

**‘Go forth into the World’
- Our Mission and Ministry -**



Presentation Brothers

**Letter from the Congregation Leadership Team
Easter 2006**

**Part I ‘A Faith that does Justice’
Part II ‘Becoming the New Song’ - Mission in Action**

Part I : A Faith that does Justice

Introduction

On a recent visit to our community in Reading, England, Richard and Martin prayed with the Brothers in their oratory. We noticed a cloth covering the altar which bore the inscription ‘Jesus- Our Best Friend’. In this letter, Brothers, we wish to share some thoughts and proposals regarding our mission and ministry in the contemporary world. Before doing so however, we draw attention again to the fundamental issue for each of us of our personal relationship with Jesus. This must be the source of our energy for mission. In our previous letter ‘Love and speak the Truth’ (Presentation Day 2005) we quoted from the document ‘Starting Afresh from Christ’, approved by Pope John Paul II on 19th May 2002. We wish to put this quotation before you again:

Consecrated persons can and must start afresh from Christ because he himself first came to them and accompanied them on the path... Starting afresh from Christ means once again finding one’s first love, the inspiring spark which first gave rise to the following (of Christ)... If ‘we love’ it is ‘because he first loved us’. Consecrated persons cannot be creative, capable of renewing the Institute and opening new pastoral paths if they do not feel loved with this love. It is this love which makes them strong and courageous, which instils fire and enables them to dare.

A faith that does Justice

Our Constitutions and Chapter Vision Statement, “ Sing to the Lord a New Song”, challenge us to engage seriously with the work of justice.

Faithful to the inspiration of our Founder, we hunger and thirst for justice so that all peoples, especially youth, can achieve the fullness of human and spiritual growth and development. (Con 6)

Many of our Brothers have made us aware of the poverty caused by systemic injustice in various parts of the world. We will engage in advocacy work with policy makers on behalf of people who are made poor. (Chapter Vision Statement)

A faith that does justice is at the core of our mission in education and Christian formation today. It is at the heart of what we are about as disciples of Jesus, in the path of Edmund Rice. Let us now look at what the Spirit of God is calling us to in the world of our time.

The Millennium Development Goals(MDGs)

In 2000, all the members of the United Nations pledged to achieve eight goals by 2015. They said, “we will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women, and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are now subjected.” The goals, and where we are so far, are described below.

- 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Specifically, the aim is by 2015 to reduce by half the proportion of people whose income in 1990 amounted to less than one US dollar a day, and reduce by half the proportion of people who were hungry.**

Currently 1.1 billion people live on less than one dollar a day, and 852 million are hungry.

2. Achieve universal primary education. The target is for all children- girls and boys alike- to be able to complete primary school.

Currently, 121 million school-aged children do not go to school.

3. Promote gender equality and empower women. The goal is for equal numbers of girls and boys to go to primary and secondary school by 2005 and go on to higher education by 2015.

Currently 60% of the children out of school are girls.

4. Reduce child mortality. The aim is to reduce the rate of children who die before their fifth birthday by two-thirds by 2015.

Currently 11 million children die of preventable diseases every year.

5. Improve maternal health. The target is to reduce maternal mortality by three-quarters.

Currently around five hundred thousand mothers die each year of birth-related complications.

6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases. The goal is to reverse the spread of these dread diseases by 2015.

7. Ensure environmental sustainability. The aims are to make drinking water safer and improve the lives of 100 million slum dwellers and reverse the loss of environmental resources.

Currently, 1.1 billion people lack access to a reliable source of water that is reasonably protected from contamination; 2.6 billion lack access to basic sanitation.

8. Develop a global partnership for development. The goal addresses a range of issues in which the developed countries play a particular role in inhibiting or facilitating poverty reduction. These include:

- Ongoing debt relief and measures to make debt sustainable in the long term.
- Trade and financial systems that promote good governance and poverty reduction.
- Increasing the amount of good overseas development assistance to least developed countries to 0.7% of rich countries' and 0.15% of less developed countries' gross national income
- Access to affordable essential drugs, such as anti-retrovirals.
- Special attention to the needs of landlocked countries and small island states.
- Strategies for decent and productive work for youth.
- The sharing of information and communications technology.

Currently rich countries on average give 0.25% of their gross national income to development assistance; the goal is to increase this to 0.7%, of which over 0.5% goes to the MDGs.

What can we do?

It may seem that these are great goals, but the question presents itself: "What can we do?" We propose seven strategic actions which, we believe, can be taken up by communities and individuals. These actions can make a difference. Here they are:

1) Pray:

Focus on a particular issue or problem. Make the people of this situation the focus of your community and personal prayer.

2) Study

Study a particular aspect of global poverty. Share your knowledge with community, family and friends.

