

Second Callings

Second Callings may be thought of as the many sequels to an initial faith encounter with Jesus Christ. Life takes a variety of turns, some anticipated, some quite unexpected, each opening new possibilities for discerning the will of God.

Jesus chose, as disciples, men who had been engaged in other activities: fishing, tax collecting, and even that of being a zealot.

Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice, before ever considering a life as a religious, had been a businessman, a husband, a father and a widower. He was in his forties when moved by both a desire to dedicate his life more fully to the Lord and a painful awareness of the social and educational needs of his country, he responded to the gospel call: *sell all, give to the poor and come follow me. (Mark 10,21)*

The men who joined Edmund in community, prayer, and service, were mature men, often coming from professions other than education. They saw the acute need for Christian education among the poor children of Waterford, Ireland, and did what was necessary to make it happen. Others followed their lead and within a few decades the basis had been laid for a Congregation that would come to live among the People of God on six continents, developing schools, social services, and child care centers, attending to local exigencies while advocating for universal human rights.

The stories selected for this edition of "Profiles" concern men who entered the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers of North America after years in other walks of life. **Brother Michael LaFrance** is a father, a grandfather and a lawyer. After the death of his wife he sought a group dedicated to prayer, living community, and serving the poor. **Brother Christopher Hall** had worked his way through college while managing a MacDonald's Restaurant. Today he serves as the Vice President for Technology at Bergen Catholic High School. **Brother Spencer Tafuri** had been an accountant, a councilman, police chief and mayor, before responding to a recurring urge to join the men who had taught him in high school, to share their dedication, comradery and joy. **Brother Timothy Granzotto** began his adult life as a banker. Today as a Brother he is a professional counselor serving the homeless of Miami.

What these men share is a call to carry forward a life and ministry characterized by *presence, compassion and liberation*. In the stories of our brothers we become aware of the movement of the Spirit as we discern our role in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, advancing His Church and her mission, serving the men and women of our times, and giving new expression to the Charism of Blessed Brother Edmund Ignatius Rice.

Brother Michael LaFrance, CFC



As an outgrowth of his legal work with children and adults at risk of deportation, Brother Mike, center, helps mentor University students interning in immigration law.

Br. Michael LaFrance writes:

Whether calling young or old, I believe people are called to get their needs met. I was called to get met my need for a shared reality, together with the need for connection, intimacy, and purpose of life.

I already had some intimacy with the voice of God within. I was attracted to the beauty and presence of God found in the Monastic grounds. Yet, I wanted the shared reality with other men in the single life where I might connect with them. It's fun praying together, eating together, and occasionally watching a good football game together. I found that reality living in community with the Brothers of Edmund Rice.

With the brothers, I found many who are interested in serving the poor. I find delight in saying yes to assisting the desperate, poor immigrant facing deportation, yet challenging to deal with my sadness at how they are treated. Being brother to the poor is where I find growth. Being Brother is a lot easier said than done. Living with brothers in a semi-simple life provides the supportive help needed to day after day to serve the poor.

Cheers, Mike

Brother Christopher Hall, CFC

Working with others to “make things work well” has been a recurring theme in the life-journey that brought Brother Christopher Hall from managing a branch of MacDonald’s Restaurant, through his years of formation as a Christian Brother, into teaching and coaching assignments, and onto roles of Dean of Students in Miami, Head of School in Harlem and now Vice President for Technology at Bergen Catholic High School in New Jersey. He points to the Latin motto on the crest of the Congregation of Christian Brothers: *facere et docere* – “to do and to teach.”

Much of his recent “doing” has been in the fields of technology and computer-assisted education. He delights in developing more effective means of communication among and between administrators, faculty and students; accompanying teachers in exploring new ways of engaging students in the learning process, stimulating curiosity and inventiveness and enhancing the impact of liturgical and retreat presentations.

He encourages students to utilize their skills in presenting school assignments, reporting of service and mission experiences, and opening new educational opportunities for others. This school year, in a gift to an elementary school in an economically challenged neighborhood, Brother Hall and a group of his students used free time during their Christmas break to installed a state-of-the-art WiFi system.



Brother Christopher Hall, on a ladder, assuring that the system installed by his students will do what it is supposed to do -- work well!

Brother Spencer Tafuri, CFC

A former Wall Street accountant, councilman, police commissioner and mayor, with a special enthusiasm for American History, Brother Spencer Tafuri has no shortage of stories to share with his junior high school religion students. Their questions seemingly take him off task until he cleverly works the content of his fascinating accounts back to the lesson of the day.

First to the school in the morning and often one of the last to leave, Brother Tafuri is the go-to person for a bit of tutoring, sharing some home or friend issues, or simply hanging out as he organizes various activities for the Campus Ministry and community service groups.

He helped the students at Christ Our King – Stella Maris to organize their own Edmund Rice Society, now one of the school's more popular and socially engaged student leadership groups.

When asked if his story might be included in this edition of profiles, he wrote:

... May I also suggest a sentence or two regarding the love and extreme satisfaction of serving God's people in ministry, as well as the joy and fraternal love that I always had embrace me in community.

Today, I am holding a Vocation Assembly with the Diocesan Vicar, the Director of Vocations, and one of my former students. Tomorrow, a vocation prayers service with several students before our assembly and then Mass. Let's keep each other in our prayers.

Your brother, Spencer

Brother Timothy Granzotto, CFC

When Timothy Granzotto applied for membership in the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers he came with the experience of having been a banker and later a secondary school teacher. He felt a calling to religious life, a desire for fraternity, and a way of life more fully dedicated to the service of God.

While attracted by the spirit of the Christian Brothers he had reservations about his possible place among the Brothers. He knew the Congregation to be an order recognized for its schools and teaching. He, himself, was experiencing a call not to a classroom but to another helping role with those on the margins of society. He had begun studies as a professional counsellor.

The Vocation Director advised him that such ministry among the poor is very much in keeping with the Charism of Edmund Rice and, in fact, many Brothers in the United States and around the globe are serving outside the structures of schools in challenged neighborhoods.

During a contact period, residential candidacy and ministerial candidacy, Tim continued his studies and became a certified counselor. He enriched his experience of Brotherhood at ministry sites in Chicago, Brownsville, Miami, Bolivia and Peru.



Now, as an annually professed religious, Brother Tim is a member of the clinical staff at Camillus House serving the street people of inner-city Miami both as counselor and in-service trainer for new staff members. He understands that his engagement on the margins of society and his educational role with aspiring counselors afford him a unique perspective on ways in which the Lord has been moving the Congregation as we seek new ways of being Brother to the world.

Many successful educators in our high schools and college come from industry, business, finance, military service, professions and the arts....teaching has been for them a second calling. For some the calling they hear goes beyond a profession or career. They understand it involves a relationship with their God and an engagement that could shape the rest of their lives.

Should the reader be in the process of discerning what to do with the rest of your life, or know someone in such discernment, you might consider the value of a conversation with a Christian Brother. We love to share the gift of our vocation. Religious life is experiencing a period of revitalization responding to the challenges and the excitement of a new day in the

Church. Perhaps what you seek, echoing in the call that keeps coming, is what we have found as disciples of Jesus following the example of Blessed Edmund.

An invitation to consider a second calling to the Congregation of Christian Brothers is being addressed to single men discerning a call to follow Jesus Christ in a new way. PSM

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