

SEASONS CHANGE AND SO TOO THE CALL TO BE MESSENGERS OF LOVE, MERCY AND COMPASSION IN SERVICE TO GOD'S MISSION



Fr. Mike Bassano serving in a camp for displaced people in South Sudan

It is January and in most of the United States this is the cold season. So too for our missionaries in places like Northern China. But in other parts of the world not so. In East Africa, for example it is hot as the people anxiously await the rainy season. In South America it is summer time. As seasons vary throughout the world so too does the nature of service to God's Mission of love, mercy and compassion that can bring creativity and new life to an often troubled world. Here above is a photo of Fr. Mike Bassano living among displaced persons in a South Sudanese camp. He is there simply to say: "You are not alone nor forgotten." So simple, yet so profound!

MEET OUR MARYKNOLL CANDIDATES PREPARING TO BECOME MISSIONARY PRIESTS & BROTHERS

MARYKNOLL FATHERS AND BROTHERS
CANDIDATES IN INITIAL FORMATION 2023 SPRING SEMESTER

Row 1:

- Charles Ogony Seminarian**
Volleyball
Languages & Cultures
Nature Conservation
- Joshua Mutende Seminarian**
Singing
Music
Poetry
- Diego Ramirez Seminarian**
Studied medicine
Fishing & Swimming
Likes Languages
- Patrick Okok Seminarian**
Playing Soccer
Outdoor activities
The Universe
- Matthew Sim Seminarian**
Exploring technology
Enjoys writing
Likes photography
- Victor Mutobera Seminarian**
Creative Expressions
Musical Instruments
Catholic Social Justice

Row 2:

- Stephen Harden Seminarian**
Computers
Languages
Ultimate Frisbee
- Josephat Odundo Seminarian**
Public Speaking
Empowering Others
Writing
- Paschal Madukwa Seminarian**
Public Speaking
Reading
Embracing Diversity
- Costantine Kasikiwi Seminarian**
Politics
Philosophy
Think Outside the Box
- Raymond Augustine Lee Seminarian**
Marine Engineering
Pilgrimages
Theology of the Body

Row 3:

- Leonard Kabaka Seminarian**
Handy Works
Servant Leadership
Proclaim God's Will
- Lawrence Mutiso Seminarian**
Playing Piano
Singing
Adventures
- Barrack Odeka Seminarian**
Singing
Serving God
Serving the Poor
- Yohana Maswizilo Seminarian**
Youth Ministry
Building Communities
People Development
- Nicholas Mulei Seminarian**
Art
Optimism
Volunteer Work
- Paul Massu Seminarian**
Reading Books
Learning Languages
Adventure
- Celestino Morenda Seminarian**
Telling Stories
Reading Books
Leading to Success
- Samuel Mutuku Seminarian**
Music
Drawing
Cultural Diversity

Where are our candidates around the world?

Chicago, IL, USA
Cochabamba, Bolivia
Nairobi, Kenya

Maryknoll missionary priests and Brothers have been serving in countries throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America for 105 years now. The initial missionaries traveled to the four corners of the world establishing the Church by founding dioceses, parishes, schools, hospitals while always proclaiming the good news of the Gospel. We have taken part in God's Mission as messengers of God's love, compassion and mercy for all. We are proud of our history. Today so many of these local churches are now strong. Among their young men and women there are those who wish to become Maryknoll Missioners as you can see here above in our Candidates' 2023 Poster.

Our world has changed since those first Maryknoll missionaries traveled to China in 1918 and so have the challenges presented in God's Mission of love, mercy and compassion for all creation. These are forever changing but we are as dedicated today as those first missionaries crossing oceans to meet the challenges of their generation.

As missionaries when we first arrive in new countries there is excitement mixed with some trepidation. We are far from home and familiar surroundings. We all wonder if we have what it takes to learn new languages, adapt to new cultures and establish good healthy relationships with the people. We must exercise patience as we become like children once again in so many ways. Prayer becomes paramount in our lives as we acknowledge how much we depend upon God. Then ever so slowly we grow and acculturate in these new settings. In the end it is always the people in our host country who show us the face of Jesus through their hospitality and warm welcome. The transformation that takes place in us is best described as grace. And that grace, God's goodness, brings us so much happiness!