3) Give

Give of our financial resources and encourage others to do the same.

4) Connect

Write to Brothers on the missions or in new initiatives related to justice. Go and visit them.

5) Raise Awareness

Raise awareness of poverty and justice issues in our schools, local communities and among those with whom we live and work.

6) Take action

Take part in a direct action e.g. a fast or a walk to raise funds.

7) Advocate

Write to, or meet, your government representatives to urge them to address global poverty.

The Micah Call

The eight Millennium Development Goals resonate powerfully with Christian faith. The “Micah Call” printed below describes beautifully the link between our faith, the MDGs, and public action – and calls on Christians to respond.

This is a moment in history of unique potential, when the stated intentions of world leaders echo something of the mind of the Biblical prophets and the teachings of Jesus concerning the poor, and when we have the means to dramatically reduce poverty.

We commit ourselves, as followers of Jesus, to work together for the holistic transformation of our communities, to pursue justice, be passionate about kindness, and to walk humbly with God.

We call on international and national decision-makers of both rich and poor nations, to fulfil their public promise to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and so halve absolute global poverty by 2015.

We call on Christians everywhere to be agents of hope for and with the poor, and to work with others to hold our national and global leaders accountable in securing a more just and merciful world.

**The call of Micah has been central to our journey since the General Chapter of 1999. This journey continues and we believe, the word of God given to us in Micah will animate our ‘singing the new song’. To join with other Christians around the world in signing the “ Micah Call” go to the following website:
www.micahchallenge.org**

120 Million Children Without Basic Education

In our Chapter Vision Statement we say

In a world where 120 million children have no access to even basic education we affirm that the Christian formation of poor youth will continue to be our mission.

This relates directly to the second Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education

Specifically, the aim of MDG 2 is, by 2015, to ensure that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete primary school. Over 120 million school-aged children- one out of seven- are not in school. And one quarter of the children who go to primary school in low-income countries drop out before completing five years.

A good primary education has a disproportionately positive effect on a person throughout the rest of his or her life. However, only 2% of the total overseas development assistance is directed to basic education. Christ the Teacher has been an inspiration for Christians down the centuries to support education, and the churches have consistently advocated for support for education and been involved in its delivery.

Three regions - East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean- are on track to achieve the goal. The others are falling short. South Asia contains the greatest number of these young children without schools; Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of children out of school.

Eucharist - Bread Broken for a New World

During the Chapter we shared our faith around the Word of God. We came to know in a deeper way the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and in our breaking open of the bread of our lives for one another. We experienced this as a grace. We call the Brothers to a deeper understanding of Eucharist.
(Chapter Vision Statement)

We, Presentation Brothers, have great devotion to the Eucharist. Most Brothers who have the opportunity to do so, go to Mass on a daily basis. Yet our Eucharistic celebration is hollow without concern for the poor and action for justice. What is happening in many parts of the developing world challenges our Eucharistic commitment. Sharing our resources in a spirit of fraternity will be central to the future of the Congregation and its mission. We are part of a generation that can change the fact that an accident of latitude determines whether a child lives or dies.

As our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his final message to the Synod of Bishops on 23rd October 2005, the sufferings of the poor “cannot remain extraneous to the celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery which summons all of us to work for justice and the transformation of the world in an active and conscious fashion”. Indeed, he added that our care for those in need is “the criterion that will attest the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations”.

In the second part of this letter we will highlight and announce some initiatives around the Congregation which we believe are at the heart of “singing to the Lord a new Song”. The list is by no means exhaustive and in future communications we will highlight other projects. Nevertheless, what we share with you in

Part II are practical examples of implementing our Chapter Vision. We ask for the continued prayer and support of all the Brothers of the Congregation for those directly involved in these initiatives and projects.

Part II : Becoming the New Song - Mission in Action

Brothers, we are happy to share the following information with you:

Slovakia

A few months ago the CLT received an invitation from the Presentation Sisters to join them in their mission in Slovakia. The Sisters work with the Roma people who are often regarded as 'second class citizens' within Slovakia and are the most discriminated against ethnic minority within the European Union. Eight Presentation Sisters work in three locations in Slovakia. Increasingly their centres are attracting men and boys as well as women and young girls. Hence the appeal for a Brother or Brothers to join their team. With the collaboration and generous support of the Anglo-Irish DLT, we have been in dialogue with a number of Brothers regarding this invitation. The positive response has been gratifying and we are now pursuing matters in the following way:

- 1. Br. Richard English will visit Slovakia in April to conduct an initial exploration of how we might assist the Sisters in mission there.**
- 2. Br. Martin Kenneally will visit Slovakia in early July. It is hoped that Brothers showing interest in this project may accompany Richard and Martin on these trips for a short visit.**

Further information will issue once the exploratory process is completed.

