

SCJ NEWS

a newsletter of the U.S. Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart

April 2011

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SCJ well remembered at home, and around the world

"He was there for me..." The words were repeated over and over at St. Martin of Tours Church in Franklin, Wis., before and after the Funeral Mass for Fr. Charlie Bisgrove, SCJ.

Fr. Charlie died April 10 just days after suffering a massive stroke. He was 58.

"My mother was dying; she wouldn't live to be at our wedding," said a woman standing alongside her husband of seven years. She then went on to explain how Fr. Charlie quickly arranged for the wedding to take place at the hospital chapel so that her mother could be present. "It meant so much to me."

Others spoke of Fr. Charlie's help in dealing with the deaths of friends and family, when jobs were lost or when life was just a bit more challenging than normal. Fr. Charlie was there in times of joy as well: weddings, baptisms, anniversaries.

"He was there for me..."

Originally from Ohio

Fr. Charles Bisgrove, SCJ, was born in Lorain, Ohio and professed

vows with the Priests of the Sacred Heart in 1972. He earned a bachelor's degree in religious studies from Mundelin College in Chicago and an master's of divinity from Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wis.

Before his ordination to the priesthood in 1990, Fr. Charlie had been a brother with the community for 18 years.

After making his final vows in 1976, Fr. Charlie served in formation, and then administrative ministries. In the diocese of San Bernardino, Calif., he was the executive secretary of the Diocesan Office of Worship, as well as executive secretary of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission. He was also Bishop Phillip Straling's master of ceremonies.

In 1983 he left San Bernardino to become provincial secretary. From 1986 – 1989 Fr. Bisgrove also served as a member of the Provincial Council. It was during his term on the council that he enrolled in Sacred Heart School of Theology and began his studies for the priesthood.

"I'm sure that my ministry will take on a more sacramental focus that I don't have as a brother, but in my approach to people, I hope that I stay the same," he said as he began his studies. "This

isn't a promotion, just another aspect of ministry. To me, being a priest means to be for the people, with the people."

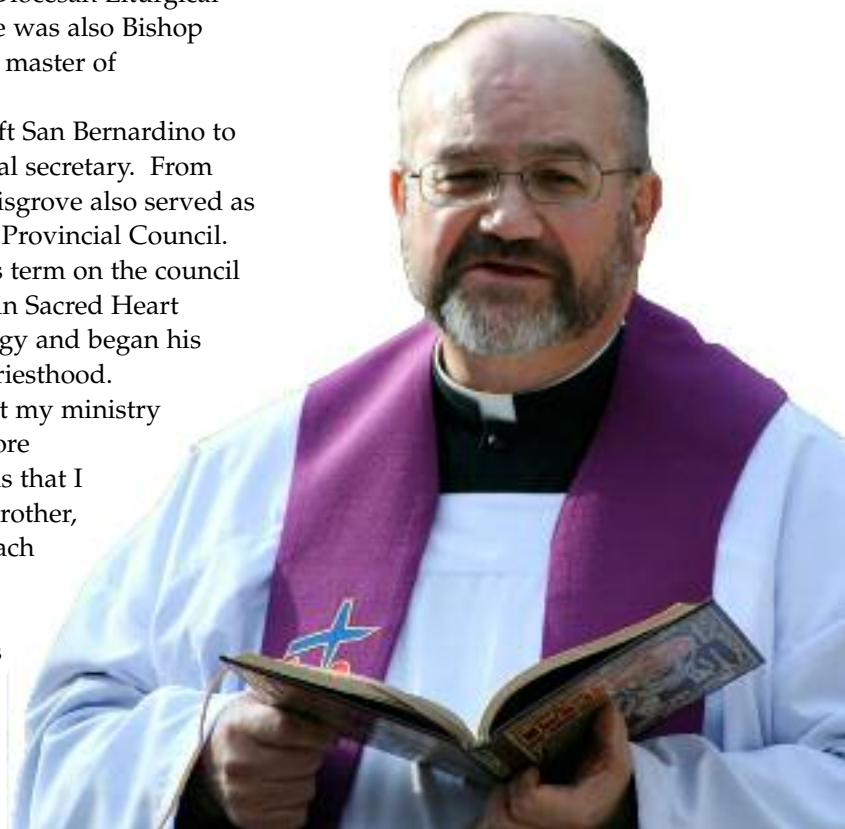


The sign at the Franklin Fire Department shortly after Fr. Charlie Bisgrove's death. BELOW: Fr. Charlie leading a prayer service.

