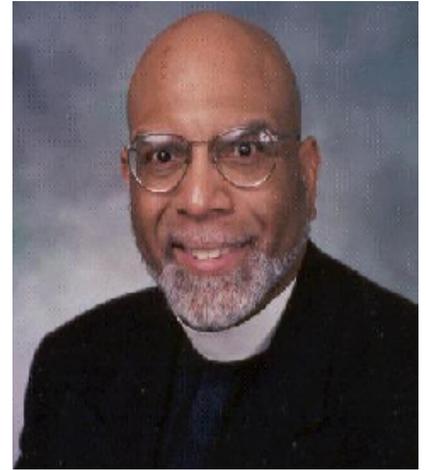


## Chapter 12: Masud Ibn Syedullah, Minister Provincial Era 2002-2005

(From material provided to Chapter members by Masud as its members were considering his election as Minister Provincial in 2001)

### Background

My life among Third Order Franciscans began in 1976 in Chicago, while in seminary. I was noviced in 1979 and professed in 1983. I have served the Order in several capacities: founder and convener of the Oklahoma Fellowship; organized and established the South Central Regional Convocation; served as member of Chapter; served as an Area Chaplain; and served as the Provincial Chaplain. Currently, I serve as an Assistant Chaplain, Co-Convener of the New York City Fellowship, and I represent the Third Order on the Ecumenical Committee of the Roman Catholic Secular Franciscans. My wife Janice and I have just celebrated our thirty-first wedding anniversary and have two adult daughters. I pastor the Church of the Atonement, Bronx; and am Director of *Roots & Branches: Programs for Spiritual Growth*. I also serve on the Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission, the Episcopal-Muslim Relations Committee, the Liturgical Commission, and the Standing Committee of the Diocese of New York.



### Masud's Vision for the Third Order

I entered the Third Order in response to an intense attraction to the life, lifestyle, and ministry of St. Francis; becoming close friends with some wonderful people who were tertiaries; and a desire to deepen my commitment to God and to the work of God. Through the years, these three categories have remained attractive to me and continue to inform and form my life. I believe the Third Order has something to offer the Church (and the world) and want to offer my skills to further its mission. We live in a challenging, yet exciting period of history, for both the Church and the world. Never before has it been more vital that people of various cultures, races, and religions learn to live together and even to appreciate and to affirm each other. It is increasingly evident that many people, disillusioned with the superficiality of much of religion, are seeking deeper spiritual life. It is further increasingly evident that many of the struggles and conflicts both within the Church and in the world have their roots in injustice, greed, and disrespect. In the midst of terror and mistrust, much of the joy and spontaneity of life is missing. These are but some of the challenges and opportunities facing Franciscans today. Our spiritual tradition, a combination of contemplation and action, is a rich resource to help guide us through the challenges of our time—not only for ourselves, but also for the sake of our parishes and the various communities we serve. What we face today is not much different in substance from that faced by Jesus, Francis, and Clare in their times. Our task is to be focused, spiritually centered, and courageous to act under inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The background that I have in the areas of spiritual formation, pastoral care, and multicultural and interfaith experiences are available to the Order as we seek to engage and to respond to the challenges of our time. I am willing to offer leadership to our Order as we seek to provide ways for our membership to be inspired and spiritually fortified, as well as to encourage and establish ways that we can be faithful witnesses to peace and justice in the Church and in the world. Were I to serve as Minister Provincial, the three aforementioned factors would remain central to the themes of my work: attraction to the life, charisma, and ministry of St. Francis; commitment to close friendship among us as a community; and a commitment to engage God and the work God gives us to do.

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### Hallmark of Masud's Term

One can generalize on the effects of Anita Catron's term and observe that she was able to achieve a balance of a local fellowship and regional life with whole-province endeavors in the Provincial Convocations. Given such a healthy balance in the Province, the hallmark of Masud's tenure was reaching out beyond the customary boundaries of the Order:

- reaching out geographically in pushing forward the Concordat with Brazil (Chapter 10) and supporting the medical mission to Guyana;
- reaching out ecumenically to the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans and to the Secular Franciscan Order (Roman Catholic) in creating the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity;
- reaching out within ECUSA in leading a revival of National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities (NAECC) composed of religious communities canonically recognized by the House of Bishops; and
- reaching out politically by taking a public stand on national policies concerning the initiation of the Second Iraq War.

At the first Chapter he chaired as Minister Provincial in 2003, a motion was made and accepted to change the name of the province from *the American Province* to the *Province of the Americas*.

# Reaching out Geographically: Medical Mission to Guyana, 2004

## Part 1. The Reconnaissance Trip To Guyana 2003

Barbara Baumgarten (Bennett) (Provincial Formation Director) (from the *Franciscan Times*)



On February 2, 2003, Julia Bergstrom and I (Barbara Bennett) flew into Georgetown, Guyana along with Guyanese tertiary Eunice Edwards, who had earlier attended the Trinidad and Tobago Convocation with us. The trip began with a visit to Bishop Randall George, who offered a warm welcome along with a word of warning about the instability and violence in Guyana. We were not to leave Eunice's side at any time, for any reason, while in the Georgetown area.

The afternoon was spent obtaining permission to travel to the interior of Guyana to visit tertiaries Charles and Celian Roland. Normally, such permission must be obtained weeks in advance, but by God's grace, the Minister of Amerindian Affairs agreed to grant our travel into Imbaimadai on Thursday, February 6. No small miracle was this!

In the meantime, Bishop George arranged an appointment for us to meet with the Chief Medical Officer of Guyana the following morning. Dr. Rudolph Cummings gave us complete instructions on how to arrange a medical mission into the interior if a team of Third Order members desired to undertake such a ministry. The Amerindians rarely receive medical care by trained physicians and nurses; many suffer from malaria, TB, gastro-intestinal disorders, and malnutrition.

After leaving Dr. Cummings, we traveled up to West Coast Berbice to spend time in Eunice's home. Eunice took us to the end of the road where a ferry must be caught if one wishes to continue on to New Amsterdam. Along the way, she showed us the seven churches served by her local priest. Eunice's home is next door to one

of the churches where she serves as a lay minister. The priest depends upon the lay ministers to do nearly everything except absolve, bless, consecrate, and perform weddings. The cemetery is situated between her home and the church, where a number of her ancestors lay and keep watch over her. The day ended with the singing of hymns and saying Evening Prayer with Eunice's extended family of nine.

