



The Alexians

The Love of Christ Compels Us

*Immaculate Conception
Province of the Congregation
of Alexian Brothers*

Mission Statement

Strengthened by community, prayer, commitment to the poor and the legacy of our founders, and in partnership with others, we Alexian Brothers witness the Healing Christ by a holistic approach to promoting health and caring for the sick, dying, aged and unwanted of all socioeconomic levels.

Values

*Compassion
Dignity of the Person
Care of the Poor
Holism
Partnership*

Mission's growth raises hope for new Alexian Brothers province

Three years after Filipino Alexian Brothers began managing the Brothers' mission in the Philippines without American colleagues on site, the mission continues to grow and to flourish, raising the possibility that someday it might become a separate province.

"Brothers have stepped up as leaders, and we have shifted gears gradually to the point now where they are accountable for the mission's current activities – and for developing its future," said Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., provincial of the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers. "We hope the day comes somewhat quickly when the Philippines can become a self-sustaining province. It's not going to happen overnight, and it might not happen while I'm still around, but we have set that plan in motion, and we are trusting God to guide us."

Brother Dan recently completed his annual visitation to the mission's two communities of Brothers in Davao City. He returned to the U.S. upbeat and optimistic about the mission's



Provincial Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., (standing, left), poses for a photo with fellow Brothers at a restaurant during his annual visitation to the Brothers' Philippine mission. Shown with Brother Dan are Brother John of God Oblina, C.F.A., (standing, right), and (seated, left to right) Brother Dominic Andes, C.F.A., Novice Brother Anthony Abastillas and Brother Ignatius Gonzales, C.F.A.

trajectory toward complete autonomy. The Brothers are building a homeless center in Davao City and are developing plans for a medical clinic in East Timor, a poor nation in Southeast Asia. (See article on page 2.)

(continued on page 5)

Brothers begin construction of homeless center in Philippines

The Alexian Brothers in the Philippines have begun construction of a center that will provide services to the homeless of Davao City.

Initial plans called for the center to be a drop-in facility where the homeless could shower, wash their clothes, eat meals, receive medical care, and access social services. But before construction began, the Brothers decided



The Alexian Brothers pause for a photo during the groundbreaking for their new center for the homeless in the Philippines. The center will be known as Dalangpanan ni San Alejo, or the Refuge of Saint Alexius.

also to offer overnight accommodations to better address the acute needs of the homeless.

Conservative estimates place the number of homeless children in Davao City at 35,000, and “the need grows exponentially when you add parents and adult siblings to that number,” said Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., provincial of the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers. “The center will be a much-needed social ministry, providing ongoing outreach to the homeless.”

The Brothers purchased a house and later had it demolished to make way for the two-level center, which is expected to open in 2020 and will be known as Dalangpanan ni San Alejo, or the Refuge of Saint Alexius. The site is near the Brothers’ residence in the Bajada section of Davao City.

A groundbreaking ceremony occurred Nov. 8, 2018, and construction was progressing early this year, said Brother Dan, who inspected the site

during his annual visitation to the Philippine mission. (See article on page 1.) “The Brothers are building what will be a very contemporary, safe and clean place where the homeless can receive support,” he said. “It will be a first-class facility.”

The project has created construction jobs for poor workers, with many traveling from the countryside outside Davao City to build the center. The Brothers purchased a commercial-size rice cooker and a water heater to provide hot meals for the workers. “We also have made sure to have hard hats and appropriate footwear for those working at the site,” Brother Dan said.

While building the homeless center, the Brothers in the Philippines continue to pursue the possibility of establishing a medical clinic in East Timor, a poor nation in Southeast Asia. They have completed preliminary planning for the new ministry and now are looking at ways to partner with other religious congregations to make it a reality.

With primitive living conditions and a pressing need for health-care services, East Timor is similar to other places where the Brothers have provided care during their 800-year history – places “where nobody else wants to go,” Brother Dan said. “It’s a situation that cries out for the delivery of care.”

Preliminary plans call for three Alexian Brothers to staff the East Timor clinic. If the Brothers establish a community there, it would become the third one associated with the Philippine mission, joining the Bajada community and the Brothers’ community in the Matina section of Davao City. The mission includes several Brothers who are medical professionals.

