



The Baltimore Beacon

The Redemptorists of the Baltimore Province

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Provincial Ponderings



Dear Brothers and Sisters: *I share with you just a few sections of the homily I gave on the Feast Day of St. John Neumann and on the occasion of the Final Vows of Brian Vaccaro and Royce Thomas on January 5th in Philadelphia, PA.*

The Olympic Games, Mexico, 1968. The marathon is the final event on the program. The Olympic stadium is packed and there is excitement as the first athlete, an Ethiopian runner, enters the stadium. The crowd erupts as he crosses the finish line.

Way back in the field is another runner, John Stephen Akwhari of Tanzania. He has been eclipsed by the other runners. After 30 kilometers his head is throbbing, his muscles are aching, and he falls to the ground. He has serious leg injuries and officials want him to retire, but he refuses. With his knee bandaged Akwhari picks himself up and hobbles the remaining 12 kilometers to the finish

line. An hour after the winner has finished, Akwhari enters the stadium. All but a few thousand of the crowd have gone home. Akwhari moves around the track at a painstakingly slow pace, until finally he collapses over the finish line.

It is one of the most heroic efforts of Olympic history. Afterward, asked by a reporter why he had not dropped out, Akwhari says, "My country did not send me to start the race. They sent me to finish."

We gather today to celebrate the final vows of Brian and Royce. Indeed, it truly is a day of great joy as these men profess the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and the vow and oath of perseverance. The days of their initial formation are now over ... for those of us who have gone through Redemptorist formation, indeed that is cause for rejoicing. But today is not a day to celebrate the ending of their formation, but for Brian and Royce it is a day to rejoice as they commit their lives to Jesus Christ the Redeemer and look forward. God has called them to a vocation within the Redemptorist family not just to start something, but also to endure and finish the race ... to persevere in the Congregation.

Your life as a religious is not about how you start, it is about how you live, how you persevere and how you finish. There will be days of great joy, like today, when you are certain of the love of your God and experience

the fellowship of confreres, family, and friends. There will be days when perhaps you have a bandaged knee, an aching head, and there is no crowd to welcome you. The living of the vows takes place on good days and bad alike. "I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Today as you profess the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and the vow and oath of perseverance I encourage you to embrace those vows completely, not only today, but every day for the rest of your lives.

One last story ... A hog and a hen sharing the same barnyard heard about a church's program to feed the hungry. The hog and the hen discussed how they could help. The hen said, "I've got it! We'll provide bacon and eggs for the church to feed the hungry." The hog thought about the suggestion and said, "There's one problem with your bacon and eggs solution. For you, it only requires a contribution, but from me, it will mean total commitment!" That's the cost of true discipleship. Brian and Royce ... congratulations and prayers as you take your final vows as Redemptorists today. I pray you are ready to give everything and even to lay down your lives on the line. It is now time for you to make not just a token contribution but to go all in and give your lives completely over to Jesus Christ the Redeemer ... to be totally committed!

*In the Spirit of the Redeemer,
Paul J. Borowski, C.Ss.R.*

Upcoming 2022/2023 Dates

Monday, February 21 - Wednesday, February 23, 2022 Province Retreat (Southeast Region) at St. Alphonsus Villa; New Smyrna Beach, FL

Thursday, February 24, 2022 Province Jubilee Celebration (Southeast Region)

Monday, May 9 - Friday, May 20, 2022 North American Conference Assembly & Phase 1 of the XXVI General Chapter at San Alfonso Retreat House; Long Branch, NJ

Tuesday, May 31 - Thursday, June 2, 2022 Province Retreat at San Alfonso Retreat House; Long Branch, NJ

Saturday, July 16, 2022 at 11 a.m. Province Jubilee Celebration: Mass & Luncheon at Sacred Heart of Jesus; Baltimore, MD

Upcoming Dates, Continued

Saturday, July 23, 2022 at 10 a.m. Priesthood Ordination for Brian Vaccaro, C.Ss.R., at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception; Washington, DC. Bishop Michael Burbidge (Arlington, VA) will be the ordaining Bishop.