Some developments in the Ghana Province

The Ghana DLT (Brothers Rupert O'Sullivan, Joseph Wegru and Bernard Gazire) are in the process of securing a new house in Tamale, the capital city of the Northern Region. Due to increasing numbers and lack of space, it is necessary that we open a number of new communities in Ghana in the coming years. The Tamale house will be the Provincial House for the new province and it is intended that the Vocations Office will also be located there. There will also be a local educational ministry.

We also have an invitation from the Society of African Missions (SMA) to take charge of a school in Nigeria. It is hoped that this new project will be staffed by Brothers from Ghana and other Provinces. In the location we are going to in Nigeria, there is a great need for the provision of organized schooling and development. In the longer term we hope the Nigeria Mission will be a source of vocations to the Congregation. Such candidates as come would go to Ghana for formation. Br. Francis Agoah, Br. Andrew Hickey and Br. Rupert O'Sullivan will visit Nigeria in May/June to see how matters can be progressed. The next 18 months will be a period of preparation/ formation for Brothers undertaking this mission. Our hope is that by end 2007/early 2008 we could have a Presentation Community in Nigeria. What a wonderful way to celebrate 40 years of our presence in Ghana in 2008, if the Ghana Province itself undertakes its own mission in another African country.

Mount St. Joseph, Cork - A New Chapter

As indicated in an earlier letter, the CLT proposes to proceed with a renovation of Mount Saint Joseph. It is hoped that work will begin in the near future. Our purpose is to have a generalate and a centre of hospitality and ministry of which the entire Congregation can be proud. The Chapter Vision Statement proposes a youth office to coordinate and develop Communio Edmund Rice, the Edmund Rice

Action Camps and the Presentation Volunteer Programme. It is our hope that the new office will be located at Mount St. Joseph. As well as being a generalate and a centre of hospitality for the whole Congregation, we believe the on-site ministries and connection with the local community will be enhanced by this new development at the Mount. Br. Bede Minehane as Director of the Generalate and local community leader will oversee this project. We are fortunate to have someone of Br. Bede's vision and experience in this role. The CLT wishes to thank him for undertaking this challenge. We are equally grateful for the support of the Brothers of the local community at Mt. St. Joseph. We also wish to thank the Anglo Irish DLT (Brs. Walter Hurley, Sean Bonner and Barry Stanton) for their generous support and collaboration in this initiative.

North America / West Indies Province

Ferdinand Vocations Workshop

Four Brothers from the North America/West Indies Province will attend a vocation workshop in Ferdinand, Indiana this April. The workshop "Re-Awakening an Enthusiasm for Vocations" is run every year by the Benedictine Sisters and attracts participants from across the USA and many parts of the world. Though the number of Brothers in the Province is small, there is no shortage of enthusiasm for vocations ministry. It is a significant commitment that four Brothers are attending: Br. Gerard Despathy; Br. Henry Spencer, Br. Francis Schafer and Br. Barry Noel. They will be joined by Br. Francis Agoah and Br. Martin Kenneally from the CLT. In total, six Presentation Brothers will attend this workshop. We pray that this initiative will "bear fruit in due season". Visitation is in progress in the North America / West Indies Province at the time of writing and we look forward to announcing further new initiatives later in the year.

Waterford- Ireland

We wish to share some news with you from our two new communities in Waterford. The CLT recently held a three-day meeting at Mount Sion. We had the opportunity to meet with the new international community of "Edmund Rice Brothers" and to see the new ministries taking shape in Waterford. There is a considerable Presentation Brother investment in this collaborative mission with the Christian Brothers. Br. Bede Minehane and Br. Patrick Fitzgibbon are directors of the heritage company. (Edmund Rice International Heritage Centres Ltd). Br. John Hunt serves on the Finance and Operations Committee. Br. Walter Hurley has been Assistant Project Manager. Br. Andrew Hickey acts as the link person between the Presentation Brothers Congregation and the community. Br. Kevin Mascarenhas represents us as a full-time member of the international community. The ministry focus is three-fold:

- 1. A project with early school-leavers**
- 2. A range of services with migrants and refugees**
- 3. Youth ministry and school retreats**

The CLTs of both congregations are the authority in matters pertaining to the religious life of the community. Since canon law recognizes only one authority, this role is shared between the teams. Consequently the CLT of the Presentation Brothers is the canonical authority of the Mount Sion Community for the years 2005-2008. We are very grateful to the community at Mount Sion for their warm welcome and hospitality during our visit. We wish them well as they "Sing to the Lord a new Song" on the holy ground of Mount Sion. Br. Kevin, in particular, would love to see more Presentation Brothers visiting. You can be assured of a warm welcome!