Laren Gordon and Marjorie White, both postulants since 1997, appeared at Eunice's home midday Wednesday. Their dedication to TSSF was apparent and then was celebrated with their novicing at Evening Prayer and with feasting. En route back to Georgetown, we stopped off at the President's College, the only residential college in Georgetown. Eunice's granddaughter was delighted to see her grandmother and to be treated with some spending cash.

At 6:45 a.m. Thursday morning, the Bishop's driver, Patrick, came to drive us (Julia and Barbara) out to Ogle Airport to catch our flight to Imbaimadai. After going through customs and waiting for the weather to settle, we climbed aboard a small bush plane to make a one-hour flight into the jungle of Guyana. One other passenger and cargo accompanied us on the bumpy and loud flight (ear plugs were a must). Upon arrival at the Imbaimadai airstrip, we were relieved to see Fr. Charles Roland waiting for us, and we were surprised and delighted to see that Fr. Winston Williams was there as well. Fr. Williams explained that we were going to get into a boat and go up the Mazaruni River to Jawalla—a four-hour ride in a motorized open canoe.

The brown river was low and much care was taken to avoid rocks and other objects. Along the way, the green jungle was thick and quiet. Occasionally, we saw miners or Amerindians going about their daily tasks. Due to the mining, most of the wildlife has moved deeper into the jungle, but we spotted a red snake and a baboon.

Jawalla sits high on a rise above the river. The settlement is spread over a great area and is connected by the river and trails. The Rolands, Julia, and I stayed at a comfortable diocesan guesthouse as did another couple who were in residence to help with the Bible

translation program. The diocesan house had chairs with backs, a “kitchen,” a common area (where we spent many hours “gaffing” or talking), and three bedrooms. Absent were running water, electricity, bathroom, window screens and other amenities taken for granted in the States. An outhouse was situated nearby and the river was used for bathing. Celian, a trained cook, and Dorina Williams were happy to have a “kitchen” area and cooked many wonderful meals for us. The staples included rice, cassava bread and some type of stew or fish—all cooked over a small kerosene stove.

Each day began with the beckoning of the conch shell to Morning Prayer and Eucharist at the Anglican church. On Friday, we were invited to eat lunch with Dee and Ray, the American couple in residence at Jawalla to translate the Bible into Akawaio (ek-a-whyoh), the local language. Ray and Dee have been in residence for five years. They spent their first four years learning the language and giving it written form since Akawaio is an oral dialect. Now they are translating the Bible with a team of Amerindians brought in from throughout the region. At lunch, the whole team joins under the thatched roofed, open eating area (like a covered picnic area) for a common meal. We were warmly welcomed by all and enjoyed the stories of many while eating “one pot,” a hearty fried rice. The days ended with the loud “whistle” of beetles that announce the setting of the sun, and sometimes the call of the baboons could be heard which resembled the sound of wind blowing through trees.

On Saturday, we joined the only other Christian church in the area for their weekly service. The Amokokopai Alleluia Church meets in a large, open thatched-roof building with backless benches circling the perimeter of the space. A simple table sat in the middle of the room with a basket on it for donations. We were invited to speak, and Winston translated what Julia said. The three-hour service, held in Akawaio (Fr. Williams translated periodically), consisted of preaching and witnessing until the final hour when we joined arms for a meditative chant-dance. The words and steps were repetitive, making it easy for us to fully participate, even if we did not understand what we were singing. The dance concluded by moving everyone outside to another communal eating area where cassava bread, dried fish and cassak (a popular wine made from cassava) were served. While this was the “social hour after church,” it felt more like Eucharist, or even the feeding of the 5,000. We were richly blessed indeed to be welcomed into the community.

Across the river and down the trail a bit, sits Jawalla’s one store, which sells a limited variety of packaged foods and supplies. Outside the store is a benched area with a television and VCR. A generator is used to power the unit. Arrangements were made for us to show our videos from the Santa Barbara Provincial Convocation and to share stories about the Third Order. Many Amerindians came to hear and see the white visitors. Again, we experienced a warm welcome and strong interest in who we were and what we were about.

The Anglican church sits in the middle of the area where we stayed. It was surrounded by the Williams’s rectory, the diocesan guesthouse, the local school and the Bible translation center. Services out of the *West Indies Book of Common Prayer* are held on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday with Morning Prayer preceding the Eucharist. On Sunday, Julia and I preached about TSSF. Fr. Roland recorded the sermon, and Celian translated from English into Akawaio even though most of the congregation understands English. After Sunday services, we lunched, then headed to the boat for our journey back to Imbaimadai.

Imbaimadai is a mining settlement, which lacks the tranquility and cleanliness of Jawalla. The miners have a huge generator that runs loudly during the night in order for them to have light; when they have a successful day finding gold or diamonds, celebrations run at full volume through the night. Their disregard for the environment is evident by the trash strewn about and the damage done to the river.

An insult added to this injury is that a rancher died and his cows now roam freely through

*Celian Roland, Barbara Baumgarten (Bennett) Fr. Charles Roland and Julia Bergstrom during sermon at church in Jawalla. Seated figure on right is lay reader and local midwife, Rita.*



*Barbara Baumgarten (Bennett) and Fr. Charles Roland en route from Jawalla to Imbaimadai on the Mazaruni River of Guyana. Hidden is Fr. Winston Williams who is steering.*



countryside. Fr. Charles and Celian welcomed us into their home with grace. Celian spent the evening spinning cotton on a rudimentary spinner operated by her thigh and nimble fingers. Once spun, the cotton will be used to make a hammock.

Due to unfavorable weather, the plane failed to pick us up on Monday morning. By the time the weather cleared, the pilot decided it was not worth making the trip. Fr. Charles and Fr. Winston radioed the pilot and convinced him to find enough cargo to warrant the trip so that we could return to Georgetown. By 1:30 the plane arrived, and off we went bidding farewell to our wonderful hosts. What an incredible gift our days with the Rolands and Williams were! The flight out offered beautiful views of the jungle and Guyana's many waterfalls.

Our final day was spent at the annual Mother's Union meeting in Georgetown. The Mother's Union is a vital organization of Anglican Church women throughout the Third World countries. At the meeting we were welcomed by Sheila George (the bishop's wife), reunited with Eunice, Larene and Marjorie, and were invited to speak about TSSF. By the end of the day, 30 women expressed serious interest in the Third Order and are looking to make application. The day ended with Larene Gordon leading the Mother's Union in a local folk song that had us all rocking with joy—a joy that expressed candidly our experience of visiting our brothers and sisters in Guyana.