From 1990-1992, Fr. Charlie served at St. Gregory the Great parish in Milwaukee as a deacon, and then as an associate pastor. In 1993 he was named pastor of what was then Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary parish in Franklin, Wis.

While he was pastor, Sacred Hearts merged with nearby Holy Assumption parish and became St. Martin of Tours.

Many staff and parishioners at St. Martin of Tours credit Fr. Charlie with making the transition from the two parishes to one as "painless as possi-





This was one of Fr. Charlie's favorite photos. It was taken with children in a small village in India. "Whenever I came to the village they would run to the vehicle singing," he said. "That gave me so much joy; to have made that connection. It was wonderful."

ble," said parishioner George Braun of the original Sacred Hearts. "That's not to say it went easy, but Fr. Charlie did a great job in presenting it. I thought that there would be a lot more grief and anger, but he did it properly."

Fr. Bisgrove later went on to serve as a chaplain with the Franklin Fire

and Police Department.

"He wore a pager," said Franklin Fire Chief James Martins to a *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reporter. "If there was a bad accident or a child was injured, he'd go out on those calls with us and help comfort the family."

Fr. Charlie was there for the first responders as well. "He rescued the rescuers," continued the fire chief. "When we had difficult situations, he was there to help us. He married some members of the department. He baptized some babies. He was a member of the family."

In 2001, Fr. Charlie became certified to serve as a chaplain with the National Transportation and Safety Board. Just a few weeks later, he was called to duty and assigned to Ground Zero in New York City. There, he ministered to those who had lost loved ones in the terrorist attacks, those displaced by the disaster, and the many fire, police and construction workers at the site.

"I was hesitant to talk about my experiences because it is so easy to exploit this tragedy," he said after returning from New York. "It's not just a news story... to be a part of people's pain and suffering, to see and even smell the devastation; you just can't capture that in a news story..."

"The first two days in New York I was at the Family Assistance Center. The building was the size of three football fields. Everyone at the center had identification tags and when you saw the ones that said 'Family' it became so personal. I saw one woman, she looked to be in her 30s, who was



A banner displayed during the funeral.

holding the hand of her little girl. I realized that it was probably her husband who was gone."

Fr. Charlie accompanied many families on visits to Ground Zero.

In 2006, Fr. Charlie made the first of several visits to India, a land that he quickly fell in love with. He first went in 2006 to fill in for the novice master for two months while he was on sabbatical. In 2007, he returned to join the formation team.

His assignment was with the theology students in Eluru. He also did ministry at nearby parishes. One of his favorites was a small parish in Vempadu, a tiny village about 20 minutes from the formation house.

"It was in a very poor area, the people barely had anything," said Fr.

"I had the occasion to listen to and hear from him what moved him personally and guided his choices in life... Such feelings came from his unity with God and from the experience of His love, which he developed as a good priest of the Sacred Heart."

-Fr. José Ornelas Carvalho, SCJ
Superior General



"It amazes me still that he [Fr. Charlie Bisgrove] could make so many meaningful contacts in the comparatively brief period of time he served in India. It's as though he didn't wait for opportunities, but rather created them... Charlie loved doing what he did, was not one to drag his feet."

-Fr. Tom Fix, SCJ
Missionary in India





Hundreds of people came for the wake, visitation and funeral for Fr. Charlie. St. Martin of Tours Church was filled for the Mass. The main celebrants were Fr. Tom Cassidy, provincial superior, Fr. Yvon Sheehy, pastor of St. Martin of Tours, and Fr. Jim Walters, administrator of Sacred Heart Monastery. INSET AT RIGHT: The Franklin Fire Department rang the fire bell prior to the start of the Funeral Mass. It is a tradition reserved for the honoring of deceased firefighters.

