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They have answered the call to serve people.

Brothers

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Spring 2017

Newsletter of the Midwest Province of the Brothers of Holy Cross

Brother Richard Armstrong

For about twenty years Brother Richard Armstrong taught at Holy Trinity High School, a school opened by the Brothers in 1910 not too far from downtown Chicago. As the neighborhood changed, so did the school, and Bro. Richard's hard work, tireless preparation and creative lessons made him a perennial favorite. But he had even bigger ideas about how he could serve God's people.



Since 1986 he has been living and serving at Andre House of Arizona, a house of hospitality inspired by the Congregation of Holy Cross and our first Saint, Saint Brother Andre Bessette. Andre House responds to the mission of Matthew 25. Bro. Richard and staff embody the mission and tradition of the Catholic Worker with the spirituality and zeal of Holy Cross. They provide food, clothing, laundry, showers, lockers, blankets, legal advice, office resources and more to those in need.

Each evening Andre House serves 500–600 meals to people experiencing poverty in central Phoenix. Brother Richard is there every day as these meals are served. Bro. Richard, a board member, has long served as Steward, ensuring that the financial support given flows directly to benefit the guests. A good example of care for the guests is the story of Todd, a 62 year old man who spent his career as a professional mover.

After years of lifting, Todd's spirit was willing but his body was too weak to continue the heavy work. Without much formal education, and after the loss of his wife, Todd, who had never taken a sick day in his life, became homeless. Bro. Richard and Todd found a number of things in common when Todd moved into the transitional house for men (called Brother Richard House). Their strong work ethic, roots in the Midwest and dry senses of humor made for an instant connection. As Todd tried daily to find work unsuccessfully,

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Brother Richard Armstrong

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Bro. Richard was there every step of the way providing encouragement and counsel. After treatment for a brain hemorrhage, Todd returned and Bro. Richard took Todd as a kind of “assistant” to join him on Richard’s many errands. Todd has now recovered, receives disability support, and is moving into his own apartment.

Bro. Richard is still in great health, lifting hundreds of pounds of produce from the Food Bank and Costco each week. He has always been willing to go the extra mile—sometimes quite literally. Conservatively, Richard has written and processed thousands of checks, cooked more than 8,000 turkeys, assisted in feeding millions of meals, and helped form hundreds of young people who provide one year of service on the Andre House Core Team. In his more than 30 years on the job, Richard has taken only a couple of sick days.

When Brother Andre was beatified, Bro. Richard was one of the Brothers who won the “lottery” to attend the beatification ceremony in Rome. How appropriate! Richard is humble in the way Brother Andre was, serving the Lord and other people. Richard is able to empathize with those he serves and truly sees them as his brothers and sisters.

Brothers newsletter is a publication of the Development Office, Midwest Province.

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message from... the Provincial



**Brother Chester Freel, C.S.C.,
Provincial Superior**

Dear Friend of Holy Cross,

In the Midwest Province’s most recent annual appeal letter, which you would have received at Thanksgiving time, we highlighted three of our Brothers active in the field of secondary education. Given that not all of our men are in ministry at sponsored high schools, this edition of BROTHERS focuses on three members who once were teachers, but now minister outside of the classroom. Each of their stories is unique but has the common thread of their serving others who, for a diversity of reasons, have difficulty in helping themselves.

In the course of my responsibilities as Provincial, I have had the opportunity to visit with each of these three Brothers and can attest to the great worth of their ministries. I marvel at their ability to treat clients with respect, patience, and joy. In the Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross is this passage:

*We heard a summons to give over our lives in a more explicit way.
It was a call to serve all people, believers and unbelievers alike.*

Constitution 1:3

The Brothers highlighted in this newsletter encounter, assist, and advocate for people in varying degrees of life’s challenges. These religious serve the poor and oppressed in their local communities and respond to the Gospel message, as found in the Beatitudes, to love others. The Church’s official *Year of Mercy* may have concluded, but for our Brothers this call to service is a life-long commitment.

As you read the enclosed stories, I trust you too will gain an appreciation for how our Brothers are responding to the summons to be Christ-like in their daily compassionate interaction with others.

May St. Joseph, Patron of the Brothers, and his disciple, St. Andre Bessette, pray for us.