## **Part 2. The Medical Mission Trip To Guyana 2004**

*Brenda M. Stewart (from the Franciscan Times)*

With God all things are possible. Mission Accomplished. After months of preparation, including lots of frustrations, the Medical Mission to Region 7 became a reality. The Medical Team, which consisted of Dr. Milan Schmidt, Dr. Tupper Morehead and Nurse Sheila Morehead was scheduled to arrive in Georgetown on Saturday, September 4, 2004, and leave for Region 7 on Sunday, September 5, but Hurricane Frances had other plans.

Dr. Schmidt arrived as scheduled on Saturday, September 4, but Dr. and Nurse Morehead had to postpone their flight for September 4 because the Miami Airport was closed due to Hurricane Frances. Tupper and Sheila displayed their Christian commitment to this mission because of the efforts they made to get to Guyana on Sunday, September 5. They flew to New Jersey, took a cab to JFK, where they made connections to Georgetown. Persons with less interest and faith would have aborted the trip and could not have been faulted for this.

The team went into Region 7 on Monday morning, September 6, accompanied by Mrs. Celian Roland and her son. Mrs. Roland, who resides in Georgetown, volunteered to go in with the team to prepare meals, and to assist her husband Fr. Charles Roland in matters relating to the mission. All food including water was bought in Georgetown and sent in with the team. It was interesting to see the passengers and cargo being weighed to determine that no more than 1500 lbs. were taken on board. Thankfully it was a fair morning, and the takeoff was smooth. The airline informed me as soon as they arrived at their destination.

They were met by Fr. Roland and members of the community who were there from the previous day because, although I tried to speak with Fr. Roland to inform him of the delay, the reception was so poor that he could not hear what I was saying, but he had all confidence that his Franciscan Brothers and Sisters of the team would arrive. After treating people at Fr. Roland's community, Imbaimadai, the team went by hired boat to Fr. William's community, Jawalla, where they treated the members of his community. Over 500 people were treated by the team, which returned to Georgetown on Thursday evening, September 9, and got a well needed rest Thursday night and Friday.

We all left Georgetown on Saturday, September 11. Fr. Roland reported that the members of the Good Shepherd Church asked him to say how grateful they were for the visit of the Medical Team, and for the needed treatments that they received. He said that the people were elated that their Church and the Franciscans cared for them, and that this was the first time that they had ever gotten this kind of attention. He said that the Medical Mission was a great success. Fr. Williams reported that the people in his area appreciated the visit, and sent their thanks to Chapter, and all who made this mission a reality.

Dr. Schmidt reported that he treated 151 persons with medical problems, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, worms, gynecological problems, pains, headaches, asthma, etc. Almost every person displayed some degree of malnutrition, and would benefit from vitamins. Almost everyone complained of having had malaria, but it was difficult to document this since he had no means of making a diagnosis. There is further need for diagnostic testing for heart disease, cancer screening, etc.

Each community had two health workers, one of whom is retired. They had three months of formal training and felt qualified to give injections, interpret malaria slides, give First Aid, etc. They had some knowledge of antibiotics. Supplies are very limited. No refrigeration, no electricity. Nothing to make blood smears. The microscope available has a "cloudy lens" and uses only natural light. The health workers are willing to improve their skills.

There is a need for examination skills and health education, e.g., videos or CDs could help. There is a local store that could assist. Topics should include hygiene, family planning, AIDS prevention, and the proper use of medication. Health workers would like to provide better stabilization, e.g., fluids etc., and transportation for serious cases.

Most employment seems to be related to mining, and there is concern that this may be reaching its end. Farming is done, but hunting is minimal. Fishing yields are low, reportedly due to pollution from the mines. Mercury poisoning directly from fish and water should

be a concern, but the local citizens have no knowledge of it. Sanitation is very problematic, and toilet facilities are poor. Most persons, especially children, are barefooted, and soap, toothpaste, and places to wash are needed.

The Church is well supplied and is dedicated to spiritual leadership but lacks material resources. The priest does not have a cross and is in need of stoles and vestments. A VCR and church education materials would be welcomed. A personal Study Bible, typing paper and envelopes would be appreciated. Packages should be sent to Fr. Roland's wife, who lives in Georgetown. The outside of the box should be marked "DONATION TO THE CHURCH," and a letter inside should state this.

## Conclusion

During the preparatory stages of this mission, Dr. Rudolph Cummings, Chief Medical Officer, was very helpful and was our contact person in Georgetown for all matters relating to this visit to Region 7. On my initial visit to Georgetown, the Jamaican Consulate in Guyana made the initial appointments for me to see Dr. Cummings and the Minister of Amerindian Affairs, and provided transportation.

Dr. Cummings met and held discussions with the Medical Team before they left for Region 7. He visited the hotel on Friday to see the team after their return, but it was late, and they were resting since they had to leave for the airport before 5 am. I spoke with him, and he was grateful for the assistance given to the people in Region 7, and has promised his support for future missions.

Mrs. Sheila George (the Bishop's wife) was very helpful. She arranged accommodation for my initial visit, also transportation from the airport. She assisted in any way that she could during the preparations for the mission, and met with the team after they returned from Region 7. The hotel staff and drivers were helpful and polite, and this made our stay easier. The written reports from Drs. Milan Schmidt and Tupper Morehead are available. Nurse Sheila Morehead did a tremendous job.

I thank Chapter for giving me the opportunity to coordinate this mission, which was an education on the lives of our brothers and sisters who are in need of the simple things of life, which so many of us take for granted. They live a life of poverty, simplicity, and humility, but the love and joy that they exhibit supersede their lack of material possessions.

Was the mission successful? YES Should there be another mission? YES

## **Part 3. Reviews of the Medical Mission To Guyana**

*Milan Schmidt (from the Franciscan Times)*

The interior of Guyana is a remote jungle where medical care is sparse and poverty endemic. At the request of the Third Order Anglican Franciscans in the area, a medical mission to Region 7 in Guyana was organized. There were two Third Order Franciscan physicians, Dr. Tupper Morehead, an Ob-Gyn currently working in Public Health, and me, Dr. Milan Schmidt, a family physician. Tupper's wife, Sheila, a pediatric nurse practitioner, completed the medical team.