Saturday, August 13, 2022 at 11 a.m. Priesthood Ordination for Royce Thomas, C.Ss.R., at St Anthony's; Guapo Cap-de-Ville Main Rd;

Point Fortin, Trinidad. Archbishop Charles Jason Gordon (Port of Spain, Trinidad) will be the ordaining Bishop.

Monday, August 15, 2022 Convoking of the XVIII Provincial Chapter

Sunday, September 11 - Friday, October 7, 2022 XXVI General Chapter ; (Phase 2 -- Canonical Phase); Rome, Italy

Tuesday, November 29 – Thursday, December 1, 2022 Province Convocation at San Alfonso Retreat House; Long Branch, NJ
[Tuesday, November 29, 2022 will be Provincial Candidates Day]

Monday, March 13 – Friday, March 17, 2023 and if necessary Monday, March 20 – Friday, March 24, 2023 XVIII Baltimore Provincial Chapter at San Alfonso Retreat House; Long Branch, NJ

Communications Updates

• Daily Audio Podcasts on the readings of the day may be found at redemptorists.net in either Spanish or English.

• Weekly Video reflections on the upcoming Sunday readings (Cycle C) may be found on Facebook: [facebook.com/RedemptoristsBaltimore](https://www.facebook.com/RedemptoristsBaltimore) or YouTube: [youtube.com/BaltRedemptorists](https://www.youtube.com/BaltRedemptorists). These videos are released each Wednesday.

• Saturday, February 19: On-line video service “Praying with the Icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help.”

Upcoming EPC Meetings

Future EPC meetings will begin at 9:30 a.m. via ZOOM until further notice.

- February 16-17, 2022
- March 23-24, 2022

- April 27-28, 2022
- May 25-26, 2022
- June 15-16, 2022
- July 6, 2022 (San Alfonso; Long Branch, NJ)
- NO AUGUST MEETING

- September 7-8, 2022
- October 19-20, 2022
- November 16-17, 2022
- December 2, 2022 (San Alfonso; Long Branch, NJ)

Upcoming Missions, Retreats, and Video Series

- **Jan. 22-25, 2022**, St. Martha Catholic Church, Sarasota, FL, Kevin MacDonald, C.Ss.R.
- **Feb. 26-March 1, 2022**, St. Patrick Catholic Church, Armonk, NY, Kevin MacDonald, C.Ss.R.

- **March 5-9, 2022**, St. Paul Catholic Church, Tampa, FL, Kevin MacDonald, C.Ss.R.
- **March 12-16, 2022**, Holy Family Catholic Church, Orlando, FL, Kevin MacDonald, C.Ss.R.

- **April 23-27, 2022**, Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, Erie, PA, Kevin MacDonald, C.Ss.R.

Advent Season at St. Mary's, Bluffton

St. Mary's in Bluffton, OH has had a busy Advent season – more so than usual. Though the last few years have been unique due to the pandemic, this one was especially unique since we also just had a change in leadership. Our previous pastor, Fr. John McLoughlin, C.Ss.R, was reassigned to Dominica, and we were assigned a new pastor – Fr. Luyen Dau, C.Ss.R. We have been so grateful to have a pastor here since for the last two decades we have been served by a variety of retired priests, and we are excited to continue to be a Redemptorist parish.



Faith formation students who participated in the Christmas play after Mass.

Throughout the Advent and Christmas season, our youth have been involved in a variety of things. Members from our faith-formation classes put on a Christmas program after Mass for the parish, celebrated St. Nicholas day with a special craft, and made an Advent project with their class. Our preschool, which is in its third year of existence, once again put on a successful Christmas program for their parents and the public and spent many days in the classroom learning about the true meaning of Christmas before enjoying a break for the holiday. Though it is still a new program, it has been incredibly successful and has gained a lot of support from the parish and the public alike - registration has just opened up for the fall and is already over 90 percent full.