“What’s exciting for me is that the Brothers in Davao have taken the initiative on this project and the center for the homeless,” Brother Dan said. “They identified these needs, and without being asked by me or the Provincial Council, they have developed plans to address them. It’s a remarkable gift to us as a province.”

Provincial's Letter

Dear Alexian Friends:

Since last July, three Alexian Brothers novices from the United States have lived in community with our Brothers in the Philippines.

Novice Brothers Joe Pense, Robert Podjarsky and Marc Rizzo are the first American novices to spend the first year of the two-year Novitiate program at our Philippine mission rather than in the U.S., and the experience they have gained already has made this new approach a success.

Under the guidance of Brother Raphael Fallado, C.F.A., director of novices and director of the Alexian Brothers Bajada Community in Davao City, the novices have immersed themselves in ministries that recall the work of the earliest Alexian Brothers, who cared for the poor and sick during the Middle Ages.

Joe, Robert and Marc have ministered to the needy at a shelter for prostituted women and children, a home for sick and malnourished children and a home for the dying. They spent two weeks living with an indigenous tribe in a remote village in the Bukidnon mountains northwest of Davao City. They also visited a center that provides rehabilitation services for people who have lost limbs or have other disabilities.

The novices not only have confronted abject poverty, but they also have stepped outside their cultural comfort zone, living in a city where they were unfamiliar with the language, customs and food, and in a nation where more than 170 languages are spoken and local cultures and traditions vary greatly. They have met people with lifestyles vastly different than those of Americans – people who live hand to mouth every day, yet do so with dignity, self-assurance, confidence and kindness.

Joe, Robert and Marc also have received the gift of living in community with our Brothers in Davao City. The novices have experienced the Filipino Brothers' inspirational approach to prayer, their willingness to sacrifice individual

needs for the greater good, and their total commitment to always doing what's best for the community. The novices have taken classes on liturgy, spirituality and understanding cultural differences, and they went on a retreat at a Benedictine monastery that had a profound spiritual effect on them.

Having spoken to Joe, Robert, Marc and Brother Raphael during my recent visitation to the Philippine mission, I am confident the novices will return to the U.S. stronger in their faith and with a deeper understanding of what it means to be poor – and of their own powerlessness in the face of poverty and death. They will have a better sense of what it means to be an Alexian Brother and a missionary and how to interact with others in a multicultural environment. I pray they also will have learned how important it is for us as Brothers to open ourselves to being vulnerable, humble and accessible to others so we can live without fear, can better understand those who are different than we are, and can comfort those in need.

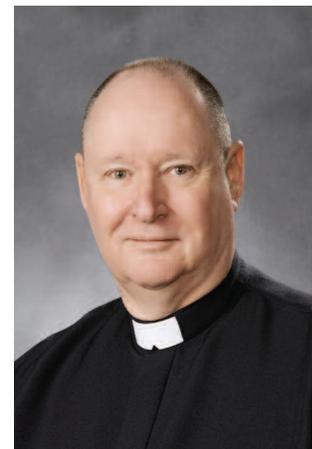
These are important lessons for our novices and all Alexian Brothers to remember as our religious order becomes more ethnically diverse and develops new ministries focused on taking God to the people, especially the poor, vulnerable and marginalized.

We shifted the first year of the Novitiate to the Philippines to ensure the missionary spirit of the earliest Alexian Brothers would live on in our ministries, and based on the first year of this new approach, it looks like a winning strategy for perpetuating our 800-year-old healing mission for many years to come.

May God Bless You and Yours,



Brother Daniel McCormick, C.F.A.
Provincial
Immaculate Conception Province of the Alexian Brothers



Did you know?

Editor's Note: "Did You Know?" provides brief glimpses into the rich, 800-year history of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers. To mark the 150th anniversary this year of the Alexian Brothers Community in St. Louis, this item focuses on the Brothers' arrival in the city.

Because of the large German population in St. Louis, Archbishop Richard Kenrick welcomed the Germany-based Alexian Brothers' arrival in his diocese in 1869.

On Sept. 21 of that year, a week after the Brothers arrived in the city, Brother Bonaventure Thelen, C.F.A., and his Brother assistants purchased the Simonds mansion for \$25,000. The mansion was located on five acres at Carondelet (later called South Broadway) and Osage streets. It was a favorable location overlooking the Mississippi River, which reminded Brother Bonaventure of the Rhine River in Germany.