We were assisted locally by regional health workers, who deal with the day-to-day reality of severely limited resources. We assembled in Georgetown, delayed a day by hurricane Frances (not Francis!). On Monday morning we flew to Imbaimadai where we were met by Fr. Roland and a group of local residents. The airstrip was just at the edge of the village. The community center was a grassy open area dotted with small rustic houses located on the Upper Mazaruni River. There was a small church building and a bar/store, which was the apparent center of social life. People were dressed in "western garb," but shoes were in short supply. Cows crisscrossed paths with the residents. We unpacked and settled in a little, had noon prayers at Church of the Good Shepard, and then checked in with the local police officer. Then it was time to begin our work.

The Health Center is a simple building with three rooms at the far end of the village. We used one room for medications and two for examinations. The local health workers escorted the patients and translated for those patients who spoke only the local dialect, Akawaio. We examined and treated a wide variety of problems: most commonly aches and pains, skin problems, worm infestations, and various infections. Almost everyone stated they had malaria at one time or another, attributing various complaints to it. There was no way to verify this.

Before supper we joined the community for Evening Prayer and Eucharist. We retired to the local bar/store for music videos, a little rum, and dancing. It was early to bed since electricity is limited to the bar/store. We slathered on DEET and settled under our mosquito nets for the night.

The rooster started his warmups at about 4 am, and was in full cockcrow by Morning Prayer at 6 am. Breakfast followed, prepared by Fr. Roland's wife, Celian. It was then time to go to the Health Center for our morning session. We were a little more organized and saw a few more patients this second day. After our noon meal and prayers, we packed our gear into a motorized dugout and headed downriver to Jawalla.

There were light rains and overcast skies for our three-hour river journey on the picturesque but polluted Upper Mazaruni River. Gold mining had produced many "beaches" of white silt from the bottom of the river. Rafts of motorized dredges pumped the river bottom up through huge pipes and, after processing, put it back into the river. The dredging process has caused considerable pollution since mercury is used for the mining and apparently often ends up in the river. Local residents informed us that the fishing was very bad since mining started. We also had concerns about the safety of what was caught and eaten, given the widespread use of mercury. There

was not a lot of wildlife along the shores, partly due to the dry season and no fruit. We were also told the monkeys have been scared back into the forest by the mining.

We pulled into Jawalla in the early evening and were met at the shore by Fr. Williams of the Church of St. John the Evangelist. Local residents descended to carry our luggage up to the village, and we all went straight to the church. We were greeted in song both in English and Akawaio. Our English soloist was the retired health worker from the village. She had a beautiful voice. The trio who sang in Akawaio had a close melodic harmony, which rose and fell and flowed like the river. We understood not a word, but it was beautiful and prayerful.

Celian fixed us supper while we arranged our mosquito nets for the night and did our slathering with DEET. As the sun set we heard a very loud noise reminiscent of a fax calling a phone line. This, apparently, is the sound of the "song bee." Soon afterward we heard what sounded like packs of barking dogs but were in reality barking frogs. We were warned that the screaming we were likely to hear about 2 am would be baboons. Sheila is sure she heard a whole troop of them; I thought I heard one.

Thursday morning at daybreak, we set up three exam rooms and a medication area and started to work. The local workers helped us direct patients, dispense medication, and translate as needed. We were starting to get the hang of this, and our flow went a lot better. We worked through until just after noon, had lunch and then spent some education time with the local health workers. We showed them how to appropriately use the medications we were going to leave, and also talked about local health needs. Then it was into the canoe and back to Imbaimadai.

The trip upriver was about the same as the trip down. The sun was out more strongly, and our sun screen got quite a workout. We were amazed by ant nests high in the trees, which we had not seen on our trip previously. Many species of birds that we did not recognize swooped or skittered near the top of the water. We arrived at Imbaimadai tired but content.

Since prayer starts everything in the area, we went straight to the church for Evening Prayer and communion. Prayer was embedded in our days and was a natural part of the flow of life. On reflection, it may be as accurate to say our life was embedded in prayer. We learned that the "Alleluia Religion" which was there before the missionaries, had a Trinity of God the Creator, God the Brother and God the Spirit. It is no wonder that Christianity seemed so natural and was adopted relatively easily.

The schedule for our last day in the jungle was slightly different. We had seen most of the patients who needed attention, and were able to spend a larger part of our last morning in discussion and education with the pair of local health workers. We worked with this pair about the medications we were leaving, discussed what further needs the community had, and how we could best address these needs. Deficiencies range from simple lancets for drawing blood, to a new microscope lens or even a new microscope. Education materials, especially how to take medications, information about AIDS and STDs, family planning, and basic hygiene would be very beneficial.

Our flight to Georgetown was late in the day. We arrived after dark and had a long cab ride back to the hotel. We had a day to rest and see some of the sites of Georgetown, then an early trip home on Saturday.



*Imbaimadai health worker and Drs. Schmidt & Morehead*

Was the trip worth it? Absolutely! We were able to cure a few, help many, and be present with all. We were told our presence and support were very valued in this area where there is essentially no medical care. One man had not seen a doctor in 30 years. The local health workers have limited training. Each community has two workers, one active and one retired. They have had about three months of education in first aid, simple infections and reading malaria slides. We were able to do some additional education of the health workers. This may be the most lasting benefit we provided.

Are there ongoing needs? Absolutely! Problems with diagnosis and treatment of malaria, worm infestations, and infectious disease will continue. Chronic disease could not be monitored using the current model. There are severe limitations of the entire health system. Even in Georgetown, treatment options are limited by availability. There is essentially no effective treatment for cervical cancer in the entire country, for example. Georgetown is accessible from these remote communities only by air, and hence travel is expensive. Basic hygiene and sanitation education and waste systems would benefit the area immensely. Safe water is an issue. Basic health education for both the population and the health workers is needed.

What can we do next? We can do a lot more to educate the local health workers about diagnosis and treatment. Some simple resources, such as a VCR, education tapes, and simple medical equipment and supplies could make a lot of difference. A lot of health improvements could be made with education regarding sanitation. Improvement is needed in outhouse and safe water facilities. Exploring other models of mission could be fruitful. For example, doing a "medical student" model training for the health workers, spending longer periods of time with each patient teaching comprehensive exams, developing problem lists, medical records for ongoing care and focusing on the differential diagnosis for common symptoms encountered in the community. A team experienced in public health and sanitation could be useful, particularly for longterm benefits.

