



2016 Summer Sports

Summer in the northern hemisphere offers students a time away from the pressures of the academic year. While experienced by some as a time of liberation from obligations, these weeks often accommodate an even more demanding schedule of activities: jobs, house chores, teams, outings, barbeques, family trips, summer reading, remediation or advancement courses, and occasional parties, quickly crowd these “care free” days. Over the past few years a growing number of students have sought to insert into their summer program a project in service to those in need. Bonita Springs Florida has become the destination of students from the Edmund Rice Network Schools for just such involvements.

The Brothers came to the area in the 80’s on the invitation of Bishop John Nevins. An alum of both Blessed Sacrament High School and Iona College in New Rochelle, he sought the Brothers to take responsibility for a secondary school in his new Naples diocese. Knowing the Brothers well, he offered as an added encouragement, the opportunity to establish a mission in service to the poor, among the growing numbers of migrant worker families in the Bonita Springs area.

For the past three decades the small community of three or four brothers has accompanied the workers and their families, linking them to health services, directly attending to the need for food, clothing and housing, teaching English as a second language, bringing spiritual services to the labor camps and laborers to the local parish, and fostering the incorporation of these families into the local community.

While conditions have changed for many, there are still families struggling with poverty and precarious living situations. The Brothers continue to reach out to those on the margins. During the long summers they join with Catholic Charities in offering day time activities for the children. These “camps” are animated by the student volunteers from the Edmund Rice Network schools. The schools scheduled for the summer of 2016 include: Bishop Hendricken of Warwick RI, Catholic Memorial of West Roxbury MA, All Hallows of The Bronx NY; Tampa Catholic of Tampa FL, Bergen Catholic of Oradell NJ, Brother Rice of Bloomfield Hills MI; Archbishop Curley Notre Dame of Miami FL, and Iona Prep of New Rochelle NY.

The local community of Brothers Tim Smyth, Bob Koppes and Joe Payne, offer hospitality to the volunteers and the faculty members of the various schools. The Brothers prepare the meals and organize the nightly processing sessions in which the students are encouraged to share their experiences in the context of the call of the Gospel. This edition of PROFILES highlights four Brothers who will be engaged in the projects. They are our “Summer Sports,”

Brother Joseph Payne, CFC



Brother Joe Payne, second from the left, with students in his ESL class.

An Alum of All Hallows High School in the Bronx and Iona College of New Rochelle, Brother Joe began his teaching career at Monsignor Farrell High School on Staten Island. He then moved back onto the mainland and initiated an extended engagement in elementary school education in East Harlem and New Rochelle. He left the New York area for a three-year engagement at St. John's Indian Mission in Laveen, Arizona, and then returned to schools in Manhattan and Brooklyn. While experienced in all grades, his preference was working with seven and eight-year-old children in whom he found a unique openness to the learning process.

Brother Joe Payne has been a member of the *Los Hermanos* Community since 2012. It was to be a temporary assignment. Parish Catholic schools in New York were consolidating or closing. Teachers with less seniority were losing their jobs, positions they needed to support their families. Brother decided that he could do what they could not – move elsewhere. His intention was to return to his role as a teacher in the elementary grades of a Catholic school perhaps in some other area. In the meanwhile, he began volunteering his teaching skills among the Hispanic migrants seeking to learn English. The cleverness, passion, creativity, and playfulness, of the master teacher of little children, was a skill set that quickly proved most effective with adult learners.

Invited to provide some material for this profile Br. Joe Payne e-mailed the following:

I continue to teach my ESL classes. Last year I was able to use the high school students to aid me in my classes.

This summer the plan is to have them assist me in two of my classes. One class will be with beginners and the second class will be with my second year students.

I am so grateful to have these students. I believe my second year students benefited greatly having a private tutor once a week for eight weeks. I have informed My Second year students were very happy to learn it would happen again this summer.

