

FRANCISCAN BROTHERS of peace

Newsmagazine A.D. 2021 | Volume 35 | 2nd Edition

Myanmar refugees suffer with their homeland

*Pah Chi and his wife Yea Kler (Clare)
stand in front of St. Patrick church in St. Paul.*

Photos by DAVE HRBACEK | THE CATHOLIC SPIRIT

Devoted to the Gospel of Life



In the news...

Stories by Brother Conrad Richardson, fbp
Community Servant

A Patron for the Disabled

When our community was founded, there were several saints and blessed that appeared to have a great deal to do with the spirit of our founding charism which is to defend the Gospel of Life. Among them, Our Lady, Queen of Peace, St. Joseph the Worker, Sts. Francis and Clare, Sts. Peter and Paul, St. John Paul II, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Teresa of Calcutta and Blessed Margaret of Castello.

This past April 24th, Pope Francis made Margaret a saint by an “equi-pollent canonization.” What that means is that the pope decided to forego the usual process leading to canonization, which among other things, requires the examination and validation of miracles.

St. Margaret was an Italian woman of the 13th and 14th centuries, and a member of the Dominican third order. She was born blind, and with a curvature in her spine that made it almost impossible to walk. She was born into a noble family who were ashamed of Margaret and treated her horribly, not allowing her to be seen by anyone, even telling people that she had died. She was imprisoned in a room off the family chapel and food was passed through to her on a tray. She could only be visited by a priest through a window to teach her the faith and bring her the Eucharist. She was abandoned at fifteen and lived as a



homeless beggar. She found her way to a Dominican convent where the nuns took her in, gave her a habit and she was professed as a third order Dominican. Margaret developed a remarkably strong faith and many miracles were attributed to her during her life on earth.

St. Margaret of Castello is the patron saint for the disabled and pro-life movements. It is clear why she would also be a patron of our brotherhood who seek to advocate for the most vulnerable of our society, from pre-born children to the medically vulnerable. St. Margaret of Castello, pray for us!

Terri Schiavo Home for the Brain Injured

If physician-assisted suicide was not contrary enough to God’s design, let us not forget how medically vulnerable aged and brain injured people are having basic care taken away from them, like food and water. Like Terri Schiavo and our founder, Brother Michael Gaworski, these are individuals who are not terminal or in the active stages of dying, rather they are healthy individuals living with a brain injury or who are slowing down due to age. It has been sixteen years since Terri Schiavo was ordered by a Florida court to have her feeding tube removed, depriving her of water and food for thirteen days until her death. Tragically, there are so many more “Terri Schiavos” whose lives are being ended by healthcare systems, more than most people can imagine.

If you are not already aware, we want to share with you some amazing developments that are rapidly unfolding to help save the innocent lives of the medically vulnerable and how you can get involved. Catholic Healthcare International (www.chi-usa.com) is building a replica of St. Padre Pio’s renowned “Home for the Relief of Suffering” hospital, medical school and a Terri Schiavo Home for the Brain Injured. All of this is being done through the active collaboration of Catholic Healthcare International and the Diocese of Lansing, MI with the blessing of St. Pio’s hospital in Italy, “Casa Solievo della Sofferenza.”

From CHI’s website: Every day, patients and families find themselves at-risk of their human dignity being violated due to a physician, medical institution, or insurance company with differing views about what sort of treatment they deserve. In the most extreme cases, patients face the prospect of someone in a position of power denying them food and water through forcible removal of a feeding tube. In more com-

mon cases, patients and families face other forms of denial of care that lead to poor, sometimes fatal, outcomes. At the Terri Schiavo Home for the Brain Injured each person will be cared for with dignity and love. The families will be treated with respect and love. And no one will be starved to death. Ever.

Phase one of the Terri Schiavo Home for the Brain Injured will be housed within a world-class medical facility in the Howell, Michigan, area. When the Home for the Relief of Suffering campus in the Howell area is ready, the Terri Schiavo Home for the Brain Injured will move onto the Medical Campus.

How you can help...

1. Visit the CHI website and get the word out.
2. Join the first-ever worldwide perpetual Eucharistic adoration program and pray for Padre Pio's healthcare apostolates in both Italy and the US (chi-adoration.com).
3. Donate to CHI and the Terri Schiavo Life & Hope Network (www.lifeandhope.com).



Leadership Team of CHI (L to R): Michael J. O'Dea, MBA, Bobby Schindler, Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke, and Jere D. Palazzolo, MHA.

Love Conquers All

Currently in Minnesota, we have two so called “death with dignity” bills facing our state, SF1352 and HF1358. If passed, Minnesota would join ten other states in our country that already have such laws in place. Among them are; California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont and Washington.