We hope you recognize how much you and so many others like you are needed today. The message of God's love for all people is so important. It needs to be heralded not only in words but in the actions of our daily lives. Each of you is a messenger wherever you go and in whatever you do. But, you still need to take some steps in the direction that will fulfill the dreams that have brought you in contact with us. So, don't be stymied by the challenge. Rather, dream on and make the dream a reality!

As always we look forward to hearing from you at (vocation@maryknoll.org): Fr. Rodrigo Ulloa-Chavarry (Vocation Director), Fr. Mike Snyder, Fr. Cuong Nguyen and Mr. Greg Darr.



Our Lady of Maryknoll in Winter

The Vocation Story of the Three Magi Narrated Through a Different Route

By
Fr. Rodrigo Ulloa M.M.



The gospel of Mathew 2:12 recounts an interesting fact, namely that the three magi “returned to their country by a different route.” But what’s missing in this part of the story? The star. The star which guided them into Bethlehem is not with them anymore, the star is gone. Is returning home through a different route without the star a challenge for the three magi? Certainly. What about us: what do we do when our star seems to disappear, especially when we are discerning or contemplating a decision to align our lives to follow Jesus?

The breakthrough in this story lies in the fact that God, who led them through the old route is the same God inviting them now to let go of fear because fear can cause all our stars to disappear. Let go of fear and embrace the new route is the motif that the three magi need to embrace. Perhaps in this New Year God is inviting us to do the same and to trust even more, to make the commitment to follow a missionary vocation to the priesthood or brotherhood. Remember this: God does not push anyone to go where there is no possible road. The three magi had a choice and they followed the new route. They left fear and trusted in the new road.

Here’s a revelation: The star is not gone but is inside them. They went home through a different route carrying the star deep within; they understand that everything inside their

hearts will sustain them. Because when God is inside us and we know it, our faith will show it. However, the three magi had to quiet the voices of what if. What if this doesn't work? What if we get sick? What if we get lost? What if Herod comes chasing us? Human questions we all have when we return home through a different route. Going home through a different route can be a struggle but it is in the struggle where we develop character and discipleship.

Let's go further. Imagine a third route. We have the old route which they took going to Bethlehem and we have the new route which they have never travelled before. But there's a third route: return to the manger. Why not see if the holy family can help them with some of their concerns. But the problem is that the manger is empty, there's no star, neither Joseph nor Mary, no baby Jesus. But this third route is an option. The three magi could have chosen to return to the empty manger to avoid letting go. An empty manger. Think of the apostles in the empty tomb. Don't stay in empty promises, don't live around an empty hope. The three magi represent people who are available, who want to see what's on the other side because how can we know if something is for us if we don't try it? How can we know if a vocation is for us if we don't take the leap of faith? The three magi decided to try the new road and the last time we heard of them was when Matthew wrote, "they returned to their country by a different route." If Jesus is calling you to follow him, think of the three magi and be not afraid to do so.

The prophet Isaiah in chapter 57:14 summarizes it well: "Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstacle from my people's way. I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite. Build up, build up, prepare the way." As we begin this New Year I pray that you take the necessary steps to prepare the way and follow your vocation even if it entails traveling through a different route.



Clothed in Grace

By

Mr. Greg Darr



It's often said that you can tell a lot about people from the clothes they wear. But, as I was reminded recently in a noisy convention center hall filled with hundreds of Catholic youth, clothes tell us nothing if we do not first open our hearts to the stories of those who wear them.

At the time, our Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Vocation Ministries team was hosting a t-shirt swap at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Long Beach, California. The idea was simple – youth were invited to bring a new or used t-shirt they could swap for a shirt that had been donated or brought earlier by someone else. Shirts would be, ideally, unique – representative of a person's culture, community, school or church. Or, the shirt could recall a life event or portray an inspiring phrase. Most important though was the card pinned to each shirt; completed by the person swapping the shirt, the card told others something about the t-shirt or offered a prayer or encouraging words for the person ultimately choosing it.