One of the Brothers said in his memoirs: "When we took over the new place in which there was a neat house, our entire belongings consisted of a teapot, a wash basin and \$23,000 in debt."

Brothers welcome new postulant in Signal Mountain, Tennessee

A new postulant has joined the Alexian Brothers Community in Signal Mountain, Tennessee.

The Brothers welcomed Carl Sisolak into their postulancy program Jan. 19 during an initiation ceremony at the Brothers' Evening Prayer in their chapel at Alexian Village of Tennessee. He received a special blessing and a pin featuring the crest of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers.



Carl Sisolak (second from left) poses for a photo with members of the Alexian Brothers Community in Signal Mountain, Tennessee, after joining the Brothers' postulancy program. Also shown (left to right) are Brother Richard Kane, C.F.A., Brother Richard Lowe, C.F.A., Brother Tom Klein, C.F.A., Superior General Brother Lawrence Krueger, C.F.A., and Brother Andrew Thome, C.F.A.

"I look forward to sharing my gifts with those to whom I will visit and minister as a member of the Alexian Brothers," he said. "I am grateful to God and to the Alexian Brothers, who are welcoming me as a postulant to their family."

Carl, 51, joined the Alexian Brothers after working in corporate accounting and finance for the last 18 years. Born in New Brunswick, N.J., he lived most recently in Basking Ridge, N.J., after earlier residing in Washington, D.C., and Seattle. He has served his parish church as a cantor, choir member, musician and lector,

and he has served as a Eucharistic minister, bringing Communion to the sick and home-bound. He also has volunteered in social outreach ministries that help the homeless.

Carl earned a master's degree in accounting from New Jersey-based Fairleigh Dickinson University, and he holds a bachelor's degree in public administration from the University of Scranton in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

During the six-month postulancy program, Carl will be under the mentorship of Brother Tom Klein, C.F.A., director of postulants for the Immaculate Conception Province of the Alexian Brothers. Carl will live, work and pray with the Alexian Brothers Community.

Carl also will minister to residents in the Alexian Village of Tennessee Health and Rehabilitation Center and to participants in the Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (P.A.C.E.) in the Chattanooga area. In addition, he will volunteer with St. Alexius Outreach Ministries, an Alexian Brothers ministry that provides ongoing friendship and supportive case-management services to isolated and vulnerable older adults in the Chattanooga area.

"We look forward to walking with Carl at the beginning of his journey as an Alexian Brother," Brother Tom said.

Hungarian mission marks beginning of Lent with Ash Wednesday ceremony

Father Gyula Gyökér distributes ashes during an Ash Wednesday ceremony at Saint Elizabeth of Hungary Home for the Elderly in Győrújbarát, Hungary. Father Gyula, a guest priest at Holy Spirit Church in Győr, Hungary, led the March 6 ceremony, marking a cross of ashes on the foreheads of residents and staff of the home. Located at the Alexian Brothers' Hungarian mission, the home provides assisted-living and skilled nursing care for low-income older adults. Among those attending the ceremony was Brother Leó Vendrey, C.F.A., (seated near piano), a nursing assistant at the home.



Five Brothers celebrate milestones in Philippines

Five Alexian Brothers in the Philippines recently joined with friends and fellow Brothers to celebrate milestones in their religious lives.

The March 19 celebration occurred in conjunction with a Mass celebrated by Father Allan Rodriguez, D.C.D., in the Alexian Brothers Bajada Community's Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Davao City.

During an initiation ceremony before the Mass began, Brother Raphael Fallado, C.F.A., accepted Postulant Rodel Abastillas into the Alexian Brothers Novitiate. Rodel took the religious name of Anthony, in honor of Saint Anthony of Padua, and Brother Raphael gave him the habit of the Alexian Brothers.

After the Mass began and before Father Allan's homily, Novice Brother Dionisio De La Banda and Novice Brother Francisco Cabangon professed their First Vows as Alexian Brothers



during a ceremony led by Father Allan and Brother Raphael. Brother John of God Oblina, C.F.A., and Brother Romie Duriman, C.F.A., served as witnesses. The two novices each received the scapular of the Alexian Brothers and signed the Written Act of Temporary Profession during the ceremony.