This issue is clear for those with a correctly formed conscience according to our faith. The fifth commandment says, “Thou shall not kill.” There is no commandment that says, “Thou shall not *suffer or have challenges in life*” physically or otherwise. Suffering on any level is unpleasant but it is not without meaning. If we believe that our lives come from God our Creator, belong to God and are destined to return to God, then that means that we are merely stewards of our life, but not the birth or death of ourselves or others.

So what about those without correctly formed consciences, how do we convey this truth more objectively to them? I believe one way is to point out the falsity of the subjective reasons that people use to become arbiters of birth and death. “There’s no way I can provide for this baby.” “I don’t want to become a burden on my family.” “This baby won’t live beyond a year if it’s born.” “I cannot stand the thought of the physical pain no matter how much they say palliative care could help.”

Sometimes trying to prove the subjectivity of statements like these won’t get you very far. So I believe the other important point to make is asking the question, “Where has this person been hurt, rejected,

abandoned, unloved — *and how will I help?*” This approach will make the greatest impact above all because “*Amor Vincit Omnia!*” — Love Conquers All!



Minnesota’s Assisted Suicide Bill Has Serious Side Effects

- NO mental health evaluation required.
- NO witness required.
- NO way to predict an accurate prognosis.
- NO safeguards for people with disabilities.
- NO doctor or nurse must be present.
- NO family notification required.
- NO safeguards against elder abuse.
- NO conscience protection for doctors.

Minnesota Alliance for Ethical Healthcare
ethicalcaremn.org

Joe Ruff | April 9, 2021

Used with Permission of the Catholic Spirit

Karen, Karenni and Chin Catholic communities in Twin Cities ask for prayers, other support for those back home

Pah Chi was married for one week when the Burmese military first kidnapped, tortured and terrorized him.

In a process repeated several times due to sporadic violence in Myanmar, also known as Burma, before he and his wife fled the country in 2002, different bands of Burmese soldiers passing by his village forced him or others to do menial chores but let them go after about a month. Each time, they claimed their victims were resistance fighters, beat them and threatened to kill them while trying to make them confess, only to acknowledge or verify later that they were villagers and let them go. If those captured were found to be anti-government fighters, they were killed.

Burmese soldiers repeatedly raided villages. Men often fled in terror and hid in the jungle until they thought it was safe to return. Women villagers were often kidnapped and treated as slaves while the men

were away, and their homes were burned down, Pah Chi said. In Pah Chi's case, as he unsuccessfully tried to escape from the soldiers, one of his uncles was shot and killed.

First kidnapped 33 years ago, Pah Chi is now 55 and a member of St. Casimir on the East Side of St. Paul. He said what he experienced is happening all over again, right now, in Myanmar. It is a cycle of ethnic and religious violence that began in 1948 when the country gained its independence from Great Britain and a brief World War II takeover by Japan. Violence has continued in some form ever since.

"I want to tell my story because this is not only happening right now," Pah Chi, wearing a full-length tunic and sandals, told The Catholic Spirit through an interpreter after a Lenten Stations of the Cross at St. Patrick, also on St. Paul's East Side.

This photo, taken anonymously on March 16, 2020, shows Pah Chi visiting his mother in Myanmar a year before the fighting broke out.



Myanmar refugees suffer with their homeland

"This happened 70 years ago (too). I want people to understand."

International pressure is needed to bring peace to their country, said Pah Chi, and his 48-year-old wife, Clare, which is her confirmation name. The couple have 10 children and 8 grandchildren. Both are members of the Catholic minority Karen in Buddhist-majority Myanmar. People must get the "Burmese military to stop this," he said.



People can help

Franciscan Brothers of Peace Father Seraphim Wirth, a native of Sauk Rapids whose ministry includes acting as chaplain for the Karen community of about 75 Catholic families in St. Paul, said people can write to their representatives in Congress to raise awareness about the violence in Myanmar and seek international intervention. Pah Chi's experience is similar to many others, Father Seraphim said.

People also can donate money through the St. Paul-based Franciscan Brothers of Peace, which has a network of trusted individuals who can make certain the donations reach people in need in Myanmar, Father Seraphim said. Checks to the Brothers marked for “Burma relief” can be sent to 1289 Lafond Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104. Pressing needs include food and rain tarps for people fleeing their villages, he said.

Most important, people can pray for peace, said Father Seraphim, who traveled with Pah Chi for three weeks last year in the region of Myanmar that has seen a great deal of the current violence. The Franciscan Brothers of Peace and the Karen community in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis have sponsored a school for internally displaced children in the Karen region of Burma. Father Seraphim made the trip in part to dedicate a chapel in that area, with permission from the local bishop. This year, Father Seraphim has kept in touch through a Wi-Fi connection that works best in the middle of the night in Burma. Recently people in that region and in the school fled into the jungle as military helicopters and jet fighters swooped in, strafing inhabited areas, he said.