Our parish has also been busy, as most are, during this season. With the change of pastors came a few new ideas and one that was received so well that parishioners are hoping to make it a yearly tradition. After an evening of faith-formation classes, parents, students, and parishioners all gathered outside for a Christmas tree lighting ceremony. The Christmas lights were turned on outside while everyone sang Christmas carols – it was a beautiful and spirit-filled experience. Afterwards, everyone was invited to enjoy some hot chocolate and cookies and join in fellowship with one another.

This year, we were able to experience some sort of normalcy with our Christmas Masses, which was a nice change from the past. Our children's choir was able to sing at one of our Christmas Eve Masses which is always a nice addition, and our adult choir sang at our Christmas Day Mass. It was truly beautiful and we are lucky to have a parish who is made up of so many willing volunteers.

As we look at the beginning of 2022, we are filled with hope and a refreshed spirit. We have a lot to look forward to this year. Our college students are back on their campus which is located across the street from the church. We look forward to having them back and creating events to allow them to make connections and get more involved in their faith.

We also are looking forward to continuing our Young Adult group – members of our parish, as well as a neighboring parish in Lima, meet monthly to have discussion, make connections, listen to speakers, and grow in their faith.

Because our parish is made up of many young families and youth,



Our preschool teachers, Kate Hohenbrink (L) and Amanda Stechschulte (R) with pastor, Fr. Dau, C.Ss.R.

we are looking at adding a Mass geared towards the younger crowd – adding more contemporary music and hopefully a choir made up of our youth. It is something many of the parishioners desire and we look forward to making it a reality.

Though it has been a busy season, it has been very fruitful. A weekly Holy Hour has renewed the parish and is something that many of our parishioners look forward to. During Advent, this was also a time for reflections, led by our pastor, Fr. Dau, our deacon, Michael Marcum, and our seminarian, Travis Kahle. Having a full time priest here has allowed us more opportunities of Holy Hour and daily Mass and it has been very well received. We look forward to continuing these as well as adding new events to help parishioners embrace and grow in their faith.



Young adults from St. Mary's, as well as the parish in Lima, meet monthly for fellowship.

Partners in Mission, Celebrating Together in Boston



Partners in Mission, Boston, kicked off their first meeting in celebration!

On November 9, 2021, we celebrated the 289th birthday of our Congregation in a very special way here at the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Boston. It seemed the perfect day to formally inaugurate our “Partners in Mission” group and to welcome them as beloved members of our family. We had a wonderful family celebration beginning with a special Evening Prayer and Welcoming Service in our chapel, followed by a rather elegant full course turkey dinner, lovingly prepared by our dear chef, Marlucy. The meal was complete with a lovely birthday cake and candles, wine that seemed to flow like the wedding feast of Cana, and music provided by



Fr. Furey (an elder member of the family) and John Vasquez (one of our newest members of the family)! We are so blessed and very happy to share these photos of our celebratory evening with you!

Fr. Anthony E. Michalik, C.Ss.R.



Saint Vincent Update

These pictures are from a Christmas party for the children in Sandy Bay, held on Christmas Eve at the Garifuna Village Market. Later that evening, everyone celebrated Christmas Mass outside under the market pavilion. A joyous occasion as everyone celebrated the birth of Christ and the rebirth in the community following reconstruction after the volcanic eruptions. Please continue to keep the community of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in your prayers.



Redemptorists Celebrate Final Vows and Deaconate Ordination



Brian Vaccaro, C.Ss.R., and Royce Thomas, C.Ss.R., had their Final Profession Ceremony (pictured left and above) on January 5, 2022, the Feast Day of Saint John Neumann, C.Ss.R., at St. Peter the Apostle Church in Philadelphia, PA.

Bishop Bruce Lewandowski's, C.Ss.R., Deaconate Ordination Homily of Brian Vaccaro, C.Ss.R., and Royce Thomas, C.Ss.R.:

Royce and Brian, today you receive awesome responsibilities, the ministry of deacon. Made strong by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, you take on the ministry of the pulpit and altar, and the ministry of charity.