Before the Final Prayer of the Mass, Brother Paul Oserin, C.F.A., and Brother Mark Buenaobra, C.F.A., renewed their vows as Alexian Brothers.



(Above left, left to right) Brother Romie Duriman, C.F.A., and Father Allan Rodriguez, D.C.D., pose for a photo with Brother Dionisio De La Banda, C.F.A., and Brother Francisco Cabangon, C.F.A., after Brother Dionisio and Brother Francisco professed their First Vows. (Above right, left to right) New Novice Brother Anthony Abastillas joins Brother Raphael Fallado, C.F.A., for a photo after Brother Raphael accepted him into the Alexian Brothers Novitiate.

Mission's growth raises hope for new Alexian Brothers province

(continued from page 1)

"My visits to our Bajada and Matina communities in Davao always lift my spirits," Brother Dan said. "Our men there are exceptionally gifted and have a consuming passion for caring for the poor. They are not afraid to roll their sleeves up and get their hands dirty doing what the Alexian Brothers have been called to do for 800 years."

During his three-week visit to the Philippines, Brother Dan met individually with all of the Brothers in Davao City to discuss the mission and their journeys as Alexian Brothers. He also joined with Brother John of God Oblina, C.F.A., director of the Brothers' Matina community, and other Brothers to celebrate the Feast Day of Saint John of God on March 8.

"To a man, the Brothers in the Philippines recognize that their formation as Brothers will continue until the day they die," Brother Dan said. "They see every day as an opportunity to grow, to learn something new, and to do something better than the way they did it the day before. That gives me a great deal of joy and encouragement."

While continuing to grow as Brothers, two Filipino Brothers are pursuing studies to enhance their abilities to serve those in need, Brother Dan said. Brother Vincent Timbang, C.F.A., plans to become a behavioral health therapist and is completing his studies toward a psychology degree. Brother Mark Buenaobra, C.F.A., plans to start attending classes this fall to become a radiologic technologist.

Alexian Brothers celebrate 150 years of serving as ‘Poor of Christ’ in St. Louis

Editor’s Note: In this article, Brother Warren Longo, C.F.A., reflects on the 150th anniversary of the Alexian Brothers’ ministry in St. Louis and the Brothers’ centuries-old tradition of caring for the poor, the sick, the dying and the marginalized. He also shares a personal story about ministering to a dying man at the former Alexian Brothers Hospital in St. Louis.

The Alexian Brothers this year are celebrating the 150th anniversary of their healing ministry in St. Louis.

St. Alexis Hospital, formerly known as Alexian Brothers Hospital and now owned by a health-care corporation, plans a series of events to mark the anniversary.

The hospital on South Broadway and the St. Louis residence of the Alexian Brothers still are located on the site that Brother Bonaventure Thelen, C.F.A., purchased to establish the St. Louis ministry in 1869, four years after he had opened the Brothers’ first U.S. hospital in Chicago.

From its earliest days, our St. Louis ministry has been consistent with the original Brothers’ vision of themselves as the “Poor of Christ” and has exemplified the Brothers’ 800-year tradition of caring for the poor, the sick, the dying and the marginalized

The Brothers always have acknowledged and embraced the truth that no person is beyond God’s love, and the Brothers in St. Louis quickly became known for the compassionate care they provided for alcoholics, drug addicts and the mentally ill.

The Brothers also established a reputation for comforting the dying and staying with them as they approached death, much like Brothers centuries ago cared for victims of the Black Plague and walked with accused witches to their execution. Several current Alexian Brothers remember ministering to patients at the hospital and extending the Brothers’ tradition of serving



Brother Bonaventure Thelen, C.F.A., is remembered for establishing the Alexian Brothers’ healing ministry in St. Louis four years after he established the Brothers’ first U.S. hospital in Chicago.

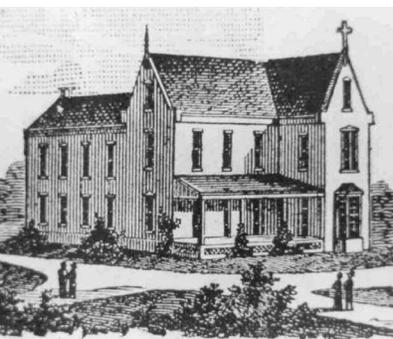
as “Seelbruders” (soul Brothers) for the dying.