As for why I joined the Brothers....God called me to be a member of a teaching order. He has used me as He wished and I am blessed with the greatest memories of service to so many students. Three times I searched if God wanted me to be a priest and three times He made it clear to me that He wants me to serve His people as Brother.

The only way I could continue as a member of the Christian Brothers is through God's Love and Mercy. Blessings, Joe.

The high school summer volunteers will be returning home with delightful Br. Joe stories involving Captain Krunch, the world of Disney, and the stirrings of child-like fantasy adding delight to each new day.

Brother Peter Zawot, CFC



Brother Peter Zawot is a member of the Leadership Team of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North American Province. He shares a bit of his story as a Brother:

My first encounter with a brother was at Bergen Catholic High School. Even as a freshman, I could see that the brothers were good teachers and had our success foremost in their minds. But there was more than just academics. They were around before and after school and readily engaged in conversation, showing a genuine interest whether you were in a particular brother's class or not.

Early in senior year, as I approached the decision of where to go to college, the idea of joining the brothers became more clear. I came because I could truly see myself doing what the brothers did, being present to youth during a significant time in their lives. I proceeded with applying and was accepted.

That was 41 years ago! As I look back on those years, I realize I have been truly blessed. I became a successful teacher and later an administrator. I have served in ten locations in different parts of the country and have made many friends. I have made "I refuse to be unhappy" my personal motto.

So, I've worked at deepening my spiritual life and working at relationships with God and within community and ministry. I stay because I really enjoy what I do and who I continue to become: a brother in every sense of that word. Knowing what I know, would I do it all again? The answer is simple, yet profound, "YES"

Brother Zawot began his teaching career in Sacred Heart School in Hell's Kitchen, NYC. He continued at Bergen Catholic, Iona Prep, Bishop Hendricken and Tampa Catholic. While his preferred engagement is that of teaching biology, Bro. Z, has been the go-to person for administrative roles in the schools of the Edmund Rice Network. He has been principal at St. John Neumann High School in Naples Florida, Blessed Sacrament-St. Gabriel High School in New Rochelle, NY, Trinity Catholic High School in Ocala Florida, and Damien Memorial High School in Honolulu, Hawaii. Having served throughout the United States, he expresses particular enthusiasm for warmer climates and island ministries.

Recently elected by the Brothers to the Province Leadership Team, Peter is now based in the Province Center in Elizabeth New Jersey. As trustee of each of the separately incorporated schools of the Edmund Rice Network in North America, he is often on the road. He delights in the opportunity the summer offers to take a break from board meetings to interact with the student volunteers. He will be introducing them to some of the culture and foods he learned to appreciate in Hawaii, sharing stories of his days as a teacher and principal, and picking up student stories to share at professional workshops and conferences.

Brother James Hamilton, CFC



Bishop Kearney High School in Rochester was where Jim Hamilton first came in contact with the Christian Brothers. Their enthusiastic presence in the life of the school nurtured his own total engagement in all that was Kearny: academic, athletic, social and religious. On graduation he knew he would one day be a Brother, and began what was necessary to make it happen.

Years later, it became his role as Brother Vocation Director to help other young and not so young men discern their vocations. Visiting college campuses and high schools he presented religious life as an attractive option within the universal call of all Christians to follow Jesus Christ.

He would tell his story enriched with humorous experiences of his years in formation, his first years of teaching in Boston and then Harlem, his subsequent assignments to Florida and Newark, and his delight in coaching and umpiring baseball.

At the end of his term as Vocation Director Br. Hamilton welcomed an assignment to All Hallows in the Bronx. Here he delights in the vibrant community of the "city kids" he teaches and coaches all in the proximity of Yankee Stadium. He knows not to walk through the neighborhood wearing his preferred Boston Red Sox cap. An AH hat is a prudent substitute. It is only at graduation ceremonies, that his students learn a favorite teacher, coach, and cafeteria prankster, now in full academic regalia, holds the title of Doctor as well as Brother.

He adds:

What drew me to the Brothers was their great spirit. As a student at Bishop Kearney, I never really saw what their prayer life and community life was all about, but I saw the fruits of those gifts as they ministered to the students through teaching, moderating and coaching. I thought that I would like to try to follow in their footsteps, and so I joined the program and quickly grew to love the vocation of a Christian Brother.

I learned very quickly that the personal and communal prayer life plays an important role in a Brother's vocation. I also grew to love the ministry of teaching, coaching, and moderating clubs and activities. The other important factor for me is community life, where we live as "brothers", pray together and share responsibilities as we journey in our vocation. I am a teacher in my ministry, but a Brother in my vocation! I have had opportunities to live and minister in several different areas, and in all of these I found that the people and the ministries there provided me with tremendous blessings.

As a student at Bishop Kearney High School, I would have never imagined that I would now be in the South Bronx at All Hallows High School, but it is a tremendous experience. God's Spirit and the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice are definitely alive in the administration, faculty, staff and students of All Hallows. I continue to teach Religion, coach baseball and work with student leadership

development and service programs and I am very honored and proud to minister as a Christian Brother.

One of the programs where I find continued inspiration is the summer camp with "Los Hermanos" and Catholic Charities in Bonita Springs, Florida. It is eye opening for me to see how our students, who come from challenging economic conditions in the South Bronx, interact so well with the children in the camp. It gives me great hope when I see our young men from All Hallows sharing the spirit of Blessed Edmund Rice and the Christian Brothers through their interaction with the children.

Our students always come away from their immersion experience in Bonita Springs with a renewed sense of God's call to service to others. I have found that God works in many varied ways in our lives and that you never know how God's Spirit will lead us in our lives. Be open to God's presence and listen to and for the Spirit who will lead us and guide us. Jim

Brother Robert Koppes, CFC



Chicago born Robert Koppes came East to begin his formation as a Christian Brother. Having graduated from Iona College he began a series of teaching assignments that brought him from Sacred Heart Grammar School in New York to Damien Memorial High School in Honolulu to Brother Rice High School Bloomfield Hills and eventually back to his alma mater, Brother Rice High School in Chicago. Next he moved to O'Dea High School in Seattle, Washington. In his nineteenth year at O'Dea he was asked to assume responsibility for the Christian Brothers' Lay Volunteer Program. He offers the following summary of his ministries from the beginning to today.

I was a teacher for forty-two years and truly enjoyed the work. I was a teacher and never had even the least urge to "move up" into administration. The

classroom was my world. For the vast majority of those years I taught American Literature and loved it. I remember a couple of years when I and another Brother, who also taught American Lit, would sit around the community room table late into the night and quote lines back and forth. A student once referred to me as "channeling" Walt Whitman. A high compliment indeed. Although I am still not sure the student meant it as a compliment.

I was a teacher and never much of a coach. But I was a great bus driver and have transported many a state championship team to and from games. My first championship game was in the Silver Dome in Michigan and I can still remember the hairs on the back of my neck standing up as the dome first came into view.

When my teaching career finally ended--the darn kids were always 16 or 17 but I kept getting older--I worked in our volunteer program. That has also been a joy beyond description.

I am currently working at attracting a young volunteer to minister with us here in southern Florida as we address at least some of the needs of migrant farm workers and new arrivals to our country. This summer I will be working with two University of Notre Dame students who will be ministering daily at a Catholic Charities summer camp.

Brother Bob solicits and administers the funds that make possible the works of the Christian Brothers in service of the poor in Bonita Springs. He along with Brother Tim Smyth and Brother Joe Payne constitute the community that will be hosting the summer volunteers and their moderator

A concluding thought:

This Fall, each of our Summer Sports will be returning to regular ministries where the young they teach, the poor they serve, and the marginalized for whom they advocate, will keep them mindful of the urging of Jesus: The harvest is abundant. Pray the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His harvest. Luke (10, 2)

Please join us in prayer, discernment, and thanksgiving for the richness of His calls to each who would follow Him.

PSM



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