This mission was a wonderful opportunity to serve our brothers and sisters in Guyana and to learn from them as well. The support of the Third Order of the Society of St Francis made this trip possible. Donations from Termann Drug in Montgomery, excess samples from New Prague Clinic, and donations from MAP International supplemented the support of the Third Order. Queen of Peace Hospital in New Prague provided scrubs for the health workers. Special thanks to our Third Order sister Brenda Stewart for her organization and on-site support. Without her the mission would not have been possible. Thanks also to Bishop George and his wife Sheila, to Fr. Roland and Fr. Williams for their gracious hospitality, and to Celian for being our cook. Thanks to Dr. Cummings for information about the area and expediting our authorization and entry into the country. Thanks also to the many wonderful individuals who kept us in their prayers before and during our mission

*Brenda Stewart (from the Franciscan Times)*

Having been on one prior mission to Peru, I had some idea what to expect on a medical mission to Guyana. I expected to be humbled by the limited resources and my limited ability to deal with the problems I would find. I expected to be touched and challenged by people and relationships beyond my usual circle. I was aware in myself of the fear and trembling inherent in placing my organized and introverted self in the hands of the unknown and possibly dangerous environment of the jungle. With time and prayer I was even able to believe (to an extent) that it was God's will for me at this time. All this I did experience. What I did not expect was how my views of simplicity, prayer, and obedience would be transformed.

My view of simplicity had been challenged in Peru by the contrast of working in the inner city and retiring to a luxury hotel. The contrast was painful and humbling, even humiliating. The sharp relief of treating people living on garbage heaps during the day and living myself in an environment more comfortable than even I was used to at night, left me acutely aware of my own excesses. It did not seem real that I could live as I found the poor of Lima living. Imbaimadai transformed my view of simplicity. There was no running water. There were no "modern" toilet facilities. Food was mostly canned and flown in at great expense. The buildings were simple, without insulation, heat, or even electricity. The exceptions were the church and the bar/store. Roads were nonexistent. Cow paths crossed the footpaths that residents took to the river for washing, travel, or necessary water. There were no cars. All travel was on foot, by boat or by air.

Medically, the necessity of having to make decisions based only on history and exam, without the comfort of even simple diagnostic tests made me appreciate the complexity of my usual life.

The contrast itself was not what was transformative. The easy acceptance and even embracing of life by these Amerindians made simplicity seem not only possible but natural. There was celebration, joy, and life. As part of this community rather than apart from it, I had time to "hang out," chat, and just sit. I learned to be thankful for mosquito nets and 12-hour days. Although there was much to do, and even with all that needed to be done, I was aware that it did not depend on my own efforts. Simplicity can make us aware not only of our own excesses, but also of God's abundance, even in apparent scarcity.

Prayer was not part of my first medical mission, a secular mission organized by American Airlines. Certainly there was a sense of service, a desire to do good, and a genuine caring for those less fortunate. There was not a daily prayerfulness or any cycle of prayer other than that imposed by my own Rule.

In Guyana, as part of a mission by and for Franciscans, there was a natural flow of prayer. We had Morning and Evening Prayer, daily Eucharist, and grace before meals. By the second day, I had the sense that nothing started before we prayed. When we unloaded in Jawalla, we went to the Church before we even unpacked. This was not the sort of self-aware "how holy am I to be praying" I experienced at Baptist Bible Camp. It was a natural flow of life. It was like stepping into a river: organic, natural, and powerful.

Most surprising to me was my reaction to a small aspect of obedience. I have struggled, as have many, with the requirements of a Daily Office. In my better moments I could visualize an unbroken chain of Morning and Evening Prayer chasing the sun around the globe. I had not paid much attention to the requirement to pray our directory. On our first day in Imbaimadai, as part of the daily prayers, I heard the names of two Minnesotans that I knew. The reading of these names was not for my benefit, but was a part of the daily prayerful reading of the Directory. We were indeed linked in prayer as I had never realized. I was struck that these devout Franciscans in remote Guyana had prayed for me monthly for years before they ever heard of me. Now here I was, with them in body as well as spirit! Discipline and obedience unleash power subtle and intense. As if to further the connection, at the same service I learned that Guyana means "land of many waters," which is exactly what *Minnesota* means. Geographical distance means little in the power of the Spirit.



*Medical mission at Fr. Roland's house with members of his congregation.*

Did these experiences transform me? Not that I can yet tell, but they have transformed some of my attitudes and thoughts. God plants many seeds, and many were planted in the jungles of Guyana. I may have to travel far upriver or downriver to tend these gardens, but with God's grace there will be fruit in due season.

*Tupper Morehead (from the Franciscan Times)*

Thank you, brothers and sisters of the Third Order, for enabling myself, my wife, Sheila, and Milan Schmidt, M.D., to visit the villages of Imbaimadai and Jawalla in Region 7 of Guyana. As you know, Imbaimadai is home to Charles and Celian Roland, and Jawalla is home to Winston and Dorina Williams. Brenda Mae Stewart of Kingston, Jamaica, worked tirelessly over the period of a year to make arrangements with TSSF, the Guyanese government, The Church of the Province of the West Indies (The Most Rev. Drexel Wellington Gomez, Primate), and the Diocese of Guyana (The Rt. Rev. Randolph Oswald George, Bishop) so that a short-term medical mission trip might become a reality. Brenda met us at the airport and attended to every detail of the mission. She also arranged for us to meet another tertiary, Eunice Edwards, of Guyana. Brenda enabled us to have a discussion with the Chief Medical Officer of Guyana, and invited Bishop George's wife to have tea with us.



*Sheila, Tupper, and colleagues.*

As I reflect upon our time in Guyana, I am moved by the presence of the Holy Spirit in community. I live in Norris, a small town in the Appalachian region of Tennessee, yet I have brothers and sisters in Guyana, Jamaica, and throughout North and South America; these brothers and sisters love me, pray for me, and welcome me into their homes as part of their family. This family of tertiaries extends around our fragile planet Earth, and this family holds me in its arms of steadfast love every day of my life. As I pray daily using the Third Order, Province of the Americas, Society of Saint Francis Directory, I am aware that the spiritual presence of our community is as vital a part of me as my own breathing.

Love in community allows a white, privileged physician raised in affluence in the U.S. to let go of fear and become completely dependent upon his Amerindian brothers and sisters living in the interior of Guyana, the poorest country in South America. Although to visit a faraway place without central air-conditioning and heating, roads, automobiles, television, electricity, plumbing, potable water, or anti-terrorism squads might make some Americans uncomfortable, I felt no fear. Rather, I felt the love of God in community with Franciscan tertiaries in Imbaimadai and Jawalla, and I was continually cognizant of the ongoing prayers of my brother and sister Tertiaries back home in the States. In spite of the obstacles of hurricanes, rearrangements in travel, sleeping in airports, getting medications through airline security agents, it was love in community that fortified me with endurance, faith, humor, and persistence.

That same love in community causes me to reflect upon the reasons why our brothers and sisters in Guyana and throughout most of the world must live without clean water, housing, food, education, and access to healthcare. Simple things, like immunizations, mosquito nets, vitamins, toothbrushes, soap, clean water for washing and drinking, flooring, shoes, antibiotics, antifungals, alcohol, anti-parasitics, contraceptives, condoms, and tuberculin skin tests are not available to these, our brothers and sisters.

Is it just our money that is required of us who live in America, where 80% of the world's resources are controlled by 6% of the world's population? I have been enlightened by our brothers and sisters in Guyana, and I have realized that what is required is both our presence and our money. I don't know why it took me fifty years to realize this. Although our visit was short, the places and faces, the smiles and the laughter, the praying and the singing, the simplicity of realizing that each day is a gift—those things will last forever for both those tertiaries in Guyana and for we tertiaries from the States. I understand the sacrifices that American tertiaries had to make to enable Sheila, Milan, and me to visit Roland, Celian, Winston, and Dorina. Some may have fasted, some may have begged, some may have dipped into savings and retirement accounts, some may have passed up buying a needed item, in order to make this outreach possible. We thank all of you. And we particularly thank you for your prayers, which took away our fears and eliminated all of the obstacles. We are a community without boundaries, and indeed our love and joy destroys all barriers between people. The Good News of Jesus of Nazareth and the Good News of Father Francis is "There is another way to live." In a culture where "Leadership" workshops, trainings, and classes abound, let us remember that Jesus and Francis call us to follow rather than to lead. Thank you all and thank you, community, for being countercultural, and providing the fellowship meetings, the retreats, the convocations, and the *Principles* which have given me the freedom to follow Jesus and Francis, rather than to lead Jesus and Francis. Pace e bene.

*Sheila Morehead (from the Franciscan Times)*

I can't remember ever being so excited about meeting new friends and being an instrument for God's mission. We have been on several medical missions before, but, maybe because this one was in the planning stage for so long, I was really anxious to get there. That is, until Mother Nature's interference resulted in one major hurricane after another to cause our plans to be so sidetracked. But as "GOD'S WILL" will be done, we went a day late from Tennessee to Georgia, to New Jersey, to New York, to bypass Florida to get to Trinidad and finally to Guyana 36 hours later than planned! I was so saddened to hear that many people traveled long distances by foot and canoe to set up a welcome party for us on Monday in Imbaimadai. But because we couldn't get there until Tuesday, they ate the party food and made the long journey back to their remote villages.

We arrived in Georgetown, Guyana, very late on Sunday night and were met by our warm Franciscan welcome committee, Brenda and Leonard Stewart. After two nights of no sleep, our room was perfect, if only it weren't located on top of an all night jazz club!

The next morning, Tupper and I met our Franciscan mission-mate, Dr. Milan Schmidt. There was a bond at first sight! After breakfast and more detailed instructions we packed up supplies and headed for our small plane that would carry us into the interior of Guyana to visit the indigenous people of Imbaimadai and Jawalla. We left the coastline and after over an hour of travel looking at rainforest and rivers we suddenly saw before us steep mountains. The view was awesome! We landed on a dirt-covered field and were suddenly surrounded by smiling faces and warm welcomes from the village people who wanted to carry everything for us. We were probably the only white faces most of these people had ever seen, but even the children were not afraid and ran up to us for hugs. Of course, we went straight to the village Church of the Good Shepherd and were formally welcomed.

My dream for this mission was to be a presence to let these people know that they were cared about and also to listen to their stories. I wanted to know about their needs, their concerns, their struggles and what brought them joy. I just wanted to hear their stories, and if we were able to do some health education and healing while we were there that would be good too. But most of all I wanted to live among them and share the Holy Spirit.

We were truly in another world far from the comforts of home, but the true blessings were the ones we received from these beautiful people.

Over the next three-and-a-half days we set up six (four-hour) clinics and saw 450 patients between Tupper, Milan, and myself. Most of the time we saw patients with upper respiratory colds, skin infections, diabetes, abdominal pain, back pain, and fatigue. But I'm sure we were also seeing a lot of malnutrition, TB, worm infestation, and malaria. Our ability to do testing for diagnosis was very limited. We had to rely on the history we were told (mostly through interpreters) and our five senses, along with just clinical gut experience. There was also a huge amount of the Holy Spirit flying around for support to us and the patients.

Some of our accomplishments were only short-term fixes and when the vitamins, worm meds, and malaria medicine ran out they were back

to where they had started. The long-term effects of our visit will be more clear as time passes. Immediate reflections tell me that these native Amerindians have basic needs for human growth and development. Clean, safe water and proper nutrition is what they need first. They need carpentry assistance getting their housing up off the bare dirt ground. They should have basic toothbrushes and tooth paste. A visit by a dental team would be very productive. Education on healthy ways to dispose of garbage and human waste would improve their conditions. Birth control was the number one request by the women. The children complained of abdominal pain, fatigue, and fever.

The Spirit Shop owner does have a satellite, a TV and a VCR. Some of the villagers asked for health education material to be sent in the forms of tape and written handouts. The Spirit Shop man agreed to play the educational tapes for the community. Would I go back to those primitive villages where there was no electricity, no running water and hot temperatures? YOU BET I WOULD!!! I left a piece of my heart and soul with the Amerindians of Guyana.