In the pulpit and at the altar, you will proclaim the Gospel, proclaim the Word. You'll be charged with preparing the Sacrifice and distributing the Body and Blood of the Lord to the Faithful. In essence, you're taking on fully the role of public ministers in the Church. The

idea is that the sanctuary should be so comfortable to you, a place so familiar to you, as if it were your own room. To familiarize yourself, not just with the furniture of the sanctuary, or only with visits to our Lord reserved in the tabernacle, but to be able to move about and move within this sacred space with ease and comfort as you lead your brothers and sisters in worship and prayer, and in particular in the proclamation of the Gospel and the breaking-open of the Word.

It will also be your ministry to catechize, to share Church teaching after the example of the Redemptorists and St. Alphonsus, in a way that is easily accessible and familiar. You'll preside over public prayer, administer

baptism, assist at and bless marriages. You'll take communion to the sick and comfort the dying with viaticum, and you'll preside at and conduct funeral rites. It's a moment, in a certain sense, to take ownership of the pulpit and the altar.

You're both familiar with the ministry of charity. In the celebration of the rite of diaconate, you're encouraged to bind yourself even more closely to the Redeemer so that feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, visiting the sick and imprisoned, accompanying and advocating for immigrants, counseling the hopeless and depressed, that these should become habitual, second nature, part of the pattern and regular practice



Brian Vaccaro, C.Ss.R., and Royce Thomas, C.Ss.R., had their Deaconate Ordination at Sacred Heart of Jesus in Baltimore, MD. Bishop Bruce Lewandowski, C.Ss.R., was the ordaining Bishop.

of your life. These are to be integrated into who and how you are after the example of Jesus, the Redeemer, who spent time with the poor, the sick, and the sinner. He not only spent time with them, he made them his friends. Some of Jesus' nearest and dearest friends were among the poor, the outcast, the unwanted and forgotten. You know all of this already. This is nothing new to you. You're prepared for ministry. I've stated the obvious. But maybe not so obvious is the question, how should you approach the ministry that you will receive today?

What kind of attitude of mind and heart is required or necessary?

To answer this, as Redemptorists, we turn to St. Alphonsus. While this is not a priesthood ordination, if you look to "The Dignity and Duties of the Priest," written by St. Alphonsus, the *Selva* as it's called, you'll find there timeless advice for all of us who are in public ministry in the Church. St. Alphonsus' instructions for you today can be summed up in two phrases. "Be afraid; be very afraid." That's the first phrase. And the second is this,

"Do not be afraid." They sound like contradictions, "Be afraid; be very afraid." "Do not be afraid." Seemingly contradictory, they are really one and the same.

You should be afraid, fearful as it were, to stand in the pulpit. I am. To stand before the altar. In the celebration of these rites you become more fully co-workers with the Redeemer, handling the things of God. That should make you nervous. It should cause you to stop and think twice about what you're doing, to reflect and not act without



intention. The divine takes up a place within you and mingles and mixes within you in such a way that you make the Redeemer present here and now, so that the Redemption, the work of Redemption can continue in and through you, through ministry of altar and pulpit, and the ministry of charity.

Don't lose sight of the awesomeness of this gift that you are receiving. It is awesome. Grow in reverence and awe for the Redeemer and the great grace and power that he shares with you today for your good and for the salvation of God's People. To be in awe and wonder always that God

would choose you. That God would call you – who you are and how you are. I think all of us in ministry sometimes surprise ourselves at what we do. Surprised by grace and how grace acts in us and through us. So, be fearful, using that gift of the Fear of the Lord that we receive in Confirmation. Wonder and awe.

You'll grow in wonder and awe and fear of the Lord as you practice this ministry if you do a few things. First, this ministry is not practice for priesthood. This is real ministry. By your actions, by your words, God acting in and through you will change

hearts, transform lives – putting people in direct contact, in relationship and friendship with the Lord. Don't see this as only temporary, as just one space and place on the journey. This is ministry. Practice it and prepare well. Do it well! Read the rites. Study them and know how they work. Know the options in the rites. Prepare well for the celebration of the Word that you will preside over. Write out your homilies. Prepare

them well. I've seen your YouTube videos. We've already heard your homilies. Well done. Well prepared. Done in true Alphonsian spirit and style.

