

# Weekly re:Cap



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## Foreign friars help keep our ministries dynamic and vital

By John Allen, editor of *Crux*

*NB: This article is especially significant for our province since we have ventured on a program of “fraternal collaboration.” A number of Capuchin friars from India have entered into this program with our province. With fewer friars of the province available for ministry due to health and/or age, the fraternal collaboration project is filling an urgent need for friar personnel in our existing ministries. Currently there are three Indian friars who are ministering in our province: Biju Parakkalayil is on the postulancy formation team in Milwaukee; and Madalai Muthu Savariappan and Joseph Mattathil Philip are both on the faculty at St. Lawrence Seminary in Mt. Calvary WI.*



L-R: Biju Parakkalayil, Joseph Mattathil Philip, and Madalai Muthu Savariappan.

If American Catholicism has an Achilles heel, it's sometimes an attenuated sense of how we fit into the rest of the Catholic world. A bit of basic math will help explain why that's a problem.

As of early 2017, there were just under 1.3 billion Catholics in the world, and around 70 million in the United States. While that makes us the world's fourth largest Catholic nation, after Brazil, Mexico and the Philippines, it also means that we represent less than six percent of the global Catholic population.

Put another way, 94% of the Catholics in the world aren't like us. Two-thirds of those 1.3 billion Catholics now live outside the West, a share that will be three-quarters by mid-century. There are twice as many Catholics today in sub-Saharan Africa as in North America, a gap that swells with every passing day, and nearly twice as many in Asia.

Based on that, here's a core insight about Catholic life in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century: American experiences, priorities and perspectives cannot always set the tone, because not everyone sees the world the same way we do, and increasingly, we're not the big dogs anymore.

Today, roughly, one-fourth of all diocesan priests in the U.S. come from foreign countries, and three in ten American priests ordained in 2016 were born outside the country. Statistically speaking, it's clear that the future of pastoral ministry in the U.S. is increasingly going to be in the hands of non-native Americans.

At times, these trends generate alarm among some American Catholics. Some worry that we're dropping the ball in terms of responsibility for generating our own vocations, while others complain that foreign priests sometimes don't adjust well to American cultural expectations and can be a bad fit at the grassroots level.

Still others worry that an increasing dependence on foreign priests may fuel a "brain drain" from churches in the developing world, siphoning off personnel from places that need those human resources far more than we do.

All, in principle, are valid concerns. American Catholics obviously should be encouraging native-born vocations, we need to promote cultural adjustment by foreign-born ministers serving here, and we also need to be careful not to exploit the material poverty of local churches in other parts of the world to satisfy our own desires.

Yet there's also a tremendous upside to the growing presence of foreign-born priests serving in the country. First of all, there's the obvious point that in many ways, the church here would come grinding to a halt without them. They help keep our parishes, schools, hospitals, and other Catholic institutions not only afloat, but dynamic and vital.

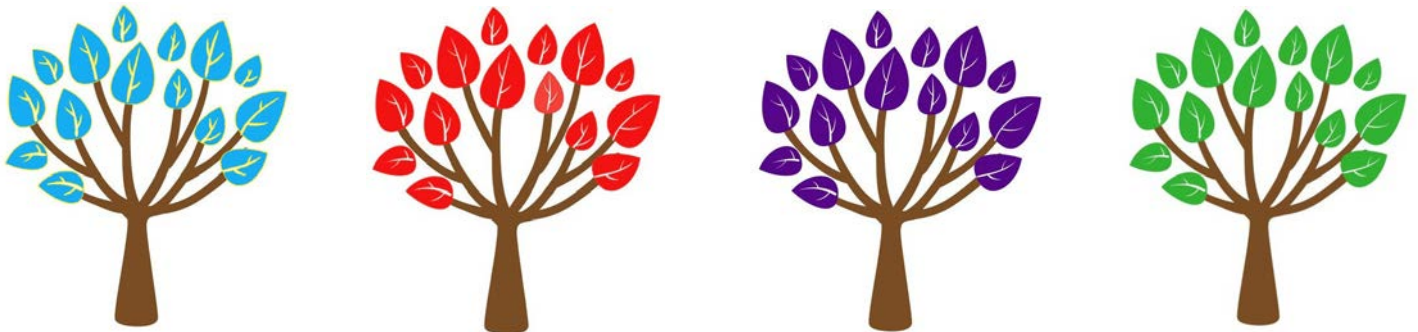
Beyond that, they're also ambassadors of the other 94% of the Catholic world in our midst. They can inform our debates about things we already care about, but also help us understand why our obsessions aren't necessarily those of the rest of the Catholic world.

Among many other things, they can help us understand what anti-Christian persecution actually means — not just nativity sets dislodged from courthouses or wrangles over insurance coverage, but what it means literally to take your life in your hands every time you set out for church on Sunday. They can offer different perspectives on the conversations we're already having, with *Amoris Laetitia* being a great example, and also open our eyes to why those issues sometimes strike much of the rest of the Catholic world as incredibly insular.

Naturally, there are things foreign-born clergy and sisters can learn from the American church too. Best practices on money management and anti-abuse efforts, which sometimes lag behind in other countries, are merely two compelling for-instances.

The bottom line, however, is that the presence of foreign-born religious offers American Catholicism perhaps the single greatest opportunity for faith formation about life in the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we could ever dream of summoning.

*The above is excerpted from an article in "Crux," available free online at: <https://cruxnow.com/>*



## Capuchin Retirement Fund is bolstered by “Dress Down Day”



Celebrating “Catholic School Week,” students at St. Labre in Ashland MT wore jeans and T-shirts, and then presented the Capuchins with a check for \$288: a donation to the Capuchin’s retirement fund. Students were quick to mention Paschal Siler for his many years at St. Labre.

Pictured at left are friars serving in Montana, along with student council members who presented the donation. Pictured with the friars are National Honor Society president Bailey Chalfant and Student Council president Caleb Redgrave.

## Celebrating *Ite Vos*



In response to Pope Francis’ request that the first order of the Franciscan family make a collaborative effort to bring the vision of St. Francis to our world today and to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Ite Vos*, the papal bull that formally divided the Franciscans into Conventuals and Observants. The English Speaking Conferences of the First Order (OFM., OFM.Conv., OFM.Cap. – NAPCC) have asked us to serve on a committee to plan a study day for the members of the first order. This will be held at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago on Saturday, November 4, 2017 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The event is free.

The theme of this event is “Looking to the Future Together: Beyond *Ite Vos*.” Speakers include Dominic Monti, OFM. “The History and Context of *Ite Vos*,” Regis Armstrong, OFM.Cap. “Common Franciscan Values;” and Jude Winkler, OFM.Conv. “Common Franciscan Projects today.” The planning committee includes Joseph Rozansky, OFM; Michael Kolodziej, OFM.Conv; and John Celichowski, OFM Cap. Details, schedules, registration forms, etc. will be forthcoming.

## Honoring Megan Rice, SHCJ during Women’s History Month



Megan Rice is a member of the Plowshares Movement, a Christian peace initiative founded in 1980. On 28 July 2012, Megan, then 82, and two other activists cut through three separate security fences at the Y-12 nuclear weapons facility in Oak Ridge TN. They painted peace slogans and splattered human blood on the wall. They pulled off what *The New York Times* reported as “the biggest security breach in the history of the nation’s atomic complex.”

Sister was charged with injuring the national defense and depredation of government property, and was sentenced to three years in prison. Responding to the sentence, Megan said: “I learned early on that a law is only a valid law when it serves society, when it serves peoples’ human rights, when it serves one of those rights, the right to truth.” Megan Rice is a member of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.



