

# Spiritan Magazine

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Volume 30  
Number 3 *August*

Article 13

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8-2006

## Home and Away

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### Recommended Citation

(2006). Home and Away. *Spiritan Magazine*, 30 (3). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-tc/vol30/iss3/13>

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# Spiritan Vocation Retreat 2006

On Pentecost weekend 2006, several men and women retreated from the hustle and bustle of Toronto and gathered at Maryholme, the Sisters of Loretto retreat center, on the shores of beautiful Lake Simcoe for the purpose of vocational discernment. The constant rain on Saturday dampened neither the spirits nor the Spirit of the retreat.

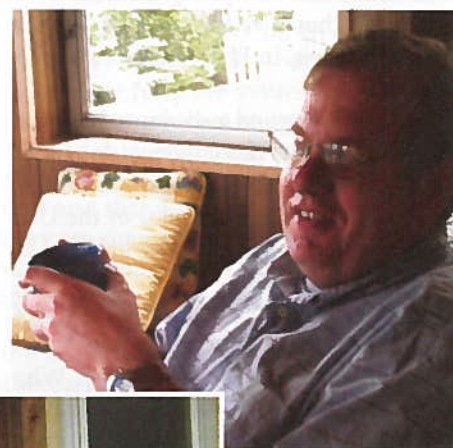
The retreatants were joined over the three days by several Spiritan priests, Lay Spiritans and VICS volunteers who shared stories of their journey within the Spiritan family. The Spiritans believe that vocation is not limited to priesthood. Our Spiritan family includes priests, brothers, lay men and women, married and single.

Spiritan Vocations Director, Fr. Mike Doyle welcomed the group on the Friday evening and presented an overview of mission today. On the Saturday morning, Fr. Paul McAuley gave a presentation on the Spiritans. This was followed by a personal sharing from Robert Di Nardo, one of our current Spiritan seminarians studying in Ottawa. Robert also braved the rain to provide the group with a wonderful BBQ lunch. Later in the day, John and Katie Flaherty told the story of their vocational journey that began as VICS volunteers in the Caribbean and has led them presently to commit to the Lay Spiritans. Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi shared his Spiritan story from the point of view of a young Nigerian priest



thrust into this strange country, Canada. The weekend was punctuated by laughter, informal sharings, wonderful meals and fellowship, and periods of prayer and quiet reflection.

Sunday after lunch, the group packed up and departed from Maryholme but the retreat was not over. They all drove to Toronto and reassembled at St. Joseph's Church in West Hill for the annual Spiritan Pentecost Mass. ■



Spiritan seminarian Robert DiNardo (top photo left) and five participants in the vocations retreat.

# Peter Fleming, CSSp 1930 – 2006

## A man who loved people

*Michael Doyle, CSSp recalls a lifelong friend*

I first met “Pete” when we were both part of a group of potential missionaries called by the Spiritans for an interview to see if we had the right stuff to join the order. In fact we were related in some particularly Irish manner involving several “removes” that only my late grandmother could unravel. Pete was from Dublin and was called a ‘jackeen’ while the rest of us were from the country and were known as “culchies”. The terms were not altogether pejorative but there was an edge to them. Pete was an instant “hit” for, not only did he play the current pop tunes on the piano, he also played a wicked hand of poker which sent many of us home with lighter pockets. Most of us smoked, which was cool in those days even though we smoked only tobacco!

We evidently made the grade and entered the Novitiate of the Spiritans (sort of a spiritual boot camp) a little later. After a year of testing our vocation we went to the seminary in Dublin from which we made our way each day, in the unpredictable weather of Dublin, to the university. Bicycle was our normal mode of transport and, since we were the most recent arrivals, we got the end of the line — rickety machines held together with bits of wire and great ingenuity.

Next came “prefecting” a couple of years spent in practical ministry, usually in one of our schools. We were lucky to be sent to the same institution, Rockwell College, in Tipperary. Then, for Pete, it was back to the seminary in Dublin for the study of Theology where I joined him again a year later.

Pete was ordained in 1948 and sent to Canada. I felt sorry for him. We had spent many years preparing to go to Africa as missionaries and here he was shipped off to Canada. A year later I was ordained and was doomed to the same fate — Canada. (Each of us quickly fell in love with the country.)

### Neil McNeil High School

We worked together at Neil McNeil High School for many years and, in the absence of a residence (which the diocese had neglected to provide), we shared cubicles in converted classrooms. Conditions were often difficult but Pete’s musical ability together with his willingness to share his talent led to many a lively party. One of his

duties was eliminating, or at least keeping the lid on, student smoking. He didn’t believe much in detentions or other forms of punishment but usually the offender was given a choice of paying a \$2 fine. This was before the introduction of the metal “toonie” so Pete’s breast pocket was often stuffed with \$2 bills. When a reasonable sum was collected it was sent off to some favourite charity. A week or ten days later a letter would come back thanking Neil students for their generosity and their interest in the particular charity.