In Holy Cross,

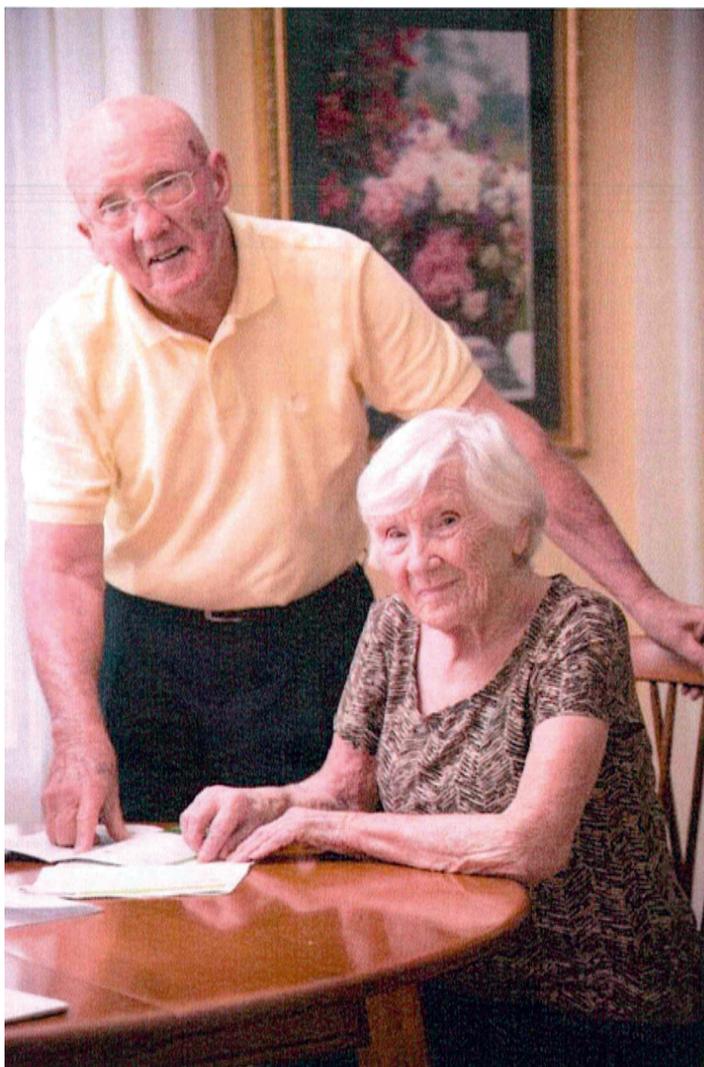
Brother Chester Freel, CSC

Brother Chester Freel, C. S. C.
Provincial Superior

Brother Douglas Roach

Upon arriving in Venice, Florida, in August of 2002, Brother Douglas Roach took a couple of months to assess the surrounding areas for how he might best use the gifts he had been given to serve others. Constitution 2.16 (“Wherever we work we assist others not only to recognize and develop their own gifts but also to discover the deepest longing in their lives”) helped him focus his time and efforts on serving adults through the Friendship Centers founded by Brother William Geenen. The particular program that caught his interest was the “Friendship at Home Program.” This program serves elderly folks who live alone, do not or cannot drive and have had to give up much of their independence. Many need transportation to grocery stores, doctors’ offices, banks, or postoffice.

Presently Brother Douglas assists three seniors who have severe macular degeneration, one who is confined to a wheel chair, and one of whom suffers from Crohn’s



Friendship at Home volunteer Brother Doug Roach visits Ann Kane.

Photo by Daniel Perales

disease. All of these individuals have minimal family support systems. They, God’s people, related to Brother Douglas their lifetime experiences, conversations which very soon led to a trust level which constantly amazes him. Once when he took a woman shopping at Wal-Mart, she handed him two hundred dollars as he was placing her purchases on the checkout conveyor belt. She said she would be back in a minute as she headed to the restroom, leaving her purse in the shopping cart. Needless to say when Brother took her home they had a discussion about elder vulnerability.

Brother is also involved in an Outreach Community Dinner program which provides a complete meal for people who are homeless or who live alone. These dinner guests have fallen on hard times due to government cutbacks on social services. Sitting down to a well prepared meal while conversing with others of similar circumstances brings about a real transformation for those who attend. Most people love to talk about their experiences, good or bad, filled with happiness and sorrow, because they know they are in a safe place. By their own integrity and their faith in God, they are able to have hope which makes their life worth living. One man who is homeless related to Brother Douglas that all of his assets have been depleted as he is putting his two children through college: a daughter who will become a neurosurgeon in May and a son who is working on his PhD. Neither child knows the circumstances of their dad because he has never told them.

Brother’s own spiritual growth has been enhanced by the people God sends his way. He has to keep reminding himself that all that he does is about God, not about Douglas Roach. At the end of each day he tries to take a few minutes and ask himself what he learned about himself through the experiences of the people he helps.

Brother William Geenen oftentimes said: “Loneliness is the malnutrition of the elderly.” Having seen this first hand, Brother Douglas can very readily attest to William’s insight.

He is grateful for these apostolic experiences and holds in prayer those he serves.

Excitement Is Building

The 2017/18 academic year is the target date for the opening of Saint Brother Andre High School, the new school in Kasoa, Ghana, West Africa. The Holy Cross Community in Ghana decided to build a National, Catholic, Private, Co-Educational Boarding High School. When the school opens in September 2017, the first enrolling students will be (Freshmen) 60 students and another class will be accepted each year until each level is complete. We will need \$950,000 to complete the main school building and \$600,000 to complete each of the dormitories. When the school is completed, it will have a capacity of 800 students.

Early in 1960s the schools in Ghana were nationalized, i.e., the government took control of the Boards of Governors. This did not immediately affect the running of mission schools. A few years ago the Government decided to take over the admission of all students to all high schools. All names are put into a computer and though the young people may indicate a first and second choice they may get neither. Thus, the Catholic schools have no say as to who will enter their school. The result is that the two high schools that the Holy Cross Brothers teach at, St. John's in Sekondi and St. Augustine's in Cape Coast have fewer than 20% of their student body Catholic.



(Above) Courtyard and exterior of the Brothers house.

(Left) The main entrance of the Brothers house.





(Above) The “Handing Over The Keys Ceremony” participants: (left to right) Mr. Michael Jumu, architect; Mr. Carl Richards, Construction Manager; Bro. Michael Amaky, CSC, District Superior; Ms. Aida Daniel, administrator

(Right) Classroom wing.



The Brothers want a school that will make it possible for any parent in Ghana who wants to send their child to a Catholic School to have the opportunity. We intend to develop future Catholic leaders for our growing church.

In 1957 the Holy Cross community started work in Ghana. The formation program began to train young Africans to become Holy Cross Brothers in 1960. There are now 50 African Holy Cross Brothers. Since 1979 the District Superior has been a Ghanaian.

Brothers

Brother Roberto Jimenez



Brother Roberto assists a parishioner in securing his citizenship.

St. Francis of Assisi parish is located in the West Humboldt Park neighborhood in the city of Chicago. The church has been there for over 100 years. It began as a Polish parish, later transitioning to a predominantly Latino parish. The neighborhood around the parish is African-American. St. Francis has two Masses daily—one at 10:30 am and the other at 12:00 noon.

When Brother Roberto Ortega Jimenez first started parish ministry in 2006, there were two noticeable groups of parishioners: the Charismatic Movement group and the Our Lady of Guadalupe group. He went to work right away by beginning a food pantry to aid in the needs of the local community. Drawing from his background of being an educator, he established programs of English as a Second Language (ESL), literacy programs, GED programs, and a youth group. Also, St. Francis now offers Bible classes to enhance the understanding of the Bible and what it means to be Catholic in today's society. Being a DRE and Pastoral Associate also keeps Brother Roberto busy.

One of Brother Roberto's ministries is helping the undocumented with issues. Recently he spent three days in the county courthouse and jail helping one of his parishioners. It was a long and tedious process. The man who was detained is a father of four. His wife is a US citizen, and all his children are US citizens as well. The issue was that when he came from El Salvador, the birth certificate and passport birthdays did not match. While he went through the process of getting his permanent resident's card (Green Card), the people at immigration services understood that because of the war there were a lot of discrepancies with documents. Now with recent orders from the President, he was picked up at home in the middle of the night and was taken to jail because, according to them, he had committed "fraud."

In the process of dealing with this case, Brother Roberto also spent some time at Stroeger (Cook County) Hospital with an elderly man who was left alone by his family and had not eaten in days because he was afraid to ask for help. It is important to Brother Roberto that he help individuals get what they need.

The parish and the church have grown under Brother Roberto's quiet and compassionate leadership. The best part of his service is listening to unspoken needs and responding in kind. Serving on the West Side of Chicago and ministering in one of the most violent areas of the city is not for everyone, but for Brother Roberto it has been a reciprocated blessing.

What does it profit, my brother, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food and one of you says to them "depart and peace, be warmed and filled" but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what good is that? Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Then someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

James 2:14-18



(Above) This is the Posadas, a procession, led by the "angels" as they process in the neighborhood. Each night during the novena before Christmas, members of the parish walk through the neighborhood, singing and praying the rosary. These are young members of St. Francis of Assisi / Our Lady of Angels parish.

Remembering our Deceased Brothers in Your Prayers

Brother Roland (John) Driscoll, C.S.C.,
died October 28, 2016 after 78 years as a vowed religious
at the age of 98

Brother Gregory John Teodecki, C.S.C.,
died March 20, 2017 after 56 years as a vowed religious
at the age of 77

*In Christ We Will
Come to Life Again*

1 Cor: 15:22

Giving On Line; Giving at Any Time

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and click SUPPORT THE BROTHERS.

Whenever you give us a gift, whatever method or way
you decide, know we appreciate your remembering the
Brothers of Holy Cross.

Brothers

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