After serving the Redemptorists well for decades, Mount St. Alphonsus continues its educational mission

By Fr. John Murray, C.Ss.R.
North East, ’65

Mount St. Alphonsus was a place that all Redemptorists were proud of. In 1903, the Provincial put Father Joseph Schneider, the 35-year-old science professor from North East, in charge of the search for an ideal location for a new seminary. He taught science in North East, but he also brought electricity to the seminary in 1900, and then oversaw the construction of the chapel.

Schneider first favored sites in Middletown, NY and then Monroe, NY, but when a 411-acre site on the Hudson River suddenly became available, Schneider knew that his search was finished. Esopus soon entered the Redemptorist lexicon for years to come.

With a slew of Brothers to work on the seminary, Schneider began digging the foundation. He purchased a quarry in Port Deposit, MD for the granite and brought the huge blocks by barge up the Chesapeake Bay through to the Hudson River. The wood for the doors and windows was from trees felled on the property. All the interior walls were reinforced concrete. The exterior walls were four-feet-thick in some places, and the halls were 18-feet-tall in an effort to forestall the tuberculosis that had taken the lives of 53 seminarians in Ilchester. No surprise that when strangers viewed the Mount from a boat on the Hudson, they thought...
that they were seeing West Point.
For almost 80 years, the Mount trained Redemptorist seminarians and turned them into priests. A total of 1,300 Redemptorists, including 10 bishops, were ordained in the beautiful chapel.
After the seminarians were moved to Washington Theological Union, the Mount was transformed into a retreat house and a novitiate. It struggled for almost 25 years as a retreat center, and in 2012 the Mount was sold to the Bruderhof.

The Bruderhof
The Bruderhof are a Christian religious community with churches in New York, Florida, West Virginia, and Paraguay. Similar to the Amish and the Mennonites, the Bruderhof were originally associated with the Hutterite Brethren. They are pacifists, emphasizing the Beatitudes and Jesus’ teaching about non-violence and compassion for the poor.
The Bruderhof were founded in Germany in 1920, but when Hitler came to power, they were forced to flee to England. With the start of World War II, the English were suspicious of the German Bruderhof, so they moved again to Paraguay. They settled in Ulster County in New York, near Esopus, in 1954. About 600 Bruderhof members live in the Esopus area. When the Mount was put up for sale, the Bruderhof were very interested. The Redemptorists sold the property to the Bruderhof in May 2012 for $21.5 million.
The Bruderhof children had attended public high schools, but Mount St. Alphonsus is now The Mount Academy, serving Bruderhof high school-age students. A total of 180 students attend the school. Including the children of the large teaching staff, 300 people take their meals in the dining room. Most students commute from the neighborhood, but 20 children of staff members live at the Mount.
The community has put the building through a $10 million renovation, making major changes to the building that the Redemptorists thought could not be done. Most of the former bedrooms on the front of the building have been turned into suites with private bathrooms for the resident staff and their children. The Bruderhof replaced the old boiler with a new, wood chip boiler. They renovated the entire kitchen. The roof now has a large patio where, in good weather, they can eat meals overlooking the river.
The road along the river between the boat house and the dock has been fully repaired, and they hope to soon restore the dock area.
The Bruderhof’s main source of income is a line of classroom furniture and toys marketed under the name, “Community Playthings.” They also produce mobility and rehabilitation equipment for disabled adults and children under the name, “Rifton Equipment.”
Mount St. Alphonsus served the Redemptorists well for over a century, and now another Christian community continues to use the building as an education center.

Fr. John Murray is editor of Alumni Notes. Contact him at: murraycssr@gmail.com.
Basic Six was a summer camp in North East for boys who were interested in going to St. Mary’s. It ran from 1968 to 1983. Here are the Redemptorists who ran the program in 1969.