Charlie. "But their warmth, their welcoming, their generosity, it was incredible. It is what I miss the most when I think of India. The people in this little village had so little but when you went to their homes they always offered you something — rice, tea — always."

The people of Vempadu speak Telugu. Fr. Charlie always went with an SCJ student for translation assistance. "But some communication didn't need translation," he said. He wanted to sing with the children "so I taught them some Alleluias," he said.

"Then, whenever I came to the village they would run to the vehicle singing. That gave me so much joy; to have made that connection. It was wonderful."

Fr. Charlie had hoped to be in India for two years, but health concerns forced him to return to the States after eight months. He later went back to the district for several short visits.

His time in India gave Fr. Charlie a much greater appreciation for the missionaries who devote years, and sometimes their entire lives, to such work.

"It is an incredible gift to be able to do such work," he said. "You have to experience mission life to truly know what it means."

Since 2001, Fr. Charlie has been a member of the Sacred Heart Monastery community and has served in formation and liturgy at Sacred Heart School of Theology.

"He was a very passionate man and a man with a compassionate heart... Other people do things more methodically or logically, but he led with his heart."

-Fr. Jan de Jong, SCJ
SHST President-Rector



"In India, they asked me what my name was. I told them that it was Charlie. Oh, *Charlie Chaplin!* said one. And from then on whenever one of them saw me on the street they would wave and yell, *Charlie Chaplin!*"

-Fr. Charlie Bisgrove, SCJ

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Priests of the Sacred Heart

Eat, pray, study

A student's life in Rome

It has been almost a year since Fr. Francis Vu Tran, SCJ, left St. Martin of Tours Parish in Franklin, Wis., for Rome. Most of that year has been spent in language studies in preparation for graduate work in biblical theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

First there was Italian, the language of the country in which he would live. He needed Italian not only to make daily life easier, but also to understand his courses. All of his classes at the Gregorian are taught in the language.

But after a year in Rome, Italian has become a comfortable language for Fr. Francis. Joining native Romans at a café he easily yells over the lunch-time crowd clamoring for the barista's attention. "Due caffè per favore!"

With Italian added to his other two languages of Vietnamese and English, Fr. Francis moved on to Hebrew and Greek. The ancient languages are prerequisites for entrance into the biblical theology program.

It was the first time that Fr. Francis' new language skills were really put to the test. The Greek and Hebrew classes are taught in Italian. It is one thing to order a couple of coffees in a new language, but to use it for academic study? It was a challenge, but one that Fr. Francis had gone through before. When he was 13 he immigrated to the United States from Vietnam. Soon after his arrival he was using his newly learned English to study alongside his American classmates.

"But Greek and Hebrew are a lot different than English or Italian," said Fr. Francis as he reviewed study notes for his winter exams. The line "It's Greek to me," isn't much of a joke for Fr. Francis.

"I have to pass these classes because they are the base for the rest of my studies. If I don't pass these, I cannot go on."

Meaning, he really couldn't even begin his graduate program in biblical studies if he didn't pass Greek and Hebrew.



A daily ritual in Rome: riding the bus.

But pass he did, and with flying colors.

Forty percent of his classmates did not pass their exams. For some, advanced studies were halted before they even got under way.

A student's life

So what is a student's life like in Rome? As with Fr. David Szatkowski, SCJ, who recently defended his doctorate in canon law, Fr. Francis is a member of the International College.

Housed in the same building as the SCJs' general curia (central government), the International College includes SCJ students from around the world, generally those who have already completed initial theology and seminary education. Most, but not all, are ordained. These are SCJs who are often preparing for teaching, formation or administrative assignments in their home countries. They include SCJs from Africa, Asia, North America, South America and Europe.



Much of Fr. Francis' time is spent at his desk, studying languages and theology.

"I asked to do my studies in Rome for several reasons but one of the most important is that I want to get a better sense of what it means to belong to an international congregation, to get to know who the Priests of the Sacred Heart are," he said.

Living in a multi-ethnic community has been a good experience, but sometimes "you miss home, you miss being with other Americans," he said. Periodically Fr. Francis gets a care package with some of his favorite foods — a mix from both his Vietnamese culture and his adopted American home: Asian noodles to replace Italian pasta now and then, along with flavored creamer, something that isn't a staple in the coffee bars of Rome.