### St. Joseph’s Parish

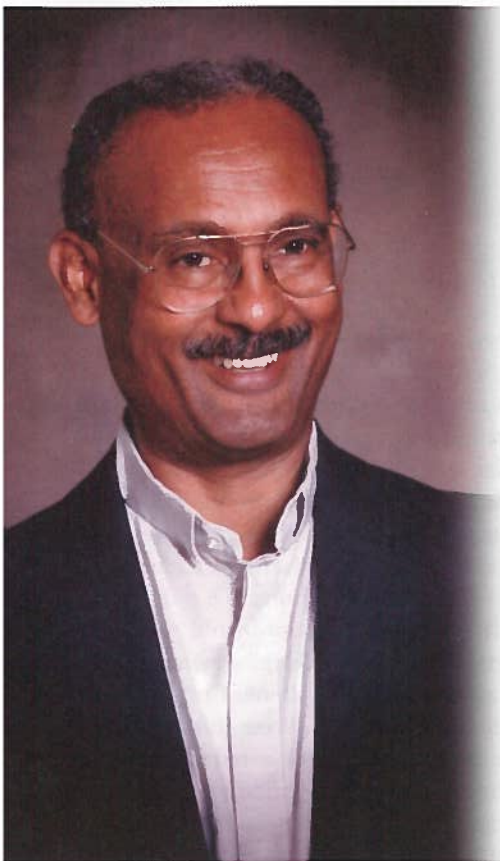
When he retired from Neil McNeil Pete accepted, rather hesitatingly, the appointment of associate pastor at St. Joseph’s Parish, West Hill. He didn’t think he would be able for it — but of course he was. Sometimes in the evenings we would discuss the parish over a glass of something (not milk). He would often comment that in a parish one was affirmed immediately. The parishioners were quick to show their appreciation, whereas in a school the students were absorbed with their own development problems and weren’t into affirming teachers, much less principals. Thirty years later they were often fulsome in their praise, but that was a long time to wait.

Pete loved music. He was also keen on golf though it must be said that his note playing was probably more accurate than his putting. Above all, though, he was interested in people. He was amongst them in their joys and sorrows. At a call from the hospital everything was dropped and he was on his way to the sick person. He enjoyed celebrations, but no matter at what hour the festivities finished he was invariably in his place for prayer next morning. He enjoyed and was a successful leader of “pilgrimages” even, as some remarked, to places where no saint had ever trodden!

And so we say a temporary good bye to Fr. Pete, a man who in life loved music and golf but above all people, who believed that true religion was based on relationships rather than abstract principles and put his belief in practice on a daily basis. We can be quite certain that, as his spirit took flight, he heard a voice saying “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord.” ■



# Fr. Philip Forde, CSSp, 1926 – 2006



A priest for 53 years, Fr. Philip Forde served in Africa, the U.S, Canada and the Caribbean. Nearly half his priestly life was spent in Toronto.

The eldest of eleven children, he attended high school in St. Mary's College, Port of Spain, and did his seminary training in Holy Ghost Missionary College, Dublin. Ordained in 1953, he was sent to Nigeria the following year where he taught and was principal in Ohokoro. He returned to Trinidad in 1967 and then went to Virginia and Albany prior to coming to Toronto in 1977 to join the staff of St. Joseph's College. A few years later he became pastor and director of the Caribbean Catholic Secretariat, known today as Our Lady of Good Counsel Caribbean Catholic Church and Centre. Its lengthy title underlines the fact that it was much more than a traditional church. Philip Forde opened offices for immigrant services, counseling, financial services, and adult ESL classes. The Centre came to be a home away from home for many Caribbean immigrants. In September 1985 Fr. Philip retired to Laval House and returned to Trinidad in 1999. But his health took a turn for the better and he spent two and half years of priestly ministry in Delaford, Tobago. Finally he returned to his people of Paramin and Maraval and died peacefully in his own home on May 30, 2006.