From left to right:
John Murray ('65) stationed at OLPH in Brooklyn; Jim Murawski ('68) married and living in Belair, MD; Manny Rodriguez ('64) Redemptorist Provincial in Puerto Rico; Dave Hickey ('64) living in Toronto; Henry Sattler ('68) stationed at St. Martin of Tours Parish in Bethpage, NY; Joe Olive ('64) died Dec. 9, 2012 in Ojai, CA; Pierce Kenny ('62) died June 25, 2012 in Timonium, MD; Jim Manning ('68); Fr. Mike Taris ('48) taught for many years at Msgr. Donovan High School in Toms River, NJ; Charlie Coury ('68) a missionary in Brazil, now in Rome; Fr. Tom Costello; Sr. Sheila Costello.
Father Thomas Maceda taught at St. Mary's in North East for 12 years from 1972 until 1984. He died on March 13, 2012 at the St. John Neumann Residence at Stella Maris in Timonium, MD. He was 74.

Born on June 1, 1937 in Brooklyn, NY, just down 60th Street from Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, he professed his first vows as a Redemptorist in 1958 and was ordained on June 23, 1963.

He began his missionary career by learning Spanish and serving for eight years in Caguas and Guayama, Puerto Rico; Las Matas de Farfan in the Dominican Republic; and also in Frederiksted, St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In 1972 Father Maceda came to North East, and for the next 12 years he served as a history professor in the same preparatory college of St. Mary's where he himself had been educated as a seminarian. He taught world and American history and religion. Father Maceda was a joy with all the students, introducing them to the elaborate games that he played his entire life.

In 1984 he was appointed for four years as the pastor of Presentation Parish in Port Ewen, NY, just down the road from Mount St. Alphonsus in Esopus. Next he served for five years in New York City in the parishes of Holy Redeemer (Lower East Side) and St. Cecilia (East Harlem), and finally for more than 18 years in his home parish, the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Brooklyn, as a dedicated and reliable associate.

“He was the type of priest you could count on,” said his former rector at OLPH, Fr. Kevin Moley. “And very few people realize how significant it is to have a man who will be there when you need him and serve generously and happily in doing whatever work needs to be done. But even more importantly, he was not only present but also on time for any assignments and for any community acts. You may not think this is noteworthy, but Father Tom always led the hymns for our liturgies. And because his singing never went flat, let me tell you, this really was a big deal.”

His most recent rector, Fr. Joseph Tizio, echoes a very similar sentiment. “Father Maceda was a wonderful community man. I know he worked hard when he was pastor at Port Ewen and throughout his early years of priesthood, but he continued to contribute a great deal here in his senior years of ministry. You could talk to him about anything and he was extremely knowledgeable on almost any topic. He was really a joyful presence who could lighten up a meal, perk up people’s spirits, and bring life to those around him. We will miss him.”

His younger confreres mirror this remembrance of him as well. “He always enjoyed lingering after meals,” recalled Fr. Frank Mulvaney. “And talking about any subject from the theology of the Eucharist to the themes of old black-and-white movies. He looked forward to the annual Redemptorist Thanksgiving Day gatherings at OLPH when confreres from neighboring parishes joined our community celebration. This gave him an opportunity to use his keen intellect and probing mind to create a host of trivia games and quizzes which everyone enjoyed.

“And he was really excellent with the liturgical celebrations. I can remember him chanting morning prayers with the people in church during Triduum services. He got them to sing and pray louder than anyone else could.

“And he was also a very caring man who never bragged about his kind deeds. When I was a deacon and preparing my first homily in Spanish, I was extremely nervous although I tried not to show it. But Father Tom sensed my anxiety and gave me my first grammar — a concrete, very practical book that really helped me. I think this is one of the reasons we younger confreres looked up to him. We knew he was working with some of the most abandoned groups in the city, doing counseling with marginalized folks — the kind of work that St. Alphonsus would do. He was a sincere, honest, holy priest, and the people really loved him. Is there any better tribute for a Redemptorist?”