There are many stories about how the Brothers of St. Louis have affected people’s lives – and how they in turn have affected the Brothers. As we celebrate our 150th anniversary in St. Louis, I wanted to share such a story. It is one of 75 stories that Catholic author Mitch Finley included in his book, “Whispers of God’s Love: Touching the Lives of Loved Ones After Death.”

‘It’s me, Robert’

One autumn when I was ministering to patients at the St. Louis hospital, I visited a 35-year-old man named Robert. He had pneumonia and was very ill.

As we talked, he said he had not been feeling well for a long time and had learned recently he had AIDS. I visited him daily, and he revealed a great deal of his life history. He also asked me to help him do some “centering



A drawing shows the Alexian Brothers’ first hospital in St. Louis. The Brothers established the hospital in the former Simonds mansion after purchasing it in 1869.

prayer” every time I visited.

Robert’s condition worsened over time until one evening he went into respiratory distress and was transferred to the intensive care unit, where he was put on a respirator to help him breathe.

Two or three times a day, I held Robert’s hand, helped him to “center,” and prayed with him. Because he was on the respirator, he could not talk, so when we finished praying he would write on a piece of paper how consoling and helpful our prayer sessions were to him. Robert also indicated that he hoped I would be with him when God called him to eternal life. I said I would.

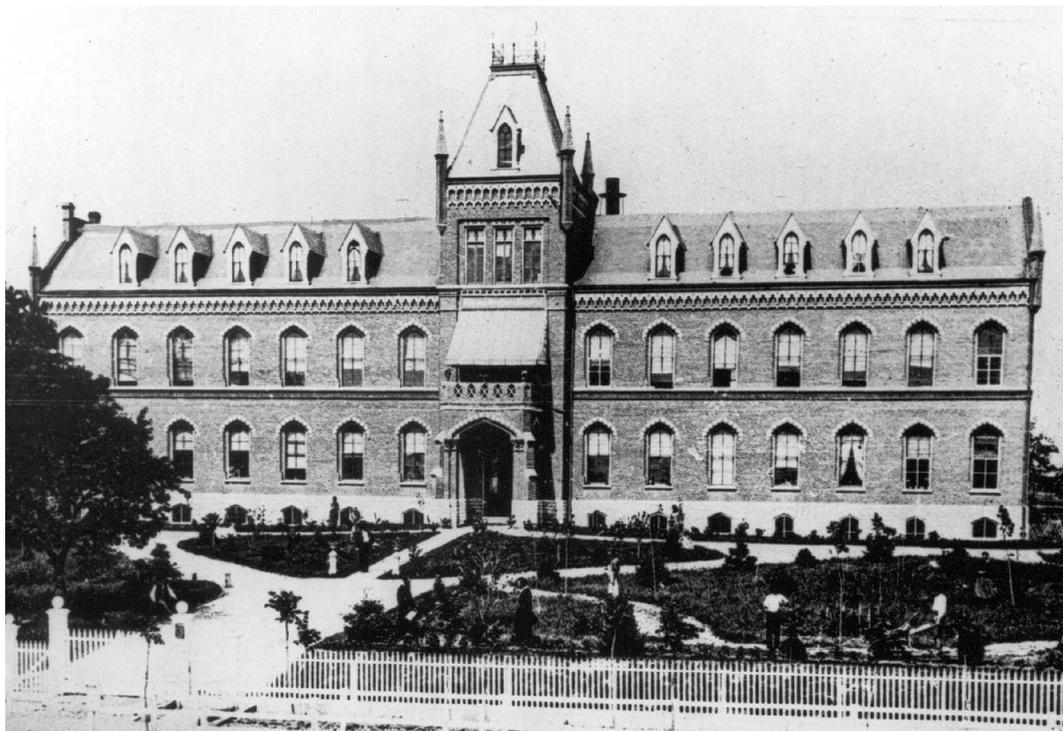
One day, I had to leave for a meeting out of town. I told Robert I would be back to see him in a week. His condition seemed to be improving at the time, and I told him he probably would be off the respirator and back to a regular room by the time I returned.

