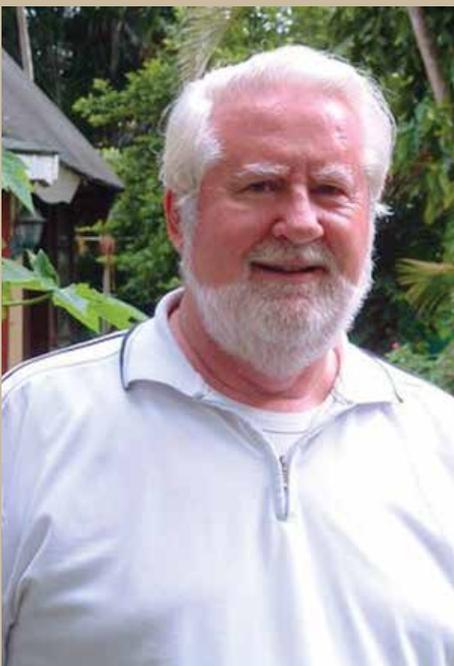
**Fr. Michael Gantley, OSM**  
60 Years Solemn Profession  
September 30, 2016



**Bro. Robert Fandel, OSM**  
55 Years Solemn Profession  
November 19, 2016



**Bro. Christopher Moran, OSM**  
55 Years Solemn Profession  
November 19, 2016



## MTUBATUBA, ZULULAND

After 52 years serving here in Zululand, I thought I had seen it all and was beyond being shocked. But last Saturday, was different. Frs. Sifiso Mchunu, OSM, and I conducted the funeral of a twin – the surviving twin was a girl. We had a lovely Requiem Mass in our Somkhele church and then proceeded to the municipal cemetery. All went well until it was time to lower the body into the grave. There was a pause and some consultation. Then I saw the young lady (now 33) being led forward. She was then lowered into the grave and lay flat on her back. The shock for me was seeing a young woman whom I

had known since she was a teenager lying in the grave and looking up at me! I had heard about burial customs for twins, e.g. switching clothing, even entering the grave... but to actually look down on somebody you know lying in the grave... that was something else!

After a few moments, she was helped out and the funeral continued as usual. So what was behind the custom? I got so many and varied explanations that I just don't know which was the real one. Basically, since death is considered a contagion it was a way of protecting the living twin.

- Fr. Mel Loftus, O.S.M.



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# Notes

from the National Shrine of St. Peregrine



At the National Shrine of St Peregrine (Our Lady of Sorrows Basilica in Chicago), a healing Mass and blessing with relic of St. Peregrine is celebrated at 11:00am on the third Saturday of the month. There is a healing Mass and blessing in Spanish on the second Saturday of each month, also at 11:00am.



## SHRINE CANDLE MADE WITH YOUR PETITIONS AND PRAYERS...

This nearly three foot candle was made from small tapers of wax that we sent along with the request to return them with your prayers and petitions. These tapers were then melted together and formed into the candle that now graces the Shrine of St. Peregrine. It was lit for the first time on St. Peregrine's Feast Day celebration. A special thanks to everyone who sent their petitions.