Renovations at Glór na hAbhann—Ecology and Spirituality Centre

Our second Waterford community- the ecology and spirituality centre at Glór na hAbhann is taking on a new look! Renovations are almost complete which will allow the centre to cater for larger groups. We congratulate Br. John Hunt and Br. Michael McKeown on bringing the project to this stage. It is a beautiful place to visit and we hope that many more people will avail of its facilities in the years ahead. Our Chapter Vision Statement says:

Our spirituality is informed by the reality of God's presence in all of creation. We seek to be more responsible for the care of the earth by implementing best ecological practice in our daily living.

We believe that the Glór na hAbhann community and project have a key role to play in helping us implement this Chapter directive.

New Vocations Initiative in the Anglo-Irish Province

Mr. Andrew O'Connell has been appointed Director of Youth Training and Formation in the Anglo-Irish Province. He will work closely with Br. Andrew Hickey in the work of evangelisation, communications and vocation ministry. We believe this appointment to be prophetic and innovative. We congratulate Br. Walter Hurley and his team on the way they are facilitating lay people in ministry.

We wish both 'Andrews' well in this important and challenging ministry.

NGO status at the UN in support of the Rights of Children at Risk

The Christian Brothers' Congregation is going to seek Non-Government Organisation(NGO) status at the United Nations in its bid to be a better advocate for the rights of the children at risk. This news was conveyed to the Brothers internationally in a joint letter from the Congregation Leadership Team in Rome. Br. Donal Leader has been appointed the Congregation Promoter of Advocacy and Justice. At present over 300 religious groups have NGO status at the UN including over 80 Catholic religious congregations. NGO status affords groups the opportunity to be consulted and to influence the formation of policies particularly as they influence the world's poor. Br. Philip Pinto and his team have invited the Presentation Brothers to be part of this initiative. The idea is that the two Congregations, together with the Edmund Rice lay network throughout the world, would seek to form an NGO to advocate on behalf of the rights of children and young people. Br Donal Leader visited Mount St. Joseph, Cork recently to speak to our CLT. We have invited him back to speak to the extended Leadership Team meeting in Spanish Point, Co. Clare Ireland in August. We believe this invitation from the Christian Brothers CLT to be providential, particularly in the light of the following words from our Chapter Vision Statement:

Many of our Brothers have made us aware of the poverty caused by systemic injustice in various parts of the world. We will engage in advocacy work with policy makers on behalf of people who are made poor.

Br. Andrew Hickey will liaise with Br. Donal Leader and our Christian Brothers on this initiative. Further information will issue in due course.

Easter Hope - Christ is alive! Alleluia!

The message of Easter is about resurrection, hope and new life. The Lord is truly risen! Alleluia!

From what we have outlined to you in this letter Brothers, we hope you will share with us the belief that we have a magnificent mission as Presentation Brothers in today's world. Christ is alive among us! Our Congregation and our extended lay family are alive and dynamic! The initiatives we shared with you are only a few examples of the wonders God is doing among us. There are so many other good things happening and in future communications we hope to highlight some other ministries and projects. Nevertheless, even from what we have shared here, it will be clear that our Brothers are truly responding to the call of the Chapter to "Sing to the Lord a New Song" We affirm and thank members of the DLTs for the leadership you are giving. Your faith, generosity and ability to innovate are critical to the process. May our song grow in beauty and confidence to the glory of God and the service of his people. May Mary of Nazareth, Mary of the Presentation, the "woman who changes things" continue to guide and protect us.

May we have the vision of God for our time as Edmund had for his:

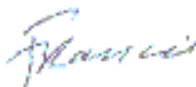
"No-one hoping in God as Edmund Rice hoped could fail to have a vision of something wonderful ahead."

Brothers, we wish you all the blessings and joys of Easter!

Your Brothers in Jesus and Edmund



**Br. Martin
Kenneally**



**Br. Francis
Agoah**



Br Andrew Hickey



Br. Patrick Fitzgibbon



Br. Richard English

For you to Do:

Practical “Follow through” to this letter.

- 1. Communities and/or individual Brothers are invited to begin dialogue with the CLT on the content of this letter. Written responses can be forwarded to Mount St. Joseph, Cork or emailed to: presgen@eircom.net**
- 2. If you wish to volunteer for any of the initiatives outlined in this letter or if you would like further information on them, you are welcome to contact any member of the CLT.**
- 3. You are invited to hold a community meeting to pray about and discuss this letter.**
- 4. Re-read the Millennium Development Goals and the Seven Strategies Actions. Choose one action and follow-through on it, personally and at community level.**