"You miss the little things," he laughed as he poured a creamer into his cup.

A typical day for a student at the International College begins with Mass at 6:30 a.m. That might seem brutally early, but for some it just barely allows enough time for a quick breakfast before catching a bus to school.

The pontifical universities are generally a 15 to 30-minute bus ride from the International College, which is located just over a mile from the Vatican. As Fr. Francis walks to the city bus stop on Via Gregorio VII and Via Leone XIII he pulls out his phone to check the bus schedule. "The 64 will be here in two minutes," he says.

Fr. Francis may be attending a school that dates back to the 1500s, but the students of the Gregorian have certainly adapted to modern times.

"There's an app for that," easily fits into a student's life in Rome. Even apps for the missal and breviary are available. It's not unusual to see students in a chapel in Rome following the prayers of the day on their phone instead of a book.

Much of a student's day is spent in class or in study. Some have pastoral obligations, celebrating Mass at a nearby convent or parish. The community's Sunday liturgy is on Satur-



Fr. Francis (center) explains an idea with a study group at the Gregorian.

day night to allow students to do weekend ministry at parishes.

At 6:50 p.m. (or 18:50 in the preferred 24-hour time of Italy), the college community gathers with the curia in the chapel for evening prayers and Adoration. Members of the community take turns leading the prayers and organizing liturgies.

And then it is on to "cena," the evening meal at 7:30 p.m. Students here take turns as well, being servers in the dining room where platters of pasta and meats are distributed "family-style" to tables of 10 – 12. The main meal is the 1 p.m. pranzo.

An important part of the shared meals is an important part of the international education experience — spending time with members of the Priests of the Sacred Heart from around the world. In the years ahead many of these SCJ students will serve on international committees or in the administration of their provinces, regions and districts. Some may even find themselves back in Rome, working in general administration.

"It is important to make connections with other members of the congregation," said Fr. Francis. "If we end up working together in the years ahead we will already have a connection. We will have a face that goes with an email address or signature. We will have a sense of the congrega-

tion beyond our own provinces."

After passing his initial Hebrew and Greek classes, Fr. Francis now adds courses in biblical studies. During the spring semester he has seven classes, most of which already require use of Hebrew and Greek.

"I have to read Hebrew in the class on Exodus," he said. "Greek in Corinthians class, Greek in the Resurrection story of the four Gospels and Hebrew in critical text. The languages are still hard, but it's getting better. I am so happy that I am finally learning something other than languages!"

Fr. Francis anticipates that he will be in Rome at least another two to three years. After that, he says that "I'll go where needed — availability." He chose biblical theology because it is something that he could teach on the seminary level.

"I want to help to maintain the SCJs' presence at Sacred Heart School of Theology," he said. "I am not pursuing this just so that I can teach at Sacred Heart, but it will be an option if the province needs me there."

But right now, the question of teaching is one that remains far down the road. For now, he is on the student side of the classroom.

"Eat, Pray, Study" — the post-graduate student's version of the popular Julia Robert's movie; at least the part that takes place in Rome.

The changing face of the SCJ congregation

The face of the Priests of the Sacred Heart is changing. After years as a European-centered congregation of priests and brothers, it is rapidly growing in Africa, Asia and South America. Among the three provinces of Brazil there are 73 men in temporary vows, Congo has 32, Cameroon 47. In Indonesia, long a province dominated by Dutch missionaries (several American SCJs have served there as well), there are 37 men in temporary vows and four novices. The new Asian districts of the Philippines and India have 45 young SCJs in temporary vows.

The General Curia and the International College in Rome mirror this new SCJ face. The general secretary is a priest from Indonesia, Fr. Heru Ismadi, SCJ. He succeeds a Brazilian, Fr. Anisio Schwirkowski, SCJ. North America and Europe are represented in the SCJs' International College, but most of the students — many preparing for teaching or administrative assignments in their home provinces — are now from Africa, Asia and South America.

The congregation has much youth; there are many young "sons" of Fr. Dehon.