“When I talked to the camp leader (in the jungle), he said, ‘Can you pray for the Burmese military, that they will change their hearts and stop attacking them?’”

Pah Chi and his wife, and all of the Karen people have relatives they worry about back in Myanmar, Father Seraphim said. Similar Catholic ethnic groups from Myanmar, including the Karenni and Chin, who have settled around the St. Bernard and St. Agnes neighborhoods in St. Paul, also worry about people back in their homeland, he said.

All of them pray for an end to the violence, Father Seraphim said, including at a March 13 prayer service at St. Patrick that centered



Francis, above left, who is in charge of a Catholic student boarding compound in the Karen region of Myanmar, gives an IV to a man who is ill in the jungle after recent Burmese air attacks on their village. The sick man died two days later, while his son in the photo cared for him.



Internally displaced students from St. Francis mission hiding in the jungle after the Burmese military bombed nearby villages.

Below, Fr. Seraphim celebrates mass in a remote region of Myanmar in March 2020. People from this village needed to leave because of the conflict.



on the turmoil in Myanmar and was led by Archbishop Bernard Hebda. About 120 people from the Karen, Karenni and Chin communities attended, praying a rosary for peace, taking time for adoration of the Eucharist and a reflection by the archbishop.

“I am grateful for the archbishop’s encouraging words to the people,” Father Seraphim said. “He gave a message of hope centered on Jesus Christ. It is clear that the archbishop has a heart full of compassion for the people of Myanmar.”

Father Seraphim said he echoes what Pah Chi said about the need for intervention in Myanmar.

“The international community needs to help by putting more pressure on the Burmese military,” Father Wirth said. “People living in bamboo homes can’t compete against fighter jets and helicopters shooting at them.”

Bursts of Violence

The latest burst of violence in Myanmar followed a military coup Feb. 1 that deposed the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. In the face of protests, junta-controlled soldiers and police have been widely seen by international observers as conducting indiscriminate brutality and deadly use of force.

More than 580 people have been killed in the turmoil, according to one estimate.

While Catholics in Myanmar observed Palm Sunday this year, many in the Buddhist-majority country were weeping at the funerals of more than 100 people killed by security forces the previous day, the Catholic News Service reported.

On Feb. 28, Sister Ann Nu Thawng, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Xavier, dropped to her knees in front of Myanmar security forces, media reports

Continued on page 8...

Our Mission Trip to South Dakota Reservation

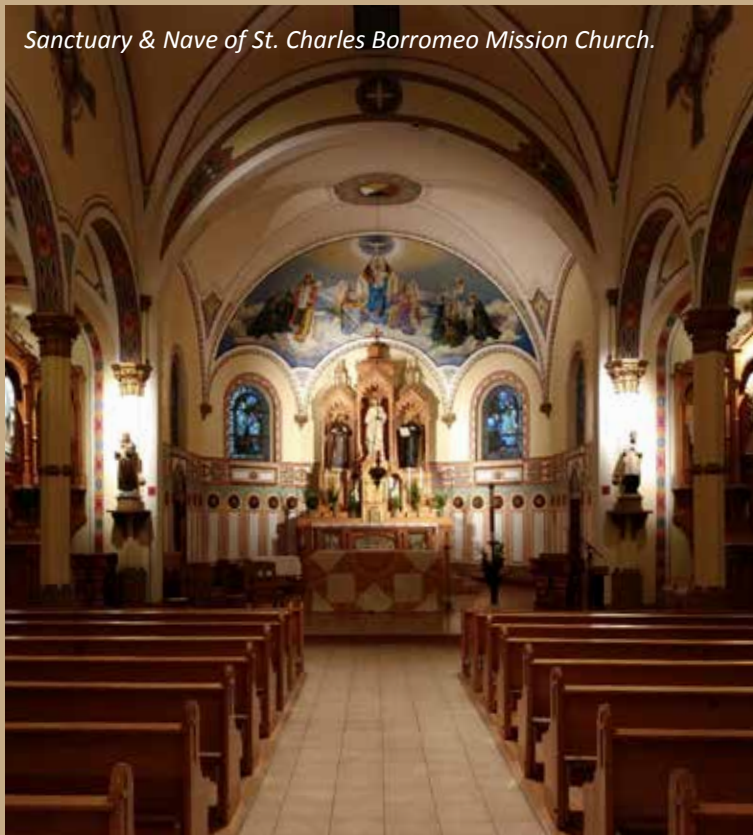
“The community of believers were of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. There was no needy person among them, ... for properties were distributed to each according to need.” – Acts 4:32, 34-35

By Brother John Mary & Brother Pio

Such was the appropriate Easter season epistle reading the morning that Br. Pio and I loaded up our cargo van with 3,000+ pounds of foodstuffs, meats and hygiene items and drove eight hours to southern South Dakota, our destination being Rosebud Lakota (Sicangu) Reservation. Having received a plethora of food donations for our ongoing food shelf mission during the COVID-19 crisis from you, our dear friends and benefactors, we have recently found that the supply was literally above the local demand. Hating to allow these resources to just sit and perhaps spoil, after placing a couple of phone calls, and realizing the great need of our Native American brothers and sisters, Br. Pio and I were soon on our way.