For complete obituaries, please visit: redemptorists.net/departed.cfm.
Dear Fr. Murray:

How delighted I am to hear from you. Since I live in the Perry Hall/White Marsh (MD) area and being so close to Stella Maris, I have tried to make Stella Maris and Fr. Gerard a regular visit. I enjoy seeing some old friends and especially enjoy Fr. Gerard’s Masses. He is to be commended for the outstanding work he does with his “failing” confreres. He treats them so kindly! However, I have not been there for quite some time and I just know that Fr. Gerard has my picture on his dart board!

I have been married to Arlene for 148 years. Oh! Did I say 148 years? Just seems that way (to her) I am sure!!! We have two grown children — Phil II who is still a bachelor and Valerie who is married to a fine/great guy, Glenn. Unfortunately, they have not been blessed with children and now they are past that stage of their life, or so it seems.

However, not having grandchildren, we have two lovable puppies, which we rescued from a shelter in York, PA. We got Desi and Lucy as puppies. On our visit to the shelter, Lucy, then 6 weeks old, jumped into Arlene’s lap without hesitation and Desi did likewise to me. When Arlene asked the caretaker if we could have Lucy (we named them), I said, “And what are we supposed to do about Desi?” Happily, we got both. We visited them each weekend until they were 10 weeks old and we were able to bring them home. Our “puppies” are now two years old. Of course, getting the puppies from a shelter, they were “free”! Please don’t ask about carpentry repair bills. To date, a little over $3,500. BUT we still luv ’em and they have stopped chewing on the furniture, etc. They are Daddy’s babies!!!! We spoil ’em rotten!

At age 72, I am still working. Wanted to retire at age 65 and my boss talked me out of it. He asked me at the Xmas office party this year what my retirement plans are, and I told him that I was considering 75. He said, “We’ll squeeze a few more years out of you after 75.” Sigh! However, I am glad that I am still working, as it gives me another reason for arising at 6 a.m. to start the day, and I do enjoy my job. Of course, the extra “dough” does come in handy for one of our favorite past times, i.e. cruising! Probably, one of the most enjoyable, totally relaxing vacations one can take. Well, my dear friend, as the Toyota slogan says, “you asked for it”! (or was that Nike?)

So, there you have it! I hope you continue to make progress and enjoy a New Year full of blessings.

Fondly,

Phil Voelker

Happy New Year Father! Me? I’m very happily married; will be twelve years this summer. We have two healthy, super intelligent (smarter than their dad, they get that from their mother) girls. They are, unfortunately for me, very beautiful; ages 9 and 7. Millie and Libby are the great blessings of my life.

Grandchildren? No, but I am a great uncle because my younger brother’s son does not seem to know what causes that. My great niece and nephew are beautiful little twins and their parents are together and will be getting married soon.

Living? Beautiful Washington State. Specifically Eastern Washington, which, many find strange to learn, is a desert. We love living here, amongst other reasons, because it gives us easy access to two different mountain ranges, where we spend many weekends camping and four wheeling. I’m the president of our local, long-established Jeep Club, the Peak Putters.

Job? I was working in the automotive field, mostly as a parts manager. But now, I am lucky to be a stay-at-home dad (SAHD). My wife is the controller at a multi-location car sales and rental Hertz franchise. The decision to go to one income with a
new baby and a mortgage was very difficult, but God blessed us and Chris (my beautiful wife) rose in the ranks at work quickly and is now on the short track to VP, so our risk has been rewarded. I do manage some consulting work periodically in my previous field, but that mostly pays for parts for the Jeep. :-)

Church? I sing with my choir at church. They are also the best prayer group I have ever belonged to. Our pastor is convinced we are the best choir in the diocese. If that is true it is despite of me not because of me. I am the least of many, but I sing with fervor. Our church uses “slide screens” instead of missals for songs, liturgy, etc. I have inherited (they say I volunteered) the ministry of setting up the PowerPoint presentations that are on the screens. Seems simple, but it takes several hours a week and gives me a nice creative outlet. I have shared in many ministries in the parish over the years: RCIA, parish council, slide operator, religious ed, etc. My name has been presented to the bishop as a deacon candidate. They are reworking that program, and I am hoping to proceed with that in the next few years if we discern that is my calling.

