



Marist Brothers East Asia Province



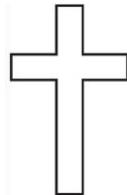
Marists  
of Champagnat

# News Bits

SPECIAL EDITION

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May 26, 2021



IN MEMORY OF



**Brother ROBERT BERNARD McGOVERN, FMS**

who died on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2021  
at the age of 91  
and in the 73<sup>rd</sup> year of his religious life.

We thank God for his exemplary life on earth.

“SURELY YOUR GOODNESS  
AND LOVE WILL FOLLOW ME  
ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE,  
AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE  
OF THE LORD FOREVER.”

**Psalm 23:6**

## RELIGIOUS FORMATION

1947 - 1948 : Juniorate / Postulancy

1948 - 1949 : Novitiate

1949 - 1952 : Scholasticate

July 26, 1948 : Habit Taking

July 26, 1949 : First Profession

August 22, 1954 : Perpetual Profession

January 01, 1963 : Second Novitiate

August 24, 1968 : Vow of Stability

Sept. 09, 1993 : Third Age Program (Manziana)

## APOSTOLIC EXPERIENCE

1952 – 1957 : Mount St. Michael, Bronx, New York (Teacher)

1957 – 1959 : Archbishop Molloy High School, Queens, New York (Teacher)

1959 – 1963 : St. Joseph's Academy, Brownville, Texas (Teacher)

1964 – 1967 : Msgr. Pace HS, Opa Locka, Florida (Teacher)

1967 – 1968 : Notre Dame of Cotabato Boys' Department, Cotabato City (Teacher)

1968 – 1969 : Marist Brothers Marbel (Director of Student Brothers & Aspirants)

Notre Dame of Marbel College - now University (Teacher)

1970 – 1971 : Marist School, Marikina Heights, Marikina City (Teacher)

1971 – 1972 : Notre Dame of Kidapawan College (3 months only)

1972 – 1980 : Notre Dame of Cotabato Boys' Department (Director)

Notre Dame Education Association (NDEA) (Executive Director)

1980 – 1984 : Notre Dame of Dadiangas College – now University (Director of Community Extension Services)

1984 – 2021 : Notre Dame Business Resource Center Foundation, Inc.  
General Santos City (President / Project Director)

## MILESTONES

1989 Recipient : Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ Award – Man for Others, Xavier University

1996 Recipient : Archbishop Clovis Thibault Award – Ateneo de Davao University

1996 Recipient : Catholic Relief Services Outstanding Partner Award

1987 Recipient : Most Outstanding People's Economic Council Chairman

1998 Recipient : Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal Awardee

(the highest medal that can be awarded to the laity by the Papacy)

February 2017 : Adopted Son of General Santos City, Philippines

March 2021 : NDBRCFI - President Emeritus

## **“A LISTENING MAN”**

*By: Dr. Allan G. Farnazo and Family*



*Dr. Allan Farnazo with his wife Rina*

he being then NDEA president and Board of Trustee of the then FAPE (Now known as PEAC). He connected me to FAPE for my thesis grant. He even delivered the checks to me. Every time we talked, he shared with me how we can do more in terms of assisting the community especially on teacher training and scholarships for public school teachers. One time, he quipped to me: “Allan, you seem to be raiding the private schools of teachers towards public school system.” And I answered him; “And we expect better teacher preparations because of the hard work you do in providing them training.” Yes, Br. Bob is always concerned about the teacher preparation of our public schools.

On a personal note, he loves listening to my stories about our family, our children. He is a LISTENING man. He has a hearty laughter on my antics. He feasts on a lot of simple things. Today, I pay tribute to a foreigner who came to the Philippines but have won our hearts, our homes, our communities and is a stranger no more. He is no foreigner anymore on the growth of business and its direction in General Santos City and other parts of the region, his assistance to budding SMEs, manpower development, local government academy and numerous others. To me personally, thanks so much Bro. Bob for working on my rough edges. You are so selfless and always have your sight towards others’ welfare. That alone is so much to thank you and I join the throngs of people you have assisted praying for the happy repose of your soul. Thanks so much Br. Bob for building a better me. I thank the Lord for the gift of Br. Bob. Thanks so much, Marist Brothers, for sharing a true and finest Brother to us. Pagmamahal at paalam, Br. Robert McGovern, FMS Consummatum Est. Indeed, a life very well lived. Rest well in our Father’s abode.

My family and I would like to extend our solidarity and deepest condolences to the Congregation of the Marist Brothers of the Schools. When I was starting my professional life, the Marist Brothers were the one who have been with me in that journey. Hence, their impact to me as a person and as a professional are so significant. At the time when I was still low in self-esteem, accomplishing any milestone seem to be too heavy and remote for me. Br. Bob sent me to a scholarship. It seemed that he had an easy access to all kinds of scholarships at that time,



## **DOING GOOD QUIETLY!**

*The Story of Br. Robert McGovern, F.M.S.*

(Reprinted from [maristbr.org](http://maristbr.org))



**Br. Robert McGovern** has accomplished much in his life. How did he start out and become a Marist Brother?

Growing up in the Bronx during and just after World War II, Br. Bob attended PS 97 because his parents couldn't afford to send him and his brother and sisters to a Catholic school, his father being a New York City policeman in the days before municipal unions were as powerful as they are today.

With his parents' blessing he finished high school at the Marist Brothers' newly opened Marist Prep in Esopus, New York and went on to complete his training in the Brothers' novitiate and Marist College across the Hudson River in Poughkeepsie.

Immediately after college, Br. Bob taught at Mount St. Michael Academy in the Bronx, New York, Archbishop Molloy High School in Queens, New York and then in Opa Locka, Florida.

In the early 1960s he studied theology in Fribourg, Switzerland and after completing this program he volunteered to go to the Philippines to teach at Notre Dame of Cotabato, a high school for boys in Mindanao.

Subsequently he went to Notre Dame of Marbel University in Koronadal City for two years as Director of 25 student Brothers and 4 aspirants, responsible for teaching theology, education courses, graduate-level classes, handling guidance and running the school's research center.

Two years later he went to visit the Brothers' school on the remote island of Jolo, at a time just before sectarian strife broke out in the area. The strife in the area made a lasting impression on Br. Bob.

After this, although he was led to believe that he would become Director of the novitiate in Tamontaka near Cotabato City, he was sent, instead, to work at Notre Dame of Kidapawan College.

In 1972, Br. Bob returned to Mindanao and became Executive Secretary of the Notre Dame Education Association (NDEA), spearheading the development of new programs for improving education throughout the area. In this position he helped not just Marist schools, but also diocesan schools. At that time the NDEA included schools run by the Marist Brothers, the Oblate Fathers and three Congregations of Women Religious with 75,000 students enrolled in 112 schools, among which were 56 Notre Dame high schools and 20 elementary schools.

Br. Bob was a driving force behind a program organized for teachers from 60 high schools who were sent for a Master's Degree program at Notre Dame University in Cotabato City and Notre Dame of Marbel University – 4 summers for 6 weeks at a time—to become certified as Principals throughout Mindanao.

To help improve education in Muslim areas, under his direction the 2 Notre Dame Universities teamed with UNICEF to identify promising Muslim teachers and provide them with an accelerated para-teacher program to become head teachers with apprentices in their local communities. This program greatly improved the quality of education and trained administrators to serve in Muslim areas. 58 science teachers were also trained for schools throughout Mindanao, some going on to earn Ph.D.'s.

Over the last several decades Br. Bob has helped launch university programs for social development, healthcare and nursing services, and a Business Resource Center Foundation that provides business training, consulting services, research on business needs, community organizing and financial assistance and loans for entrepreneurs. Thousands of personnel have been trained in addition to “out of school” youth enrolled in the Marist Technical Training Programs to get skills needed for employment.

In 1993, Pope John Paul II awarded Br. Bob the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal, the highest medal that can be awarded to the laity by the Papacy.

Br. Bob is especially proud of helping to create thousands of new jobs by promoting the development of a new fish seaport in General Santos City, and of collaborating with USAID to build an airport to fly the freshly caught fish directly to Manila, strengthening existing businesses and enabling the fishing industry in the Provinces of South Cotabato and Sarangani to thrive and expand.

With loving faith and youthful openness to the Lord’s guidance in his life, Br. Bob has been a blessing and inspiration to countless people around the world, now more than ever.



## **A Man with a Gold Heart!**

*By: Br. Manuel Uluan, FMS*



**The midnight curtain finally went  
Down on the man with a gold Heart.  
For fifty-four years – he served  
This country not his own.**





**His big frame overshadowed the  
Weaknesses and failures of us all.  
He never gave up on us – although  
We continued to be ungrateful  
And even indifferent.**

**His name was Br. Robert B. McGovern  
A fellow Marist Brother, a mentor,  
A superior, an educator and man  
For others and a man with a gold  
Heart.  
Many came for him to ask for help  
But only few came back to say  
Thank you.**

**Yet – he never said no to the poor and the  
Downtrodden.**

**His heart was bigger than his tall and  
Bulky body.**

**He could have left us – if he wanted to  
But he couldn't leave us.**

**As he grew older – his maladies were  
Getting worse but he never gave up  
To live for us.**

**His life was on this country and his  
Wish was finally granted ... to die in  
This country.**

**He was a foreigner but his heart was  
Filipino.**

**He may not have spoken our language  
But his language of love surely was  
Understood by all.**

**Farewell Br. Bob and angels for sure  
Will sing of your praise.**



## **LETTER OF BR. DAN O'RIORDAN, FMS ON BEHALF OF THE MARIST BROTHERS USA PROVINCE**



Marist Brothers  
United States Province Center

May 21, 2021

Dear Brothers and Marist Family of the Philippines,

Blessings to each of you from New York. On Behalf of our Marist Brothers USA Province, I wish to express our deepest condolences to you on the loss of Br. Bob McGovern, who happily served with you since 1967. I apologize that I am unable to join you in celebrating his life, but due to the restrictions of Covid-19, travelling for his funeral was impossible at this time. We are grateful that we will be able to join you in prayer and watch his services via the internet thanks to your arranging for streaming of all his final services.

We are deeply blessed to have such a long and rich connection to your great country and our Marist Mission there. Beginning with Br. Joe Teston, Br. Peter Leonard, Br. Herbert Daniel and Br. Maurice James in 1948, so many USA Marists gave many years of service to the Philippines. A number of our USA Brothers helped start many of the schools and universities that still are impacting the lives of many young people even today. I have had the privilege to know and live with many American Brothers, who so often proclaimed that their best years of Marist Life were the years that they each spent working with you. Brothers such as Br. Bernard Curtin, Br. Alfred George, Br. Jim McKnight, Br. Jim Adams, Br. Paul Meuten, and Br. John McDonnell were each graced to proudly serve with you.

Please accept our promise of prayers for each of you as our world continues to overcome the many challenges of the Covid-19 Pandemic. We will be watching Br. Bob's services and joyfully remembering the gift that he was in all our lives.

I hope in the coming years, I will find an opportunity that will allow me to visit your great country and see the impact and legacy that Br. Bob and our other American Brothers contributed to our Marist History there.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brother Daniel O'Riordan, fms".

Brother Daniel O'Riordan, fms  
Provincial  
Marist Brothers USA Province

## **TESTIMONY OF THE LIFE OF BRO. ROBERT MCGOVERN, FMS**

*By: Sr. Gladys Enanoria, SMSM*



to share some of these memories with you today and some of the attributes that made him so special to me and no doubt, to many other people who knew him.

I met him while I was teaching at the Notre Dame of Kabacan. He used to visit us being the president of the Notre Dame Educational Association. I can remember that although his visits were short and passing, he had always a ready smile for everyone.

I got to know him better when I joined the Marist family and much more when I was missioned in Maitum and worked at the Business Resource Center Foundation which he founded. I came to admire him for his many ideas and his inexhaustible energy, of forever initiating livelihood projects for the people in need, and for his dedication to education, peace and development. We know of his various projects with the Tiboli people in Kaangka, Maitum and the indigenous of Gen. Santos City. For them, he was like a father figure who understood their situation, a real angel who came down from heaven.



It is of great sadness for me when I heard about the death of Bro. "Bob." Although I was able to say my goodbye to him at the hospital before I left General Santos City, it is still difficult to accept that his is gone.

Bro. Bob was such a wonderful person. I am glad that I was able to know him in this life. I would like



Brother was an incredible missionary and was loved by everyone. His generosity and concern to everyone: the Indigenous people, the Muslims, the poor, the students, the SMSM sisters, and to all who came along his way, whether they are poor and nobody or a well-known figure, he would always leave a deep impression due to his genuine interest and concern to people.

In the many meetings, conferences and conventions I had had while in the Philippines, whether local or nationwide, I would always meet someone who would ask me about

him or send their regards. What really touched me was, when in one of my Peace Conferences, I met a former Commander of the Muslim Rebel who said, brother helped him bury his father when he was a young student. His compassion towards anyone in need is indeed exemplary.

I had my own taste of this when my late father was very sick. He offered his ambulance, and nurse to take him to the hospital. Surely, his kindness and generosity will be remembered by all who had the pleasure of knowing him and I was one of the lucky ones.

Goodbye brother. You will be dearly missed.



## **TRIBUTE TO BR. RICHARD ROBERT B. McGOVERN, FMS**

*Br. Manuel V. de Leon, FMS*

**(February 12, 1930- May 19, 2021)**



Rest in Peace Bro. Bob.

Br. Bob died at the age of 91 due to lingering illness. My last visit to him was last March during the NDDU Board Meeting. He was already getting weak but still able to carry a conversation. Lately, I heard from Br. Pat Corpus that he was already bedridden.

I lived with Bro. Robert in the same community from 1978 to 1980 when I was assigned for my first teaching assignment at Notre Dame of Cotabato Boys' Department. He was then the Executive Director of Notre Dame Educational Association or NDEA. As an Executive Director, he was always busy attending meetings and conferences, visiting schools, and travelling to Manila and abroad. But every time he was back in the community, we spent a minimum of one hour at the dining table listening to his stories about his meetings, projects and plans.

Br. Robert was always passionate about his work and he drew his energies from the time he spent in prayer at the community chapel and attending the daily Holy Eucharist regardless of whether he was tired or had sleepless nights before. I remember one day, he shared that he was so

distracted at Mass because of a project he was trying to conceptualize and put into reality. That is how deeply spiritual Br. Robert was. He brought his concerns to prayer and made them all part of his prayer. He was a man of prayer and action.

As an NDEA Executive Director, he was able to assist member schools, colleges and universities in terms of faculty and student scholarships, teachers' training program, updating of school administrators through seminars and graduate degree programs. He was instrumental in getting funding for the Agri-prep Program of NDKC, the COCOFED Scholarship Program, Para-teachers Training Program for Cultural Communities which later evolved into a Baccalaureate Degree known as the Accelerated Teachers' Training Program for Cultural Communities or ATTCC, the Masters' Degree Program in Educational Management for members of Cultural

Communities (EAMA) coming from different parts of Mindanao with Notre Dame of Marbel University as the provider institution.

In 1980, he was transferred to Notre Dame of Dadiangas College to be the Director of the Community Extension Services of the college. His network with funding agencies such as Misereor, UNICEF, OXFAM, Asia Foundation, USAID, Manos Unidas, Child Fund Japan, Save the Children Foundation, etc.; educational associations including CEAP, PAASCU; Association of Foundations (AF), helped him establish the Notre Dame Resource Center Foundation, Inc. or NDBRCFI. NDBRCFI has assisted the City of General Santos in coming up with the baseline data



and the technical support for the City to put up the Fish Port and the International Airport that have accelerated the economic activities of the SoCCSKSARGEN or Region 12. The Foundation, with the support of Misereor of Germany, was able implement the Marist Technical Training Program for Out-of-School Youth and was replicated in different parts of the country. As former chairman of the Board of Trustees of NDBRCFI, I am very much informed of the many novel programs that he had initiated and continued to implement even up to this day. I am sure Mr. Carmelo "Meloi" Enriquez will have more to share about these programs.

Br. Bob is the kindest person I have ever known. His love for the poor and the needy was always evident wherever he was assigned. He believed that in order to help the poor, give him good education; attend to his health needs; and provide him with easy access to credit to start a livelihood. He was an "international beggar" soliciting grants and aids for the programs he thought would benefit the poor mostly through scholarships, technical and skills training, primary health care, micro-finance, Early Childhood Specialization Program, Badjao Village to give them decent houses instead of begging in the streets, the handicraft project for women belonging to the Indigenous People in Maitum.

One day, I was looking for a good mechanic and I found one who was a graduate of the Marist Technical Training Program of NDDU. He said, if not for the MTTP, he will still be pushing ice cream cart for a living. Many stories such as this are told, and we owe it to a man of vision and compassion.

Br. Bob, as Vice-President for External Affairs of NDDU, he was able to get funding for the Religious Education and Nursing Programs of NDDU; acquired the land and put up the building facilities for the Espina Campus to serve the poor residents in the area; and put up the Mother and Child Center that has provided medical services to the indigents of the City.

As Provincial, I had the opportunity to journey with Br. Robert especially in dealing with his health. Before he became seriously ill, it was common for him to be hospitalized due to his heart and lung problems. But he was always able to recover with the medical expertise of Dra. Adarna, his cardiologist. One day, I told him that he can consider going back to the United States and the Brothers there will take good care of him. He attempted many times to get treatment in America and had the time to recuperate. But somehow, his desire to come back to the Philippines was stronger. The only assurance I gave him was, if he decides to remain in the Philippine, we will take good care of him. And he was very happy to hear that from me. It was in the Philippines that he found a real home and the emotional support to keep him going.

Preparing for this tribute, I asked Br. James McKnight to provide me with some information about Br. Robert and he sent me these:

*"Richard McGovern was a New York City boy and the son of a New York City Police Officer and had a brother and two sisters. He lived near St. Michael Academy in Bronx, New York City which was and still owned by the Marist Brothers but his family could not afford to send him there. He attended public schools but one day, a Marist Brother came to his parish to recruit young men to join the Brothers. Though still in high school, Richard joined the Marist Brothers and entered the Juniorate in Esopus and later the Novitiate at Tyngsboro, Massachusetts. When he made the first vows, he took the religious name Robert Bernard. He then attended Marian College, now Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York State.*

*"He was a man of prayer and had a deep love for the Blessed Mother. He dedicated his life to be a Brother to all especially the poor. He was a dreamer and put his dreams to action. The dreams centered around helping people. He was a fundraiser par excellence because people and funding agencies trusted him. He was interested in people, in every individual he encountered. He may be conservative in his religious views but very radical and revolutionary when it came to serving others. He was simple, humble and modest man."*

Thanks, Br. James, for the help. Br. James had volunteered on many occasions to accompany Br. Bob in his travels to the United States and back to the Philippines when Bro. Bob needed a trusted companion while seeking medical attention. He also facilitated getting the right medicines for Bro. Bob when they were not available in the Philippines. He is also one of the Brothers who is close to the family of Bro. Bob.

Br. Robert or Br. Bob to many, made significant contributions to the Marist presence in the Philippines and East Asia Province. He will be forever remembered as the "man with the kindest heart". Like St. Marcellin, our founder, he had a heart that knew no bounds. On a personal note, I say "adieu" to a great man who made an impact in my life just by witnessing how he lived his life as a Marist Brother. May the eternal rewards of heaven be upon you Br. Bob.



## **BR. BOB'S LIFE WAS A BLESSING, HIS MEMORY A TREASURE**

*By: Lolly B. Estacion*

*Your life was a blessing, your memory a treasure. You are loved beyond words and missed beyond measure.*



Tonight, we celebrate the life lived by Br. Robert McGovern, FMS. I am speaking as a living witness of how he cared for his employees and the people who deserved to be helped.

I am very proud to tell everyone, especially my children that I am who I am today because of Br. Bob. He taught us to love our work by giving our best with the aim of helping others.

I joined NDEA in 1979 and on the same year Br. Bob offered me a scholarship for a Master's Degree at UST. At that time, I refused the offer because that means my support to the family will be put on hold, but he insisted and told me he will take care of my family. I could not forget his words to me- *Lolly, you are like a diamond covered with mud, take away the mud and you will shine.* He also sent Rosa Dequina, his Secretary to pursue Graduate Studies at De La Salle University. Both of us came from poor families and can never be in these universities on our own, but because of Bro. Bob, we obtained our Master's Degrees at a very young age. From then on, we realized the value of continuous learning, a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change.

Br. Bob served as the President of NDEA in 1973 to 1977 (two terms) and in 1995 to 1999 for another two terms. He was appointed as Executive Director starting in 1976 up to 1981. As Executive Director, he responded to the desire of the school administrators to upgrade the quality of education offered to young people inhabiting in the rural areas. He was instrumental in developing the tools necessary to achieve this desire like the:

- Formulation of the Syllabi
- Conduct of seminars
- Year-end testing programs
- Scholarships for students and faculty alike; and
- Assistance to member schools

He enabled the Association to extend professional assistance so that the schools could constantly advance and commence ascending the levels of accreditation which contributed to the development of quality education.

While formal education is the main purpose of the schools, Bro. Bob was able to encourage schools to initiate non-traditional and other developmental education programs which made them more relevant to the communities they are serving. Through these programs, schools were able to be of service to the poor especially to the tribal Filipinos and the Muslims in conflict areas who often are among the poorest of the poor.

To support the efforts of the schools to become relevant to the communities they are serving, Br. Bob sought financial help from numerous local, national, and international donor agencies which earned him a moniker of an "international or a professional beggar".

To mention a few, we had:

- Ford Foundation who provided an endowment fund for the sustainability of the Association
- Misereor, Filipinas Foundation, IBM Philippines, Cancio, Cardinal Cooke, Meyer Foundation, COCOFED, CARITAS for student scholarships
- NSDB, UNESCO UNICEF, Missio, PBSP for teacher training; and
- Peace and Equity Foundation, OXFAM, USAID, Canadian Embassy for Community Development.

Through Br. Bob, NDEA became a bona fide non-governmental organization in Southern Mindanao. The Association itself became a model which other regions tried to emulate. Agencies like the Private Education Assistance Council and the Catholic Educational Association made the NDEA as its implementing arm in Region XII and the BARMM.

Everybody knows that after NDEA, Br. Bob established and nurtured the Business Resource Center in General Santos City that enabled many out-of-school youths to acquire skills to earn a living. Many communities were served through programs on health, livelihood, pre-school education, parenting, and the like.

As for NDEA, we have maintained our partnership with Misereor which is now on its 41<sup>st</sup> year of continuous service to poor communities. We may not achieve what Bro Bob has done when he was at the NDEA, but the spirit of service has been planted and will remain as one of the development agenda that the Association has adopted.

Br. Bob had time for everybody regardless of religion, ethnicity, and status in life. One time, his car had a flat tire and a poor man volunteered to help. A conversation later made him decide to send the man's daughter to school. Indeed, Br. Bob lived his life fully in the service of the Filipino. He was a Filipino at heart.

In behalf of the NDEA personnel who worked with Br. Bob, and the people whose lives were touched by him, we shall remember his legacy and try to emulate his deeds as best as we can.

Thank you, Br. Bob, for spending your life with us.



## **LIFE'S LESSONS WORKING WITH BR. BOB**

*By: Weng and Meloi Enriquez*

**Weng Enriquez** works as Bookkeeper/Finance Officer and Superintendent of the Sponsorship Program of NDBRCFI, while **Meloi Enriquez** started as Databank Chief and later became Project Manager of the Foundation. Both started to work at NDBRCFI in 1984 until the present.

### **Weng's Reflections and Learnings**



*Br. Bob hands out the certificate during the Badjaos Day Center graduation*

When I started working at the BRC in 1984, I thought that it was just for the time being to earn income to help my family and help my siblings finish College; then after a couple of years, go and look for the proverbial greener pasture. That time, I began keeping the books of the Foundation, preparing Financial Reports and so on. More than these, I realized that when things are done properly, funds will come on time and assistance to the target beneficiaries will go uninterrupted.

As time passed by, I discovered that I was learning more than just my task, but work itself, as I have seen him work on a day-to-day basis. Later, as years passed, I started to know more about the Founder, St. Marcellin and his charism, partly through the activities like retreats at Notre Dame.

I realized that such qualities I have seen and experienced working with Br. Bob.

For example, **Love of Work**. Br. Bob taught us that however small or insignificant your work may seem, do your best, learn to value it and love it. Part of love of work are positive work ethics like Honesty since I was handling the finances of the Foundation. When comes to money matters, he is such a “terror and exact” and does not allow “monkey business”. He always emphasized that funding agencies would earn our trust if we were honest and orderly with the funds, they have entrusted to us. I can truly say that Br. Bob is honesty personified. He liquidates all his cash advances on time with complete receipts and supporting documents. Being in charge of Finance, I am a witness to the number of people he has assisted (ex. Poor students, IPs, disadvantaged youth, the sick, etc); a clear proof that his generosity is beyond compare. His reliance to the saying “God will provide” is real and always worked!

Secondly, working with Br. Bob has enabled me to know and see the Marist Charism of **Family Spirit or Love of Family**. In our informal talks, he would preach about practical ways to show your love to your family, especially our parents—spending quality time with them. In fact, in a few occasions, he himself even found time to visit my parents in the barrio. These he also did to families of his other staff. It would be an understatement to say that Br. Bob is compassionate and sensitive to his own staff and to other people. He never fails to ask “how are you today, how is Papa, how is mama, how is everyone in the family?” Simple questions of care and concern make you feel better and important. I must admit that being concerned with other people aside from your own family—I imbibed, little by little, because of what I have seen and experienced with Br. Bob.

Few people know that while Br. Bob is a hard worker, he always finds time to keep a healthy balance, between work and leisure or relaxation. He asks that an office outing be organized after a stretch of busy schedules. He taught us to celebrate success and life even in the simplest ways. All staff birthdays are celebrated even just with cake, pancit and ice cream. He always finds time

to treat us during birthdays and Feast Day of St Marcellin, Birthday of Mama Mary, Thanksgiving in the US, or his favourite basketball team wins, or St. Patrick’s Day (even if most of us do not even know St. Patrick).

Lastly, Br. Bob taught us the value of **appreciation**. At the end of every workday, prior to leaving his office and going home, he goes to almost all staff and say “Goodbye, see you tomorrow. Thanks for working hard today.” I often wonder and ask myself, “Did I really work hard today?” to deserve a compliment.



*Br. Bob with a T'boli mother and her child, in one of his many trips to Maitum*



*Br. Bob enjoys a moment with children; this one taken after the completion of the Summer Remedial Class in Maitum*

At a personal level, I find Br. Bob a very **sincere and sensitive** person. He is keen to find out and know when I am not OK or having problems or concerns. He takes time to listen, and even if he does not give any advice, he is just there to listen. He is not judgmental and always assures you of his prayers.

I just realized that I have spent more than half of my life working with Bro. Bob. It has been a privileged working with him. If there is one thing, I wish I could do, is to be like Bro. Bob who will continue doing God's work.

Br. Bob, you were an inspiration, you are an inspiration, and you will always be an inspiration to me and to many others whose lives you have touched.

### **Meloi's Reflections and Learnings.**



*Br. Bob delivers a pep talk to MTTP trainees.*

I consider Bro Bob a **“Man for Others”** even before he received his award of the same title from Ateneo. His works and projects are for the least and the last: the Badjaos in Bawing, the T’bolis in Kaangka, or the B’laans in Malungon; the high school dropouts who cannot proceed to college; the poor who cannot afford the high cost of health care.

Living to the ideals of St Marcellin, Br. Bob **does good quietly**. He does not announce his accomplishments. It is left for others to notice them, and proofs are the humanitarian awards given to him by various agencies and groups.

Before Google, there was Br. Bob who knows many things about many topics: current events, politics, governance, international events, even sports like US Football and the NBA. He can almost say something about any topic. He is **knowledgeable** because he is a wide reader, always carries a book in the office, and often during his travels, and watches cable TV.

Most of all, Br. Bob talks and listens with his **HEART**. Language is never a barrier to him. It is quite amusing that he can communicate with our janitress, Nang Laida, who does not know how to speak English; and Bro. Bob who cannot speak in Bisaya -- yet they understand one another. Talking and listening with his **HEART** is how Bro. Bob is able to feel and understand, and loved by the T’bolis, the B’laans, the Muslims and the countless ordinary people whom he has helped. Truthfully, the heart knows no bounds, knows no barriers.

Truly, Br. Bob’s life is a life well lived. As he once said during one Board Meeting of the NDBRCFI, “I don’t intend to retire, I’ll continue to work and die with my boots on.” Br. Bob, you got your wish. Mission Accomplished.

## A LIFE OF ENDLESS GIFTS

By: Marie Ann P. Capacillo (Batch 2- Religious Education Program)  
Sinolon Elementary School  
Tboli West 3 District  
Division of South Cotabato.



Marie Ann in Action!

If there is any person who touched my life in so many ways, it is Br. Bob. He is the most compassionate, the kindest, and the humblest man I have ever met.

The first time I saw him was during the Religious Education (RE) Scholars Batch 2 orientations. Knowing him, I felt his oozing love and genuine concern for us and his desire to uplift the way of life of Filipino children. "I want the children to have teachers who would show and teach them good values", he said. His mere presence radiates love, respect, kindness, and compassion for others. Since then, my heart was filled with fond memories of Brother Bob McGovern, FMS.

In our milestones as an R.E. scholar, he was always there to celebrate with us. In many such occasions, not everybody would want to sit beside him for lack of English vocabulary. I was one of few who dared to converse with him using "English *kinamatis*" He had his way of letting me know that he understood what I was trying to tell him (even though the words and grammar might have sounded funny). He would try to talk slowly for my sake and I admire him for that. In the course of my College studies, I started to read English articles to widen my vocabulary so that the next time we talk, he won't really have a hard time grasping my "crooked English".

Brother Bob was labeled "the international beggar" because of us, Religious Education scholars. He would do everything he could to source out finances for his programs that help poor people like me. If not for him, I cannot imagine where would I be now. I feel so blessed to be a grantee of one of his programs, the R.E. Scholarship Grant (his pet program). I was fortunate to belong to the second batch (1988-1992).

In everything I do, I am always guided by the principles that I learned during the formation. In a big way, it helped me and other RE scholars become better persons and keep the passion for teaching to burn in our hearts—all inspired by Br. Bob's way of life.

I came to know him more when I worked as a Kindergarten teacher in one of his projects, the Badjaو Integrated Development Project. Working as the first KD teacher in the Badjaو Village, I realized learning does not rely solely on brains. It takes more of the heart. Indeed, love and gratitude know no ethnicities and boundaries.

After Badjaو Village, I was assigned as a trainer in one of his special programs, the Early Childhood Education Program. Br. Bob would often visit us in the office and asked how the things were in the field. He was so thoughtful and grateful to the bones. Through the encouragement of Br. Bob, I took up and finished my Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education to be supported by the Project—an attainment that would be handy in my profession.

During my most trying moments, Brother Bob was there for me. No questions, no explanations, no judgments, just pure love and understanding. He offered help even before I could ask. He commiserated with my silent miseries, and celebrated with my joys. I learned humility in its true sense from him. Even if I lived far from Gensan and never communicated, he would appear at our doorsteps with Willy bringing Jollibee goodies for the kids and to fetch me for my chemotherapy schedule in Gensan City.

He really was my angel in disguise!

I had so many great memories with Br. Bob... too many for me to mention. They are stored in my heart ready to be told to my children and great grandchildren when the opportunity arises. I couldn't thank God enough for bringing Bro. Bob to my life.

I am pained by his death... but if it's death that would complete his mission for him to receive his heavenly reward, so be it. He doesn't deserve to be anywhere else but with the angels in heaven beside Jesus and Mama Mary.



Marie Ann's family with Br. Bob!

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### **"A MENTOR, A FATHER FIGURE, AND A SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION"**

*By: Virgie Abrea-Pasiuk*



*Virgie and Terry with the volunteers and BRC Maitum Staff during the Summer Remedial Class in Maitum!*

For those of you who do not know me, my name is Virgie Abrea-Pasiuk. I had the honor and privilege to work for Br. Robert McGovern as his Secretary when he first came to NDDC, now University, to be the Executive Assistant to the President in 1980.

I still remember feeling nervous when I was informed that I will be transferred to another office. That was after working for just about a year at the Bursar's

Office, right after graduation. Because I did not know much about my new boss, I could not help but felt nervous,

insecure, and intimidated because of my lack of experience to work as Secretary to the Executive Assistant to the President.

I was so relieved to find out that this American Marist Brother was not intimidating after all. Bro. Bob was a person who was soft-spoken, gentle yet firm; he looked very dignified and serious, but he could be fun; he was kind and understanding; and there was something very special about Bro. Bob that as I came to know him, the more I admired and respected him.

Knowing and working for Br. Bob was not just an honor and a privilege but also was a blessing. He was not just my boss. He was a mentor, a father figure, and most of all, a significant source of inspiration, all rolled into one. I will not be the person I am today had I not worked for the man who saw something in me that others and even I, did not see; a man who made me do things that I thought I could not do. He helped me believe in myself. And like a father, he was not shy of voicing out even his unsolicited honest advice regarding my personal matters, when he needed to. He led by the example of his selfless and generous spirit, and for his deep concern and love for others especially when it comes to their education, an altruism—almost that of a saint.

Br. Bob later moved to another building when the Business Resource Center was established in 1984. I stayed behind to do a job with bigger responsibility. I, however, still continued to work closely with Br. Bob when I became the Coordinator of the Graduate School Program, a job that I would have not been qualified had he not prepared me for it. I was one of those very grateful recipients of the Master's Degree scholarship training program that Br. Bob had initiated and strongly fought for.

In 1995, I left for Canada with heavy heart without Bro. Bob's blessing. Eighteen (18) years later, there was a twist of events in my life and later, I reconnected with Bro. Bob. It was in 2012 when we came for a visit to the BRC and I introduced my husband, Terry, to him. That was the beginning of a different phase of relationship with Br. Bob, a more meaningful one, made possible by the very inspiration that he has set himself and by God's grace.

Thankfully, I had the chance to virtually visit Br. Bob 3 times early this year. The last one was in a group Zoom get-together with people close to his heart to celebrate his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday. That was our last happy and memorable virtual reunion with this great man who has made a positive impact in us all.

Br. Bob has inspired and touched many lives. He will always be remembered, honored, and loved. He is a legend. He is gone but his spirit will live in my heart forever.



*Virgie Abrea with husband Terry Pasiuk during their visit to Br. Bob*

## **“A MAN FOR OTHERS”**

*By: Alma S. Hordista*



It is an honor and a privilege to write this in behalf of those whose lives were touched by Br. Bob.

The time has come for Br. Bob to rest. He is gone, back to his real home of peace, joy, and eternal happiness. No more pains, no more sickness, and no more works or travels! We regret that we failed to comfort him and make him smile; health restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic prevented us from doing so. In our hearts we say “goodbye”.

We pay tribute to the “Man for Others”, the very humble and truly dedicated Marist Missionary who had spent half of his life in the service of the poor and the marginalized Filipinos, in the pursuit of their education and better healthcare. The people of Mindanao are so lucky to have benefited from all the efforts of this big man with a generous heart.

I gathered some stories of those who worked with him in his projects. Allow me to share to you their experiences.

Ms. Hermie Diaz, the former Coordinator of the Early Childhood Education Program had this to share:

*While I was still with NDMU, I just heard of Br. Bob being a generous person. Later, he was moved to NDDC (now NDDU). I would meet him at DLSU and several times he would look for me to ask about my studies and my allowance if I had a problem. His concerns! So touching to offer help when I was not close to him.*

*Came 1987, when finally, at NDDU, he became my direct boss in the Early Childhood Education Program. I was a witness to the kind of Marist he was. Working and developing a new project for the specific IP (Indigenous People) children and parents was no easy job. We learned much from his brilliant ideas and vision. His philosophy on hard and genuine work, honesty, and transparency had earned trust of project funding partners. Though his health was already failing at that time, yet he would visit the areas we were serving then.*

*His link with government officials kept the programs successful. Sometimes, we thought of him as more Filipino than us because of his generosity. He would offer own allowance to people he did not know.*

*From these few experiences with Bro. Bob, we will always remember him as a compassionate person.*

Shiela Lyn Recidoro, the former Project Health Nurse assigned as community nurse in Barangay Libi, Malapatan, Sarangani Province shared that:

*Br. Bob was an epitome of “love for the least favored”. He taught me how it is to give selfless service especially to the poorest of the poor and the IP’s (Indigenous People). I was one of the community nurses of NDBRCFI assigned to Libi, Malapatan, Sarangani Province. He would often ask how the people are doing, the mothers, and the kids. One day I told him, “Br. Bob, you know most of the families in the areas of the community have limited clothing. The children wore the same clothing within 2-3 days so that the mothers will be able to save time washing and save soap. When Bro. Bob heard the story, he solicited clothing and detergent soap and gave it to the families. One container van of clothing was distributed to these families in Sarangani Province.*

*Br. Bob would always emphasize the need to preserve the cultural practices of the IP’s. He loved to see children singing their traditional songs and performing their cultural dances.*

If Br. Bob’s presence is felt by the outside community, this was doubly felt in NDDU. I remember him always stopping whenever he met someone he knew. Whenever I met him, his question was always, “How are you? How is your family? How is the school doing?” He remembered not only our names but our stories as well. He was a good listener. His concern for our own families was genuine. When my husband died, he was one of the first from NDDU to visit us. My children and I were touched by his kind and consoling words. Thank you again Br. