



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*

Brothers ‘color outside lines’ at discussion-focused Assembly

When the Alexian Brothers of the Immaculate Conception Province gathered in St. Louis for their annual Provincial Assembly, no major debates or votes were on the agenda.

Instead, the Brothers dedicated most of the Assembly to group conversations about their individual religious vocations, living in community with other Brothers, and balancing community life with prayer life and the pursuit of ministries that perpetuate the Brothers’ 800-year healing mission.

“It wasn’t what most people expect of an Assembly,” said Provincial Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A. “We colored outside the lines.”

Nineteen of the 31 Alexian Brothers in the province attended the Assembly, which took place Nov. 12-15 at the Alexian Brothers resi-



The Alexian Brothers gather for a photo during their Provincial Assembly in St. Louis.

dence in St. Louis. The attendees included Brother Leó Vendrey from the Brothers’ Hungarian mission and most of the Brothers from their Philippine mission.

Brother Dan kicked off the gathering by setting some ground rules for the discussions ahead: No one would control the discussions, and no senior Brother would use terms such as “Don’t you think?” or “Shouldn’t you consider?”

(continued on page 7)

Three postulants join Brothers as vocations drive gains momentum

Three men recently joined the Alexian Brothers as postulants, giving fresh momentum to the Brothers' vocations campaign.

"This is the biggest class of postulants that we have had in a while," said Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., provincial of the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers.

The Brothers welcomed Joe Pense, Robert

Podarsky and Marc Rizzo during an evening prayer service Jan. 13 in the chapel at the Alexian Brothers residence in St. Louis. The three men each received a special blessing and a pin featuring the crest of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers.

Joe comes to the Brothers from Cathedral City, California. He

converted to Catholicism early in his life, attracted by the format of the Mass, the Catholic Church's various rituals and its concern for social justice. Committed to the ministry of healing, he formerly served as the administrator of a behavioral health program, helping to establish better protocols and procedures for treating clients with addictions.

Robert, who hails from Davenport, Iowa, served in the military and worked in law enforcement for eight years before joining the Brothers. He also worked for a number of years in the restaurant business. An avid sports fan, he has spent a considerable amount of time as a volunteer assisting the elderly and people with addictions.

Marc, who is from Pompano Beach, Florida, worked as a corporate travel agent for many years. At the time of the 9/11 attacks, he worked for American Express in the World Trade Center's

North Tower. As he arrived at the North Tower that day, he saw the first plane hit the building. He joined the Brothers because he wanted to belong to a praying group, help the elderly and have the opportunity to know Jesus better.

As postulants, the three men will be under the mentorship of Brother Warren Longo, C.F.A., postulant director, for six months before they become eligible for the Alexian Brothers Novitiate, a two-year formation program. They will attend several classes on religious life each week and will live and pray with the Alexian Brothers Community. They also will serve as volunteers at Alexian Brothers ministries.

The Alexian Brothers have been working to heighten their visibility and to attract new candidates by increasing their presence online. They have been taking steps to make their website, alexianbrothers.org, more expansive, dynamic and interactive. They have been advertising on Facebook and have established a presence on other social media sites. They also have been collaborating with VocationsPlacement.org and the VISION Vocation Network, (vocation-network.org), which use online questionnaires to help people discern religious vocations and to suggest religious orders that might be a good match.

While most religious congregations do not accept candidates older than 30 or 35, the Brothers will accept men as old as 55, which gives the Brothers an advantage as they work to expand their ranks, Brother Dan said. "For older candidates filling out the online questionnaires, it automatically places us as a congregation to contact," he said.

"Most Catholics don't know the difference between religious brothers and priests," Brother Dan added. "We're doing everything we can to educate the public, to get the word out about the Alexian Brothers, and to let people know there is an option for people over 35 to still serve the Church and God."



Postulant Director Brother Warren Longo, C.F.A., (second from left), poses for a photo with new postulants (left to right) Marc Rizzo, Joe Pense and Robert Podarsky after the three men joined the Alexian Brothers during an evening prayer service in St. Louis.

Provincial's Letter

Dear Alexian Friends:

Late last fall, health problems sent five of my fellow Alexian Brothers to the hospital. All held key positions within the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers, and their absence created a leadership void.

Fortunately, they all were feeling better as 2018 began, but the experience reminded Brothers across our province of several realities of religious life in the 21st century.

Because our ranks have thinned considerably since the mid-1900s, replacing Brothers, especially those in leadership roles, is not as easy as it used to be. There was a time when 50 or 60 Brothers were assigned to the old Alexian Brothers Hospital on Belden Avenue in Chicago. With that many men, understudies were available for most Brothers in leadership positions. Today, we have 31 Brothers in our entire province, including our missions in Hungary and the Philippines, and understudies are a thing of the past.

In this environment, we must redouble our efforts to attract new men with religious vocations. We must change with the times and heighten the visibility of the Brothers online, collaborating with organizations committed to establishing connections for people trying to discern whether religious life is the right fit for them. Recognizing these imperatives, we have intensified our vocations efforts in recent years, and they have begun to bear fruit, with three new postulants – our largest class in recent memory – joining the Brothers in January. (See article on page 2.)

Without a plethora of colleagues, current Brothers must be willing to wear multiple hats at the same time. Several Brothers do so already, and I expect this situation to continue. We also must be willing to pinch-hit for other Brothers at a moment's notice, even if their roles are unfamiliar to us. Flexibility and adaptability will be

crucial to our efforts to perpetuate our 800-year healing tradition.

At the same time, we must nurture the talents of men who choose to join us. We must be prepared to give newer Brothers greater responsibility, challenging them without overwhelming them, and guiding them without micromanaging them. This approach has led to the revival of our Brothers-presence tradition at several of our namesake healthcare ministries in suburban Chicago. (See article on page 6.)

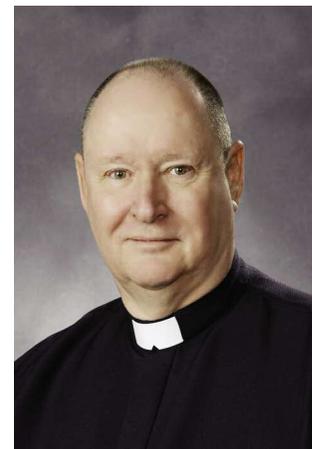
We also must invite and welcome newer Brothers' ideas for enhancing our ministries, our prayer life and our life in community. Keeping this in mind, we designed our latest Provincial Assembly so that all Brothers would feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings during group discussions about what our vocations mean to each of us and the difficulties we sometimes encounter during everyday life in community. (See article on page 1.) These discussions were well received and set a positive tone for the Brothers and our ministries as we entered 2018.

My colleague Brother Jeffrey Callander, C.F.A., likes to say that difficult circumstances are a gift – if we allow them to be. Although the health problems that sidelined my five fellow Brothers were difficult for them and challenging for our province, we view them as a gift – a gift that will motivate us to change and grow as a religious congregation in the months and years ahead.

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.

Dorothy Day was a renowned Catholic who has been approved for the process of beatification and canonization.

Born in 1897 in Brooklyn, New York, she worked as a journalist and was involved in protest movements for women's rights. As her faith grew, she used her exceptional intelligence and zeal to serve the hungry and the poor. Together with Peter Maurin (a former Christian Brother), she founded the Catholic Worker Movement and a newspaper. She worked for integration and social justice, especially for the most marginalized.

In 1971, Brother Warren Longo, C.F.A., met Day in Chicago at a special assembly sponsored by the Ecumenical Community of Taizé. When they were introduced, she immediately stood up and loudly praised the Alexian Brothers for taking care of "my men" – those on skid row who were suffering from alcoholism. "You were the only ones who would take them into your hospitals," she said. "God's blessings are upon you Alexian Brothers. Don't ever forget the poor."

Mission in Philippines celebrates 36th anniversary

Editor's Note: *The Alexian Brothers recently celebrated the 36th anniversary of the founding of their mission in the Philippines. In this article, Brother Ignatius Gonzales, C.F.A., provides a first-person account of the festivities.*

On the Feast of the Guardian Angels, the Alexian Brothers celebrated the 36th anniversary of the founding of their mission in the Philippines with a tribute to the pioneering Brothers who launched the mission.

The Oct. 2 celebration started with a

Mass celebrated by Reverend Father Allan Rodriguez, D.C.D., in St. Alexius Chapel at the Alexian Brothers Health & Wellness Center in the Matina section of Davao City.

During his homily, Father Allan thanked the Brothers for their presence and

their significant contributions in providing quality healthcare to the people of Mindanao, the island where the mission is located, and particularly in the Archdiocese of Davao.

He reminded us that it was not a coincidence that we have our ministries and apostolates in Davao City. He said it was God's plan to send our pioneering Brothers to Davao City to

conduct a mission that would serve the needs of the people, especially the poor. Father Allan also challenged us to continue to be faithful to the charism of our congregation, our prayer life and our community life, and always to be cognizant of the signs of the times in terms of our ministries and apostolates.

The Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers founded the Philippine mission Oct. 2, 1981. The late Brother Eugene Gizzi, C.F.A., the late Brother Maurice Wilson, C.F.A., the late Brother Robert Petersen, C.F.A., and Brother Jeffrey Callander, C.F.A., served as our pioneering Brothers.

Through God's graces, the mission has been blessed for 36 years with two communities – our Matina community, which is a formation and full ministry residence, and our community in the Bajada section of Davao City, which serves as the center for our postulants, novices and temporary professed Brothers. The mission includes a total of 11 Brothers, including five perpetually professed Brothers, three temporary professed Brothers, two novices and one postulant.

Our ministry site, the Alexian Brothers Health & Wellness Center, serves the healthcare needs of people in Davao City and nearby provinces. We also operate an outreach ministry to inmates at the Davao City Jail and to several Davao City barangays, or districts, in need of quality healthcare services.

After the anniversary Mass, Father Allan, Alexian Brothers and associates of the Alexian Brothers Health & Wellness Center visited Brother Maurice's gravesite and offered prayers for all deceased Alexian Brothers. We also visited the gravesite of Dr. Lourdes Macavinta, one of our volunteer doctors who made a significant contribution to the success of our outreach ministry.

We later had a lunch celebration at a Davao City restaurant, where we enjoyed authentic Filipino dishes in honor of our heritage.



Alexian Brothers join Reverend Father Allan Rodriguez, D.C.D., (fifth from right), for a photo after Father Allan celebrated a Mass marking the 36th anniversary of the founding of the Alexian Brothers mission in the Philippines.

Alexian Brothers and associates of the Alexian Brothers Health & Wellness Center offer prayers for deceased Alexian Brothers while visiting the gravesite of Brother Maurice Wilson, C.F.A., one of the founding Brothers of the Philippine mission.



Brothers use team-building trips to strengthen staff ties in Hungary

Team-building is a top priority for the Alexian Brothers at their mission in Győrújbarát, Hungary.

Brother Alexius Siska, C.F.A., director of the Alexian Brothers Community in Győrújbarát, and Brother Leó Vendrey, C.F.A., a nursing assistant at the mission's St. Elizabeth of Hungary Home for the Elderly, work closely with the home's leadership and associates, and both Brothers provide pastoral care for the home's residents. Last September, the Brothers took turns accompanying a total of 50 of their St. Elizabeth colleagues on a pair of one-day team-building trips to Bratislava, Hungary.

The travelers, including Henrietta Ziegler, director of the St. Elizabeth home, visited the gothic St. Martin's Cathedral, known for being the coronation church of the Kingdom of Hungary between 1563 and 1830. The cathedral contains the remains of St. John the Merciful, who died in the early seventh century. Its tower is topped by a gold-plated replica of the Crown of St. Stephen, Hungary's first king, and the cathedral's garden features a statue of St. Elizabeth.

"The point of these team-building trips is to strengthen St. Elizabeth home's community by allowing everyone to get to know each other better," Brother Alexius said. "In this way, we can work together better toward our common goal of serving the home's residents. We had luck with the weather, so everybody felt well and traveled back with nice memories."