*On the steps of Fr. Roland's Church of the Good Shepherd in Imbaimadai.*

## **Reaching out Ecumenically: Establishing the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity, 2004**

*From Minister Provincial Report to Chapter 2004*

God has also been calling us to deepen our ecumenical relationships, particularly with non-Anglican Franciscans. In February, the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity was launched with the convening of representatives from its three founding orders: The Third Order, Society of Saint Francis, The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, and the Secular Franciscan Order (Roman Catholic). Its mission statement declares that:

*For the sake of all Creation, we are called to bear witness to the essential unity of the Church, the Body of Christ, by working towards Franciscan unity at all levels of fraternal life. We will achieve this through dialogue and collaboration among the Orders which follow Christ in the tradition of Francis and Clare.*

Furthermore, its organizing principles state that:

*Acknowledging that they share a common Franciscan charism and are committed to bear witness to its dedication to the work of Franciscan unity, members of the Joint Committee work together in ways that demonstrate mutual respect, honor, and affirmation of the several gifts each brings to the work of the committee... Central to its vision of Franciscan unity is its call to engage efforts toward reconciliation among its sponsoring Franciscan orders and the ecclesial bodies they represent.*

Diana Finch was elected to be Chair of the Joint Committee. This work is also exploring uncharted waters. Pray that God will grant it wisdom as it engages its work of reconciliation.

Inviting Brother Christopher, a monk of the New Skete Orthodox Monastery, also represents a step towards further ecumenical relationships. Already the Monks of New Skete have asked that we serve as a resource to their community as they seek to create a way to organize and provide spiritual formation for lay and clergy who seek to be in relationship with their community. The process of hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit and responding continues.

(Masud also invited Bros. Bill Short and Wayne Hellmann, OFM, the editors of the new “Omnibus” entitled *Francis: Saint, Founder, Prophet* to be the keynote speakers at the Provincial Convocation in Endicott, Massachusetts in 2007.)

## Reaching out Within ECUSA in Leading a Revival of the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities (NAECC)

*Summer 2005, Franciscan Times*

Representatives of eight Christian Communities met in New York City in May 2005 to map out the future of their national association. Chaired by the Rev. Masud Ibn Syedullah, the meeting revived the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities (NAECC), which is made up of religious communities canonically recognized by the House of Bishops.

In the year to come, NAECC plans a campaign to increase the visibility of its members, including a brochure and a website. The association also began an effort to explore revision of the Church canons to clarify that members of churches in full communion with the Episcopal Church, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, are eligible for membership.

The Rev. Br. Tobias Stanislas Haller, Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, was elected as Chair, with three other officers: Vice-chair, Cathy Cox, Rivendell Community; Treasurer, Bill Farra, Community of Celebration; and Recorder, Br. Carle Griffin, Community of the Paraclete.

Br. Tobias Stanislas said, “We spent our first evening together telling about our communities and the many ministries of our brothers and sisters. I expect future meetings to be hosted by members in every region of the U.S. We also committed ourselves to offer support to fledgling communities and to active participation with the House of Bishops Standing Committee on Religious Communities.” Br. Tobias Stanislas, as Chair, will serve as the NAECC representative to this body.

## Reaching out Politically: Taking a Public Stand on National Policies

*Easter 2003, Franciscan Times*

Easter greetings to you all!

This past Holy Week and Easter Day celebrations were, by far, at once the most buoyant, yet the strangest that I think I have ever experienced. Who can explain all the reasons why worship experiences may affect us in one way or other at a particular time? Yet, for me in my parish here in the Bronx, there was a profound sense of drama throughout the week – from the exuberant cheers and gripping foreshadowing of the Passion on Palm Sunday, through the intimacy of footwashing and Eucharist on Maundy Thursday, the meditations of sacrificial love on Good Friday, and culminating with the joyous shouts of “Alleluia. Christ is risen!” at The Great Vigil of Easter on Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday morning.

What drama! Such a progression: from joyful expectation, to brutal execution, to the new life of resurrection. Such is the central week of the Christian year and such is the story of our lives. Such is the ongoing story of our journey of faith in Christ.

That week was strange in that it was also a time in the history of our world when the war in Iraq was still being waged with indications that it would soon come to an end. What a turbulent time in the life of the world! What a strange moment as the Church was living out, through its liturgy, the drama of the cosmic conflict of good and evil.

What an “out of joint” kind of time. What a time for Christians to be proclaiming the victory of God over death, sin, evil, and corruption. What a challenging juxtaposition of events. It was really too much to take in. It will surely take time to digest, if we will.

As the season has progressed and we have been given the word that the combat portion of the war is over, we are left with an awareness that some significant changes have happened, yet the contrasts persist. An old regime is gone, a country lies in disarray; people are free from a tyrannical government, people are left without homes, family members, body parts. People have new freedom. People have new hope. People are unsure about the future. It is somewhat reminiscent of the opening lines of *A Tale of Two Cities*, “It was the best of times. It was the worst of times...” It is in such times that we need to know the reality of the resurrection. It is in such times that every fiber of our being yearns for the reality of new birth, the restoration of true goodness.

As we of Christian faith continue through this season to proclaim the reality of the Risen Lord, may we also continue our prayers and actions for peace and reconciliation in the world that it may be restored. As our shouts of “Alleluia” ring, may also our shouts for justice persist. May the joy and experience of Easter life not be only for some, but for all. May we be vigilant in our efforts to make it known that the Lord is risen indeed over all corruption, sin, death, and destruction.

## Towards Maturity in Christ and Franciscan Spirituality

*Final Report to Chapter as Minister Provincial (Franciscan Times Winter 2005)*

In my report to Chapter last year, I said that during the past few years, “It is as if the Holy Spirit is calling us to move to another level of maturity, being thankful for what we have been and done, yet calling us onward to what we can be and do.” That perception continues to ring true to me as I reflect on the events of the past year, particularly within the context of the last three or four years in the life of the Order.

There are at least three characteristics of maturity that I can identify:

1. Openness to listening to and responding, with care, to others;
2. Openness to changing the way we do things when it is for our good and/or that of those with whom we are in relationship; and
3. Openness to taking risks that enable peace, reconciliation, wholeness, and health.

During the past three years, our Order has been challenged, time and again in each of these areas, to expand our minds, hearts, and spirits in order to respond to the mission God calls us to embrace. The Way of Christ and Francis is such that it receives us as and where we are at the beginning of our journey, then calls us onward to higher heights and to deeper depths of faith, love, and trust as we continue on the path. Such a journey is not always easy, nor predictable, and it is certainly not one that we control if Christ is indeed the Lord of our life, but one that we learn to walk with increased awareness of the faithfulness of God as we continue on the Way.

During the past few years, the Lord has brought before our Order several areas of mission and ministry that were new to us. While most of our energy during at least the past twenty years has been focused on the internal life of the Order, with matters of structure and formation, during the past few years there has been an enormous increase of missionary energy directed to work beyond the Order as well. The internal work of the past was necessary for the health and growth of the Order at that time. We are now in a new place where we must be attentive, not only to the internal life of our community, but also to ways that we reach out beyond ourselves. We began to turn the corner about four years ago.

After years of many activists among us often feeling that they were on the fringe of our community—that their concerns were not central to the focus of the Order—an increased number of our members, as well as the Chapter, began to endorse and participate in more public actions for justice and peacemaking. Our membership in Franciscans International, the Peace and Justice listserv, peace and justice oriented devotional and resource materials, Chapter’s letter to President Bush urging non-military efforts for peace in Iraq prior to the invasion, our presence at the Franciscan Witness for Peace in Union Square, New York City, as well as the medical mission to the interior of Guyana—all of these and more represent a new era in the life and work of the Third Order in this province. It was clear at IPTOC that the Province of the Americas has become one of the leaders in expressing our interior spirituality in more exterior ways. It is an inspiration and encouragement to our brothers and sisters in the other provinces.

Also in the past year, we entered intensified relationship with Franciscans beyond the Anglican Communion, namely in participating in the creation and support of the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity, an historic effort towards mutual regard and collaboration among Franciscans of all Christian traditions - Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Protestants. One of the results of this collaborative action is that the Minister General of the Roman Catholic Secular Franciscans (SFO) has invited the Minister General of The Third Order to attend and participate in the Secular Franciscans’ international Chapter in Assisi in November of this year—a first in the history of Roman Catholic and Anglican Franciscan relations. Furthermore, there is scheduled for February of 2006, a Conference on Franciscan Unity to be held here at Little Portion Friary, bringing together leaders from the Roman Catholic Secular Franciscan Order, The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, and The Third Order. This is also a major step beyond any that we have ever taken before.

As your Minister, I, along with representatives of two other Christian Communities of the Episcopal Church/USA (The Brotherhood of Saint Gregory and the Community of the Paraclete), was responsible for calling together representatives of the other canonically recognized Christian Communities in the Episcopal Church to re-establish the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities. Its purpose is to enhance communication among the eleven communities, to share resources for mission and outreach, to give support to newly forming communities, and to be a collective voice for the religious communities of our classification to the Church at large and to the ECUSA House of Bishops, in particular.

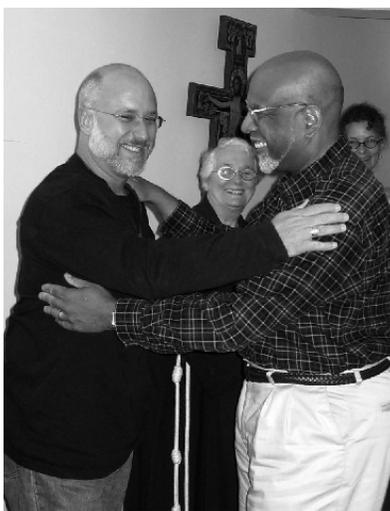
Each of the areas of new exploration that we have engaged during the past few years has challenged us towards greater maturity in Christ and Franciscan spirituality. Each one challenges us to be more open—more open to listen to and to respond with care to each other—more open to do things differently than we have done them in the past—more open to risk for the sake of justice and true peace—ultimately, more open to the Holy Spirit of God.

As we move forward, there are at least four more areas that demand our maturity in Christ and Franciscan spirituality:

1. We are currently in the midst of seeking ways to better assure ourselves and the Church that we are committed to being a safe place. Committed to hold each other in esteem as gifts of God, we further commit and discipline ourselves to attitudes and behavior that in no way demean, endanger, or exploit others in any way. Along with other religious communities of the Episcopal Church/USA, we are working along with the Standing Commission on Religious Communities of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church/USA to set in place standards of spiritual formation, sexual boundary training, and other means to educate and discipline ourselves in ways that provide a spiritually and emotionally safe environment among us in our Order. As a community dedicated to reflect the nature and glory of Christ, such an expectation is consistent with our Principles and Rule. The challenge for us is in the detail of how we, being such a large and dispersed community, can meet such an expectation effectively.
2. As a community living under vows, it is necessary for us to honor those vows. Each professed member of the community has the responsibility to:
  - A) Renew our vow annually,
  - B) Report annually to the Area Chaplain, and
  - C) Make a financial pledge and contribution to the Order annually.

These three are the core responsibilities to be regarded and maintained by each member of the Order. Each one is an expression and indication of our commitment to be in community with each other, to support our common life as well as our mission.

3. The next generations need to know what is life-giving and exciting about living a Franciscan Christian life. Participants of IPTOC were enthusiastic about identifying ways to share life with the younger generations. They are already the Church of today and need to be aware of what an extraordinary resource the Society of Saint Francis can be to giving definition and direction to the life in Christ. A part of the responsibility of mature adults (elders, if you will) is to offer leadership and guidance to those who come after. What a tremendous resource we can be to those who are seeking alternative ways of thinking and living in today's world.
4. The Anglican Communion is in a time of stress, seeking how it may move forward as a body in ways that will authentically represent Christ in the present world, amidst the various cultures where it exists. There are great disagreements as to what voice it should have in the world. As Franciscans, we intuitively understand that our foundational call is to be radically and passionately committed to love God and each other at all cost. Francis lived a life that demonstrated his determination to express such radical love to all—even to those the Church wished to exclude or even to eliminate. I was encouraged that the Interprovincial Chapters of The Society drafted and sent a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury and to all of the Primate of the Anglican Communion commending them to be radically committed to each other as family who, although not in agreement about some things, are in agreement that they are related to each other and are committed to honor each other's differences of opinion. We in this province will surely have the opportunity to invite our brother and sister Anglicans to a more mature understanding of what it means to be family.



*Masud ibn Syedullah, right, passing on the role of Minister Provincial to Ken Norian in 2005. In background, Sister Jean CSF and Julia Bergstrom.*

None of this can be accomplished in our own strength. As Day Thirty of the *Principles* reminds us, “Humility, love, and joy, which mark the lives of tertiaries are all God-given graces. They can never be obtained by human effort. They are gifts of the Holy Spirit.” May God grant us his Holy Spirit, more and more, to grow into the maturity that we need to accomplish the good work committed to our charge.