Upon entering a rather arid, ranch land part of the state, negotiating miles of highway construction, eventually we arrived in the small Lakota community of St. Francis, South Dakota where we were met and heartily welcomed by Fr. James Kubicki, SJ and a couple of his community helpers. We immediately unloaded the van of the food, meats and hygiene items — while one of our new Lakota friends exclaimed, “Boy, this is some good stuff.” We could sense that the need is great.

Sanctuary & Nave of St. Charles Borromeo Mission Church.



Br. John Mary (far right) with our new friends (from left to right), John, Reggie and Fr. Jim Kubicki, SJ.

Task accomplished, Fr. Jim that evening and Wednesday morning then gave us a description and grand tour of that communal St. Francis Mission, the hub of a Jesuit outreach consisting of five local parishes encompassing hundreds of square miles of Rosebud Reservation. We could see during the drive in — also confirmed by Fr. Jim — that no large-scale industry is in that part of the state, with unemployment at about 50%. Native people are genetically vulnerable to diabetes and struggles with alcoholism and other addictions. And while touring the mission’s museum it became obvious that this Nation is both an incredibly proud people, and one that has been oppressed over many generations.



Br. Pio, Reggie, John and Fr. Jim unload the van.

Please join us in praying for the Jesuit outreach of St. Francis Mission. Step by step they are striving to better the lives of the populace they serve. They help promote and sponsor their communal dental clinic, recruiting volunteer dentists from surrounding states; they serve thousands annually via their recovery and sobriety programs. The Jesuits are perhaps most proud of their St. Charles Borromeo Mission Church, a beautifully native-decorated sanctuary where the sacraments are celebrated; and their accompanying K-8 Mission School which currently enrolls over 50 students, their curriculum being taught in both English and their local Lakota dialect. Br. Pio and I were privileged to meet some of the school administrators and teachers; we could tell they take pride in their educational mission.

*The Crazy Horse Memorial...
the world's largest mountain carving — under development.*



From Rosebud Reservation, our whirlwind trip continued west. With a strong desire to see some of the surrounding country, Br. Pio and I then drove toward Rapid City, taking in the starkness of Badlands National Park with its accompanying bighorn sheep along the way. From Rapid City we diverged, stopping at Chief Crazy Horse National Monument, further educating ourselves of the Lakota heritage via the accompanying museum. Continuing that day's journey, we then drove the wildlife loop of Custer State Park, witnessing the profound jagged beauty of the Black Hills and local wildlife (wild donkeys, antelope and hundreds of bison). Eventually we made it to Mount Rushmore, taking in the visage of the presidents.

We slept well at a local hotel that night, because we had the final venture of driving ten hours home the next day. The drive allowed us the perspective to reflect how, via your generosity, God continues to broaden the mission of the Franciscan Brothers of Peace in providing for the needs of the community of believers. Thank you for your trust in us!

Bison enjoying a relaxing day.



Inside the Mission Church.



A Bighorn sheep looking for a snack.

*Br. Pio plays
"Name that
President!"*



Myanmar refugees *Continued...*

said, raised her hands and implored, “Don’t shoot, don’t kill the innocent. If you want, hit me.”

Shocked security forces stopped their advance. About 100 protesters were believed to have escaped from police because of the religious sister’s actions.

FBP



The faithful attend a prayer service for peace in Myanmar led by Archbishop Bernard Hebda, held at St. Patrick’s Church in St. Paul.

Photos by Dave Hrbacek



Archbishop Bernard Hebda and Fr. Seraphim, fbp with members of the Karen community.



Prayer for an End to the Sin of Racism in Our Land

Leader:

Pope Francis exhorts us with these words: “My friends, we cannot turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion of any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.” (Message to the U.S. June 3, 2020)

And so we pray:

Community:

God of Heaven and Earth you created the one human family and endowed each person with great dignity.

Aid us, we pray, in overcoming the sin of racism.

Grant us your grace in eliminating this blight from our hearts, our communities, our social and civil institutions.

Fill our hearts with love for you and our neighbor so that we may work with you in healing our land from racial injustice.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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Please Join Us via LiveStream on YouTube or Facebook!

FRANCISCAN holy hour

Every First Friday at 7:00 P.M.

Adoration + Franciscan Crown Rosary + Chanted Compline + Benediction

www.brothersofpeace.org