In other Hungarian mission news:

- Kápli Gergely Csaba, a local artist, donated to the mission a stained glass version of the Alexian Brothers crest. He previously made the stained glass windows for Divine Mercy Chapel in the St. Elizabeth home and St. Bernadette Chapel in St. Alexius Monastery, the Brothers' residence at the mission.

- The mission's dog (Amadeus) and two cats (Mirci and Garfield) visited with residents of the St. Elizabeth home as the Alexian Brothers cele-



Brother Alexius Siska, C.F.A., (top photo, left), and Brother Leó Vendrey, C.F.A., (bottom photo, seventh from right) visit Bratislava, Hungary, with St. Elizabeth of Hungary Home for the Elderly staff members. Brother Alexius and his group are shown in front of a statue of St. Elizabeth in the garden of St. Martin's Cathedral.

brated World Animal Day, an international day of action for animal rights and welfare. The special day last Oct. 4 coincided with the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

"Amadeus, Mirci and Garfield bring so much love and joy to our residents, their relatives and the home's staff," Brother Alexius said.



(Left) Stained glass donated by a local artist to the Alexian Brothers' Hungarian mission shows the Alexian Brothers crest. (Right) The Hungarian mission's cats (Mirci and Garfield) visit with a resident of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Home for the Elderly on World Animal Day.

Brothers launch 'presence ministry,' reviving tradition at healthcare sites

The Alexian Brothers have launched a “presence ministry” at several of their namesake healthcare facilities in Chicago’s northwest suburbs, providing comfort, support and spiritual guidance to patients, residents and family members.

The new ministry revives a role the Brothers played for years before an overall decline in religious vocations and the deaths of older Brothers

thinned their ranks. The Brothers recently have seen an increase in vocation inquiries and have welcomed several new men to the Immaculate Conception Province, allowing them to reinstitute the ministry. (See related article on page 2.)

Brother Torch Acosta, C.F.A., who professed his First Vows in 2017, is leading the ministry, dividing his time among several facilities and residences each week. The places he visits include AMITA Health Alexian Brothers Medical Center Elk Grove Village, AMITA Health Alexian Brothers Rehabilitation Hospital Elk Grove Village, the Alexian Brothers Hospice Residence in Elk Grove

Village, and the Alexian Brothers Center for Mental Health in Arlington Heights. He also visits residents in the mental health center’s Transitional Living Program and Community Integrated Living Arrangement program.

Brother Torch walks the hallways and visits different areas of the facilities, greeting people, talking with and listening to those who want to share their thoughts or difficulties, and praying with them.

“One of the reasons I became an Alexian Brother was because I was drawn to how our Lord Jesus, if people did not go to him or approach him, he went to the people,” Brother

Torch said. “He went to those who were crippled. He went to people who were blind or deaf. That’s what I do. I go to the people.”

Although Brother Torch does not have a medical background, “it’s healing for people when I just give them the compassion and respect they really want – when they are given what everybody wants, and that’s to be treated like a human being,” he said.

In keeping with the Alexian Brothers’ value of partnership, Brother Torch checks with nurses to get their approval and advice before initiating visits with patients or residents. “I check on any precautions I need to know,” he said. “I also check on any interests a patient has and how soon their doctor will be visiting, so I can make sure not to interfere.”

Launched last fall, the ministry has generated “very positive” feedback from patients, residents, family members and staff, said Provincial Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A. “I delivered the opening remarks at a doctor/dentist dinner a couple of months ago, and I must have had five or six doctors come up and say, ‘It’s good to see the Brothers in the facilities again,’” Brother Dan said.

Brother Torch also has received numerous positive comments as he makes his rounds, with people often sharing fond memories of Brothers whom they saw regularly in years past. “They’re all happy the Brothers are back,” he said. “It seems like people light up when I tell them I’m an Alexian Brother, because they remember how it was in the past when the Brothers had more of a presence.”

Plans call for expanding the ministry to AMITA Health St. Alexius Medical Center Hoffman Estates this year.