I encourage you also. Hold on to the lessons and structures that you lived in formation, in seminary, in life. Don't let go of them. They're not temporary, to be made things of the past. As full-time Redemptorists in community life and ministry – in Mexico – Dominica. Participate in common life, in community prayer. Don't let your personal prayer be put



crackle with love for the Redeemer cultivated in prayer... if it does not do that, you won't be successful. Your success depends only on your friendship with the Redeemer.

If we could sum up St. Alphonsus and his advice to all of us as Redemptorists in ministry, and all those who take on these awesome responsibilities, "Be afraid!" of the awesomeness that is shared with us. Awe, wonder, how awesome it is! And "do not be afraid," because the

Redeemer will never abandon you or leave you alone in the mission that he has entrusted to your care.

Borrowing from St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Alphonsus says that our fear of God is as servant and son. We fear and love God as servants. We are put to work in the vineyard of the Lord. It's a servile kind of love as we give ourselves completely and totally to the Lord, as we say "use us, Lord, we are instruments in your hands." But at the same time. We are sons of the Redeemer. Fathers take good care of their sons. You'll want for nothing as you go forward in your diaconal ministry to serve God's Church at pulpit and altar, in charity to the poor and most abandoned.

Love the Redeemer! And be afraid, so afraid to lose that love for Him. Live in fear of losing that love so that you'll protect it and take care of it always. Be afraid.

Don't be afraid, because the Redeemer loves you more than you'll ever know. I challenge, I invite you - the two of you- as you accept these awesome responsibilities, to live as sons and servants in the Fear of the Lord. How awesome it is to be servants and sons of the Redeemer.

*Most Reverend Bruce Lewandowski
C.Ss.R., Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore*

aside. Make a regular confession, keep in touch with your spiritual director or find one where you're assigned. Why? Because you have been doing this all along. It's the norm for our life. It's how we act and live and grow in our vocation as Redemptorists, whether a priest, deacon, or brother. Hold fast to what you learned in the seminary. Not just theological concepts and pastoral practices, but hold on to those structures that have brought you to this day and have been successful in forming you into who you are at this moment. Let them continue to shape and form you as you go forward. Hold on to the things that will help cultivate within you that Fear of the Lord that will make you an effective minister in the company of the Redeemer.

"Be afraid." But at the same time, "Be not afraid." The Redeemer is your friend. The Redeemer is your co-worker. You're not asked to be successful. We're not expecting you to be superheroes. What we do expect is that the flame of Faith that was ignited in you at Baptism, and that through the reception of Confirmation and Religious Profession has continued to grow, continues to light a fire of love for Jesus Christ within your heart... Protect that fire, that flame.

Failure lies only in losing friendship with the Lord. When that happens,

when we let our love for the Redeemer grow stale, old and cold, and irrelevant and indifferent, when that fire of love for our Lord is extinguished in our hearts, then you're a social worker, a media commentator, a do-gooder, a helper and not a Redemptorist or a deacon. St. Alphonsus said, "One who is not on fire, cannot inflame others." Take care of that fire of love that is in your heart. Protect it through daily prayer, frequent prayer. Pray often, visit Jesus in the Eucharist. Be present at the celebration of the Mass with devotion and love. And receive the Word and the Eucharist as a gift, the gift that the Lord gives to you, not just to fortify you and strengthen you for ministry, but to sanctify you and make you holy.

"Prayer is the furnace where zeal is kindled," St. Alphonsus says. You're on fire, Brian. Royce, you're on fire. I've seen it. Watch their videos. On fire with love for Jesus. Let that fire continue to grow and blaze deep within you so that you catch others with that fire, so that they burn also with love for the Redeemer. Through prayer, Jesus will give you everything that you need for ministry. Don't be afraid. Through prayer, Jesus will make you effective ministers. Don't be afraid when you go to Mexico. When you go to Dominica, don't be afraid. Ministry must blaze, burn, flame, click and

Our Lady of the Hills, Columbia



Fr. Peter Sousa, C.Ss.R., celebrating the baptism of a young couple's first baby.

Like so many other parishes, Our Lady of the Hills is returning to semi-regular operations. While we continue to encourage the use of masks, many more people are returning to Mass. For some, restarting coffee and donuts after Sunday Mass is a sign that we are getting back to somewhat normal.

Our Family Life Center is open for religious education on Wednesday and Sunday evenings. For those parents who want to continue at home

catechism, our staff prepares the material for the parents to use with their children. Many parents have commented how much they enjoyed instructing their children during the height of the pandemic. Our teens and confirmation candidates are meeting in person on Sunday nights.

Adult education has continued with Fr. George Rosario's weekly, Wednesday afternoon Epiphany group. He is guiding them in a deeper

understanding of the Scriptures and the Gospels.

Our Hispanic Community continues to flourish. We recently had a refresher Evangelization retreat that was like a vaccine to help boost people's spiritual lives. Small communities which met over Zoom for the last year and a half are once again meeting in person. The Hispanic community also held a few KERMES, or food bazaars, to raise

funds for our church expansion project and to help with expenses of two parishioners who suffer from cancer. They are presently preparing the Our Lady of Guadalupe festivities for the entire parish.

Our Lady of the Hills parish provides a ministry of hospitality for a variety of diocesan events. Our location at the intersection of I-26 and I-20 makes it easy for people at either end of the Diocese to get here. The four diocesan Cursillo weekends are held here, and Fr. Peter Sousa, Fr. Blas Cáceres, and Fr. George Rosario celebrate the Masses and hear the confessions of those on the weekend.

The Diocesan Deacon Formation Program uses our classrooms for a weekend once a month and participate in our Saturday vigil Mass, getting the men in formation an experience of Redemptorist preaching. The priests, sisters, and laity involved in Hispanic ministry throughout the Diocese gather here once a quarter as we discuss programs and events that affect all our Hispanic communities.

We are becoming increasingly a welcoming parish for immigrants. We have three families recently arrived from Africa as well as two families



Fr. Blas Cáceres, C.Ss.R., at a meeting of the Hispanic community planning for the Guadalupe Celebration.



Fr. Blas Cáceres, C.Ss.R., with an immigrant family recently arrived from Burundi.

Our Lady of the Hills, Continued



Fr. George Rosario, C.Ss.R., leading his Epiphany Group in a bible study.



A crowd gathered outside for Mass.

from Iraq. We have small group of Vietnamese and Indian families as well as our large contingent of Hispanics. Our parish is one of thirty-two churches and two synagogues in the Columbia area who are members of the Midlands Organized Response for Equity and Justice or MORE Justice.

Father Cáceres and Father Sousa along with thirty parishioners participate

with the other congregations to promote affordable housing in the Columbia area, public safety personnel receiving Critical Incident training, and programs to end gun violence. Fr. Sousa was elected to serve on the Executive Board for the year 2022.

The Redemptorist presence at Our Lady of the Hills continues to inspire and strengthen the people of God in

this part of Columbia as well as the entire Diocese. With the prayers of our Mother of Perpetual Help and St. Alphonsus and the grace of the Holy Redeemer, we strive to show that missionary spirit and see all that we do as if it were a continual mission.

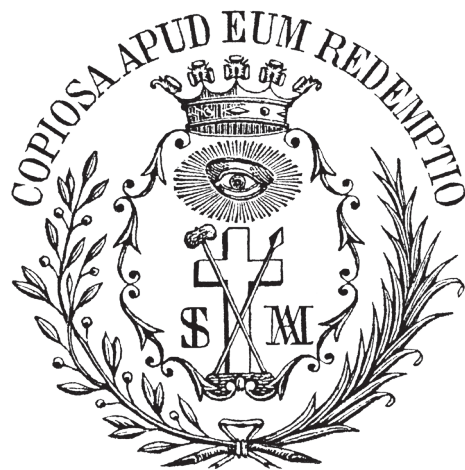
Fr. Peter Sousa, C.Ss.R.

Baltimore Province Welcomes Visiting Redemptorist Seminarians



Felix Escobar Ovando and Diego Navarro Lema, Redemptorist seminarians from Bolivia, will be studying English before beginning their Theological Studies in San Antonio, TX.





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