Matthew Boah knew Fr. Philip for 24 years. "Everyone that knew him knew that he was a good cook and a great baker. His father was totally against the idea of his eldest son becoming a priest until Fr. Philip read him the story of St. Francis of Assisi stripping himself bare in public as a sign of his total dedication to others. The old Forde gave in and said, "If you are going to be a priest like this man, I will not stop you." When he was about to leave for Nigeria his mother's advice to him was, "Be good to those people and treat them well." Her words stayed with him and later guided his approach to the West Indian people in Toronto. His wish was that the Caribbean Centre would give them a sense of their own dignity and worth as well as an opportunity to worship in their own way. When he returned to Trinidad for the last time it was with the intention of retiring back home. But he found out that the people of Delaford had no priest: no one wanted to go there. So Fr. Philip volunteered to serve them. May God be gracious to him forever." ■

## Canadian Church Press Awards

*Spiritan* was awarded four Awards of Merit by the Canadian Church Press at its annual meeting in Winnipeg in June 2006. This brings the number of such awards over the past eleven years to twenty-eight.

Katie Flaherty won first place in poetry for 'Confessions at a Carnival'. Tim Faller was awarded second place for layout and design. Pat Fitzpatrick's article on 'Real Presence' was third in the theological reflection category. Also, *Spiritan* magazine received the third place award for general excellence. Considering the large number of entries and the high quality of so many religious publications, these awards, and especially the one for general excellence, were most gratifying.



# EMMAUS Toronto

Pierre Wong Kai Pun, Communications, EMMAUS

**L**uke 24: 13-17,.... Images of two slightly mystified and down-in-spirit disciples plodding along, homebound to their village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Jesus, the Teacher, joins Cleopas and his companion and patiently takes the time to clear their minds and eyes before revealing His Resurrected Self to them. Elated and re-energized, the two disciples run back to Jerusalem to spread the Good News.

History does repeat itself! Almost two millennia later, it was another reawakening of sorts that inspired a group of Catholics to embark on their own spiritual journey of self-discovery, renewal and service.

It all started in the fall of 1999 with a pastoral visit of the Bishop of Port Louis, Mauritius, to the expatriate community in Toronto. Despite the brevity of his stay among them, Bishop Piat's down-to-earth spirituality touched all who congregated at his Eucharistic celebrations, retreats and formal and informal gatherings. The community's thirst for the spiritual, clearly palpable, was temporarily satisfied in the joyful celebrations of the moment, enhanced, no doubt, by the colourful and happy resonance of a shared "lingua franca". The yearning for more had been rekindled, though. At Bishop Piat's gentle urging, a small group volunteered to continue the work he had started.

In January 2000, a first plenary meeting of the EMMAUS, a lay Catholic group, was born. Its audience is mainly, but not exclusively, the Mauritian community in Canada; its mission, a fairly succinct one;

*In response to the call received at baptism and reaffirmed at confirmation, we pledge to:*

- Deepen and nurture our faith,
- Live and share the Good News with Mauritian families in Canada and the communities in which we live.

Affiliation of the group with the Archdiocese of Toronto quickly followed. In those early days, practical realities and constraints were swept aside by the group's contagious enthusiasm, and it probably took on too much too fast. Some six years later, a wee bit wiser (and greyer) and armed with a clearer perspective, EMMAUS has developed a more eclectic approach, focusing on some well-established and much-anticipated annual ministries and celebrations.

## Two parallel but inter-related paths

Individual companions have progressed in their spiritual journey, in their own unique ways and at their own pace. A happy



Emmaus companions on retreat at Mt. Alverno.

corollary of that individual growth is the increased involvement and integration of EMMAUS members in their own communities and local parishes. At the same time, we have also reached out to the community. One of our signature events is the annual small faith-sharing sessions that we hold in five different regions of the Greater Toronto Area throughout the Lenten season.

In early fall, the *Messe du Père Laval* brings together Mauritians and friends from all corners of the metropolitan area to celebrate *l'Apôtre de l'Île Maurice*.

The younger (of age and of heart) have not been forgotten along the way. Their enthusiastic involvement has been a key element in the success of our participation in Out-of-the-Cold programs. And who can forget 2002? The North American Mauritian community came together under the umbrella of EMMAUS in an unprecedented spirit of goodwill and generosity to sponsor and host 27 World Youth Day pilgrims from Mauritius and Reunion.

Six years and a small first circle were symbolically completed with the recent visit of Port Louis Vicar-General Gerard Sullivan. One simple and profound lesson learnt: We continue in the deeply-held belief that the Lord's mission is not an overnight project and small or even tiny steps add up to real progress over time.

Following the departure of Father Justin Desroches, our first Spiritual Director, Spiritan Father Paul McAuley has patiently and enthusiastically journeyed with us, ever ready to dispense much-needed guidance and counsel while tending to our spiritual needs.

Our theme song is "Companions on the Journey". Like the disciples in Luke's Gospel, the EMMAUS companions are "on a journey of faith, breaking bread and sharing life." So, join us and "Stay with us". ■