I hope to see more people share this kind of information in the Alumni Newsletter. Please feel free to share my email address and let alumni know I can be located on Facebook.

Yours in Christ,
Lee Retterer
iacocca@urx.com

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Dear Father Murray,

First of all, thanks a million for keeping me on your distribution list for the newsletter you started many years ago, and for giving it a new face/life. It’s amazing the power of technology. Now you have more and better pictures; it’s in living color and plenty of room to write more stories. Remember the days when you had to struggle trying to get the newsletter printed; then preparing the mailing list and trying to find money to cover for the postage? The good Lord found a way for you to continue this worthy mission of passing on love and memories to present and alumni Redemptorists, great stories of the past and those happening now as well. Kudos to your Communications Director as well.

Now that you have the format set for the newsletter, it should be a piece of cake to duplicate future editions. Again, congratulations to you and your entire team for moving up to the world of technology. I am sure you are not losing any more sleep thinking how and when you are going to have the next newsletter ready to go.

I wish a very Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year 2013 filled with joy and peace in the Lord Jesus!

4 ever in Christ,
José Méndez

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Domine Jesu!


Up from my golden saucer in the dawn
Flows without fleck,
in streak of upmost glow,
The floodlight of my savior Jesus Christ,
Ascending soundless,
like an upward snow.

More than the rainbow’s last invisible hues —
Intangible yet scorching bolt of Grace,
Probing the poles of space and all the stars,
It finds and floods with joy the Father’s face.

Lo, from my mirror, lacquered like a lake;
Lo, from my dish, as from a focused arc,
God from the shallow bottom of the world
Streams upward unto God through all the dark.

And I, with Domine Jesu!
on my lips,
Bend and look softly over in the blaze,
Bend and look downward in the blinding beam,
My lips, my eyes caught betwixt Gaze and Gaze.

By Thine effulgence breaking on my brow,
Domine, bear mine image on with Thee
To cast my shadow on The Father’s face,
That in Thy look He may remember me.
Sammys Reunion at West End
June 28-30, 2013
San Alfonso Retreat House, Long Branch, NJ

A Celebration of Brotherhood

INVITED: ALL currently active or inactive in ministry, anyone who participated in any phase of Redemptorist formation.

Like the Sammys of the ‘80s at West End, this gathering offers a social/spiritual weekend in a resort atmosphere. The reunion aims to renew friendships and brotherhood founded in all stages of the past and present Redemptorist experience.

As we age, friends become fewer, and brothers become fewer still.

Contact: Tom Costello (tomlp247@yahoo.com)
Most Holy Immaculate Virgin and my Mother Mary, * to thee, who art the Mother of my Lord, the Queen of the world, the Advocate, the Hope, and the Refuge of sinners, * I have recourse today, I, who am the most miserable of all. * I render thee my most humble homage, O great Queen, * and I thank thee for all the graces thou hast conferred on me until now; * particularly for having delivered me from hell, which I have so often deserved.

I love thee, O most amiable Lady; and for the love which I bear thee, * I promise to serve thee always and to do all in my power to make others love thee also. * I place in thee all my hopes, I confide my salvation to thy care.

Accept me for thy servant, and receive me under thy mantle, O Mother of Mercy. * And since thou art so powerful with God, deliver me from all temptations, * or rather obtain for me the strength to triumph over them until death. * Of thee I ask a perfect love for Jesus Christ.

Through thee I hope to die a good death. * O my Mother, by the love which thou bearest to God, * I beseech thee to help me at all times, * but especially at the last moment of my life. * Leave me not, I beseech thee, until thou seest me safe in Heaven; blessing thee and singing thy mercies for all eternity.

Amen. So I hope. So may it be.