But there are also a growing number of elderly members of the SCJ family, many of whom paved the way for the current growth in the Southern Hemisphere.

And it is not just individuals who are aging, but in some cases, entire provinces. The average age of SCJs in the Dutch-Flemish Confederation — 121 priests and brothers — is 78. A few other



Fr. Jim Schroeder of the U.S. Province is a member of an advisory committee that is examining the needs of elder SCJs and aging provinces.



The 2010 - 2011 international formation program in Rome reflected the changing face of the congregation. Here, a Polish missionary who serves in the Philippines studies alongside a Filipino and African. The Priests of the Sacred Heart are quickly growing in the Southern Hemisphere.

provinces aren't too far behind.

It is easy to concentrate on growth, on youth. It was the focus of much of the early years of the congregation.

"When the whole congregation was young and growing we did not need to focus on aging and

retirement," said Fr. Jim Schroeder, SCJ. "All of our efforts were on formation and education, building schools and preparing formators and teachers, starting new ministries and missions."

Fr. Jim, a member of the U.S. Province, serves on a newly developed Working Group on Aging. The international group of six SCJs, including Fr. John van den Hengel of the General Council, was developed late last year as an advisory body to the general administration. They met for the first time in February.

"What we are looking at are not just the needs and concerns of indi-

vidual SCJs but also of some provinces where entire populations are aging," said Fr. John, chairperson of the group.

At 71, Fr. John is the eldest member of the General Council; he said that it wasn't a coincidence that he was named to head the group.

He emphasized that the working group is not just looking at how to support and care for elderly SCJs. Questions go beyond finances, health care and residential options. They go beyond the immediate needs of seniors today.

"How can we ensure that we — all SCJs — are spiritually well cared for in our senior years," said Fr. John.

"Not much consideration has been given to this 'third age,' or third part of our lives as SCJs [the first two being initial formation and active ministry]," said Fr. Jim Schroeder. "There needs to be on-going formation regarding this part of our lives as religious. How can we care for the spiritual and pastoral needs of men who have spent their whole lives providing pastoral care for others?"

The example of Fr. Leo John De-

hon was cited. "As all of us do as we age, he had to make adjustments," said Fr. Jim. "But even with limitations, he continued a vibrant life until the end..."

"How can our SCJ spirituality inform and enliven the religious life that we live until death?" he continued. "How can we — not just those who are elders now, but our young SCJs who will one day be elders themselves — grow and flourish in parts of our lives while also diminishing in other areas?"

"Sometimes it takes the experience of old age to force one to get to the core of who he is as a spiritual being," said Fr. John van den Hengel. "We tend to strongly tie our lives to our activities and then can forget that life is not all that much about what we do but more about the worth and goodness that we become in doing."

Aging provinces

While much of the working group's initial discussions focused on the individual experience of being a senior, as noted, several provinces as a whole are aging. The most significant example is the Dutch Province, which decided to "end the province in its present form," said Fr. John. A rapidly graying province that had gone for years without new vocations, Dutch SCJs decided to stop seeking new members.

"A process was developed to allow for this change but there are many issues that were not foreseen," said Fr. John. "How will we take care of our SCJ communities that no



The working group at its first meeting in Rome.

longer have members who have the energy or ability for certain roles in leadership? Dedicated lay people are taking on increased responsibilities but we need to discuss what they can and can't do in regards to our communities and resources. Can laity serve on our councils? Can they be given the same authority that an SCJ would have?"

"We need to obtain and explore canonical models," said Fr. Jim Schroeder. "What are the possibilities? Do new models need to be created?"

In the months ahead members of the group will gather demographic information on the SCJ entities and examine policies on aging, retirement, healthcare and other related concerns.

"Our discussions helped me gain an appreciation for what we are doing in the U.S. Province," said Fr. Jim. "We really are on the forefront in having policies on aging, retirement and healthcare."

A positive beginning

About the first meeting, Fr. Jim said that "I was very pleased with the vitality, fraternity and creativity of the members of the working group. The six of us ranged in age from 62 to 86, and I was not the youngest! The older members of the group were an inspiration in their intelligence, experience, good humor, energy and stamina."

Fr. Jim said that it was interesting to learn "how some provinces have found very creative ways of continuing their works, using their large buildings, and caring for their seniors.

"But most importantly, I was very pleased with our discussion of how our senior religious can live our charism unto death. Our Constitutions give us some beautiful counsel: No matter how old or sick an SCJ may be he can live our charism because 'we are called in the Church to seek and to lead, as the one thing necessary, a life of union with the oblation of Christ' (N. 26)."

SCJ NEWS

SCJs' eldest bishop turns 90

The congregation's eldest bishop, Bishop Evert Baaij, SCJ, celebrated his 90th birthday in March.

A member of the Priests of the Sacred Heart since 1942, Bishop Baaij was born in the Netherlands,

became a citizen of Canada, is a member of the U.S. Province but has called South Africa his home for the past 54 years. "I'm a citizen of the world," he joked.

After his ordination in 1947, he taught in Canada and the United States before heading to South Africa in 1957. In 1974, Pope Paul VI named him bishop of Aliwal North, South Africa. His bishop's shield carries the Latin words: "Veni Creator" (Come, O Creator). Bishop Baaij said that he chose it because "God is the creator of the universe and we are God's co-creators."

Bishop Baaij served as bishop of Aliwal North until 1981 when health concerns prompted him to resign.

He now lives at and serves as a chaplain to a retirement community in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

Read the full story about Bishop Baaij on the province website (www.sacredheartusa.org). The story is available in the "News" section (second tab on the top).



Bishop Evert Baaij

In the Army now!

In the last *SCJ News* we noted that Fr. Mark Mastin, SCJ, completed the initial part of his basic training in preparation for service as a chaplain in the U.S. Army. In April he concluded the final phase and graduated from the Chaplain Basic Officer Leader Course at Fort Jackson, SC. He is now stationed at his first assignment at Schoefield Barracks in Hawaii on the island of Oahu. It is the home of the 25th Infantry Division, which primarily serves the Asian theater, but is dispatched to other locations as well.

Pastoral ministry will be a significant part of Fr. Mark's job, but so too will be personal and family counseling for people of all faiths.

Eighty-seven chaplains graduated with Fr. Mark. In the Army there are approximately 100 Catholic chaplains and 1,000 protestant chaplains that serve 130 faith traditions.

St. Joe's student turns soup labels into a computer

How does one go about getting a new computer? For Rebecca, a fourth



Fr. (Captain)
Mark Mastin

grader at St. Joseph's Indian School in South Dakota, the first step involved soup labels – a lot of soup labels! She and other girls in her home at St. Joe's set goals to clip enough Campbell's soup labels to earn something special for themselves. Campbell's "Labels for Education" program has long awarded prizes for schools and students who save the company's soup labels.

"A few girls decided to save enough labels for a toy or basketball, and a couple others were working toward an i-Pod Nano, but Rebecca's goal of a laptop was by far the most ambitious," said a member of St. Joe's staff.

Recently she reached her goal: 63,000 Campbell's soup labels!

"She began this endeavor independently," said Vicki, one of Rebecca's houseparents. "She kept working at it without prompting or complaining, and never once thought about quitting. Her determination and perseverance are something to be admired by both staff and students!"

Upcoming events at SHM

The Province Development Office, in collaboration with Sacred Heart Monastery, hosts several events throughout the year. If you would like to attend one of the events please call the development office at 800-448-7674 (in Milwaukee call 414-425-

Meet Fr. Francis

Fr. Francis Vu Tran, SCJ, is currently doing graduate studies in Scripture at the Gregorian Pontifical University in Rome. Read his story, starting on page 4.



The Priests of the Sacred Heart (SCJ) are brothers and priests called to live, pray and work together, sharing the love of the Sacred Heart in our lives and ministry.

**Questions about a vocation?
Contact us!**

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3383). Upcoming events include: Masses for the Anointing of the Sick on May 17 & 19 at 1 p.m., Feast of the Sacred Heart on July 1 at 11 a.m., Pet Blessing on October 2 (time TBA) and the Advent Concert on December 18 at 2 p.m.

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