In addition to providing a Brothers presence at Alexian Brothers facilities, Brother Torch volunteers one day each week with Habitat for Humanity, helping to build new homes for low-income families.



Brother Torch Acosta, C.F.A., who professed his First Vows in 2017, is leading the Brothers’ new “presence ministry,” dividing his time among several healthcare sites and residences each week.

Brothers ‘color outside lines’ at discussion-focused Assembly

(continued from page 1)

In the discussions that followed, Brothers “shared from their hearts” why they became Alexian Brothers and what their vocations meant to them, Brother Dan said. They also spoke honestly about difficulties they encounter during everyday life in community. “That’s something we’ve never been encouraged to talk about,” Brother Dan said. “It was very much: ‘This is what my life is like as a Brother.’”

Brothers recognized other Brothers who had served as mentors, and older Brothers and Brothers in leadership roles opened up about their assignments, responsibilities and challenges through the years. “The younger Brothers got a chance to hear what leadership is really about and how difficult it can be,” Brother Dan said. “They also got a chance to understand not everything will be what they want it to be and they have to surrender their own personal desires for the benefit of the province.”

Other conversations focused on the Brothers’ prayer life, including how prayer services are structured in the province’s different communities. “The Brothers are unique in that our communities establish their own pattern of prayers,” Brother Dan said. “We’ve always allowed each community to define it for themselves. For us, it keeps prayer alive and vibrant and very genuine. It’s not a matter of just sitting down, reciting words, making the Sign of the Cross and then going about your day.”

Two presentations punctuated the Brothers’ discussions. Sister Amy Hereford, C.S.J., author of the book, “Religious Life at the Crossroads,” talked about the importance of religious communities evolving with the times while still honoring the mission and legacy of their founders. “One of her key messages was that leaders of religious orders cannot continue to administer them like they did in the 1950s and 1960s before Vatican II,” Brother Dan said. With religious vocations in decline, religious orders

also must find new ways to work together, such as partnering on volunteer projects that further the mission of the Catholic Church, Sister Amy said. Religious life, she added, “is the space that allows us to grow the Kingdom of God on Earth.”

Brother Patrick McCabe, C.F.A., associate vocations minister for the Immaculate Conception Province, delivered the other

“Everyone was pleased because we talked about things that matter. It was a time for the Brothers to really be human – to be men and Brothers at the same time.”

presentation, updating his fellow Brothers on vocations strategies and recent progress in attracting men to the Alexian Brothers. (See related article on page 2.)

The Brothers reacted positively to the Assembly’s discussion-oriented format, Brother Dan said. “When we finished on the last morning of the Assembly, we went around the room and talked about how the Assembly was, and not one person was negative or unhappy,” he said. “Everyone was pleased because we talked about things that matter. It was a time for the Brothers to really be human – to be men and Brothers at the same time.”

In This Issue

Volume 43, Number 4
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Cover
Brothers 'color outside lines' at Assembly



Page 2
Vocations drive produces three new postulants



Page 4
Philippine mission marks 36th anniversary



Page 6
New 'presence ministry' revives tradition



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The Alexians

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Brothers provide relief for victims of New Year's blaze in Philippines



In keeping with their centuries-old tradition of assisting the needy, the Alexian Brothers provided shelter and other relief for victims of a devastating New Year's fire that swept through a neighborhood in the Bajada section of Davao City in the Philippines. Many families lost their homes in the massive blaze, which broke out just after 12 a.m. Jan. 1 as residents celebrated the New Year in a neighborhood behind the residence of the Alexian Brothers Bajada Community, said Brother Raphael Fallado, C.F.A., the community's director. The fire engulfed 56 houses and displaced more than 100 families. *The Philippine Star* reported that two people were injured in the fire. No deaths were reported. The Brothers opened their doors to provide temporary shelter for the displaced families and enlisted the support of the Philippine Red Cross to help those affected by the fire. In addition, the Brothers launched a fundraising campaign to provide food, drinking water, hygiene kits, clothing and other items for fire victims. Plans called for funds raised by the campaign also to be used to help displaced families start rebuilding their homes.