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Chapter 11

Religious Brothers are an Integral Part of Spiritan History and Future

Religious Brothers Day is celebrated on May 1, the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. By definition, a religious brother is a member of a Christian religious order who commits himself to following Christ in the consecrated life of the church, usually by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Spiritan brothers live in community with priests as equals, serving alongside them in both missionary and apostolic work, such as education and parish ministry. The difference lies in the call. A person enters religious life responding to a call from the Lord. He may be seeking vowed religious life, but not necessarily the priesthood.

Brother Michael Suazo, CSSp, heard the call early—he knew from the fourth grade that he wanted to enter a religious community as a brother. “I remember being inspired to enter consecrated life by the Divine Word priests and brothers working in my home parish of St. Patrick in West Oakland, Calif., when I was a child, and later by a Spiritan vocation poster I had seen when I was a teenager,” said Br. Michael. “My parents were supportive, though confused that such an aspiration would be coming from a fourth grader!” He entered the Spiritan seminary in Houston, Texas, in 1971, at age 17, and his first profession was in 1975.



Throughout his time with the Spiritans, Br. Michael has been involved in administration as provincial secretary and vocations director, and served at a variety of Spiritan parishes and outreach ministries to the poor and marginalized. He currently serves as Director of Hospitality at the Spiritan Retreat Center in Bethel Park, Pa. At this time, he is the only Spiritan brother in the US Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, but there are more than 200 active and retired brothers worldwide.

Br. Michael continues in a long tradition of religious brothers whose contributions have shaped the Spiritan community over the years. Br. Jerry Keating, CSSp, worked at Duquesne University, first as a chef, where he fed penniless students during the Depression. He was a well-known figure on campus for more than fifty years, and earned an honorary doctorate in humanitarian service. Br. Baldomir Hermanns, CSSp, known by the Igbo as “Brother Iron Hand,” was a mechanical engineer who built churches and cathedrals in Nigeria. These men of faith are just a few examples of the seventy+ Spiritan brothers who have been part of the US Province over the years. “We pray that future generations will see the impact these brothers have made and be moved to consider a religious vocation,” says Fr. Honest Munishi, CSSp, the Vocations Director for the US Province. If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about the Spiritans, please contact Fr. Honest Munishi at (832) 244-8839 or joinus@spiritans.org.

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