When I returned a week later, I learned Robert had died four days earlier. I was devastated, particularly because I had promised to be with him during his last days. About a month later, I was reading Scripture one evening during a retreat and suddenly felt Robert’s presence. Although I did not literally see or hear him, his “presence” sat on the bed next to the chair I was using.

“It’s me, Robert,” he said to me. “Why have you been feeling so guilty about not being with me when I died? You were there, not in body, but in spirit. You were very much with me. Please tell my mom and dad that I am very, very happy – the happiest I have ever been – and that I am at peace.” And suddenly, his presence was gone.

Healing legacy endures

I believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that this episode was not a product of my imagination.



It was a reality more real than anything I have physically seen, touched or felt.

About a month after Robert died, I received a note of thanks from his father. It said: “From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you for ministering to our son. When you were away those last days, Bob was really missing you and the time spent talking about God. Like you, Bob’s mother and I know that God needed him for ‘something special,’ and he is most certainly with God.”

The Alexian Brothers always have believed it is a privilege to be at the bedside of the dying and to assist them in their passage to the “other side.” By ministering to the dying and by caring for the sick, the poor and the marginalized, we honor their dignity as people created in the image and likeness of God. We also honor the legacy of Brothers who have gone before us – a healing legacy that endures at St. Alexius Hospital and other ministry sites launched by the Brothers in the United States.

Brother Bonaventure would be very pleased.

A photo shows the Alexian Brothers’ second hospital in St. Louis in 1874, the year the hospital opened.

In This Issue

Volume 45, Number 1
Spring 2019



Cover
Mission's growth raises hope for new province



Page 2
Construction of homeless center begins in Philippines



Page 4
Brothers welcome new postulant in Tennessee



Page 5
Five Brothers celebrate milestones



Return Service Requested

We work very hard to maintain an accurate mailing list; if you wish not to receive future mailings, please email us at Matthew.Wakely@amitahealth.org.

**Alexian Brothers
Communities and Ministries**
600 Alexian Way
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007

Brother Lawrence Krueger, C.F.A.
Superior General, Congregation of Alexian Brothers

Brother Dermot O'Leary, C.F.A.
Vicar General, Congregation of Alexian Brothers

Brother Daniel McCormick, C.F.A.
Provincial, Immaculate Conception Province of the Alexian Brothers, Director of the Alexian Brothers Community, Elk Grove Village, Illinois

Brother John Howard, C.F.A.
Director of the Alexian Brothers Community, Milwaukee

Brother Richard Lowe, C.F.A.
Director of the Alexian Brothers Community, Signal Mountain, Tennessee

Brother Steve Fogt, C.F.A.,
Acting Director of the Alexian Brothers Community, St. Louis

Brother Alexius Siska, C.F.A.
Director of the Alexian Brothers Community, Győrújbarát, Hungary

Brother Raphael Fallado, C.F.A.
Director of the Alexian Brothers Bajada Community, Davao City, Philippines

Brother John of God Oblina, C.F.A.
Director of the Alexian Brothers Matina Community, Davao City, Philippines

The Alexians

The Love of Christ Compels Us

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit # 307
Carol Stream, IL

Ecumenical service marks arrival of Lent at Alexian Village of Tennessee

Residents of Alexian Village of Tennessee in Signal Mountain, Tennessee, celebrated the arrival of Lent by gathering for the third annual Community Lenten Service hosted by the Alexian Village Interfaith Committee.

Alexian Brothers and pastors from local churches joined residents of the continuing care retirement community at the March 7 ecumenical service in the Alexian Village Town Hall. The service featured prayers, hymns and Scripture readings about Jesus' life, from His baptism through His death.

"This is such a meaningful service for our residents," said Brother Tom Klein, C.F.A., who ministers to Village residents and serves as director of postulants for the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers. "We are blessed to have such a faith-driven community. Even though they may have different religious beliefs, they are respectful to each other, understand we are all children of



Pastor Scott Bowen of the Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church speaks at the third annual Community Lenten Service at Alexian Village of Tennessee. He was one of several local pastors who joined Village residents and Alexian Brothers at the service.

God, and understand the importance of Jesus in our lives."

Alexian Village, which is operated by Ascension Living, "is blessed to have participation from the Signal Mountain pastors, who are always willing to participate and be present to our residents," Brother Tom said.