The swap took place under the hashtag, "#Share4Creation". It seemed like a fun but thought-provoking way of reminding ourselves that, as members of God's family, we share this one Earth and everything made from it. Even as shirts were swapped, youth learned how we can care for Creation and impact the lives of people in distant countries through the clothing choices we make. Youth can also serve as powerful advocates on behalf of those who labor long hours for low pay to produce clothes we often take for

granted. And youth, of course, learned about the extraordinary work of Maryknoll priests, sisters, brothers, lay missionaries and affiliates around the world.

The idea was simple. The experience was, at times, profound.

As youth browsed the racks, some found shirts that attracted them in deep and unexpected ways. One youth chose a t-shirt donated by a Maryknoll Lay Missioner who served many years in East Africa as a doctor; he told us of his own plans to become a nurse and help those most in need of medical care. Another picked out a shirt donated by Divine Word Missionaries, she hopes to someday go abroad in mission. One young man was so excited by the t-shirt he found, he stripped off the shirt he was wearing and handed it to us in exchange.

Perhaps the most inspiring of these stories came from a young woman who decided upon one of the most ordinary-looking of t-shirts – a simple 5K race t-shirt. A traumatic brain injury years earlier, she recounted, had left her in a coma for about eight weeks. She regained consciousness on her birthday – her “new birthday”, she remarked – the day she began learning anew how to live and accomplish ordinary tasks most of us perform without thought. Months of effort passed before she could walk again. Still, she set an ambitious goal; she would someday run. On the t-shirt she chose was printed the goal she so painstakingly accomplished; she’s now able to run a 5K race though her running abilities are not as they were before her injury.

It was, however, the hand-written message attached to the shirt that moved her most. She read it aloud with emotion: “To whom this shirt will go — may every step you make, make you closer to the heart of Jesus Christ.”

Christ, she remarked, had been with her through it all. It was in Christ’s love that she found faith in herself to persevere, to run her 5K race, and discover herself even closer to God through the struggle. She hopes her own hard-won experience will inspire other young people to find faith in themselves, through God’s love, even as they endure the toughest of challenges in their own young lives.

The famed world heavyweight boxing champion, Muhammed Ali once observed, “The fight is won or lost far away from witnesses – behind the lines, in the gym, and out there on the road, long before I dance under those lights.”

This young woman, who shared her story with me, won her race the same way: behind the hospital room curtain, in years of occupational therapy and ultimately out on the path, one painstakingly awkward step at a time until, in a noisy convention center hall, she held up a used 5K race t-shirt and beamed with gratitude.

VOCATIONS FACEBOOK AND YOU TUBE PORTAL

We understand that not everyone is a Facebook user. However, if you take the time to visit us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/mklvocations>) you will find several short video testimonies of Maryknoll Missioners speaking about their vocations and experiences in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

We also have a private Facebook Vocations Group for men expressing greater interest in a missionary vocation. The group meets regularly to watch interviews with Maryknollers and have the opportunity to dialogue with us and with each other about missionary life. Please visit our Vocations Facebook page and if you are interested in joining this group then just contact Fr. Rodrigo at vocation@maryknoll.org or follow the instructions online for membership.

Also, visit our Vocation You Tube portal: <https://www.youtube.com/c/MaryknollSociety>
Here is a sample by Fr. John Siyumbu:
https://www.youtube.com/embed/qQI_rFCN4m8.

NEW MARYKNOLL VOCATIONS WEBSITE

We are also proud to introduce you to our newly revised website. Please check it out and let us know what you think about it!

[Maryknoll Vocations | A Life of Mission Overseas](https://maryknollsociety.org/vocations)
<https://maryknollsociety.org/vocations>



Queen of the Apostles Chapel, Maryknoll NY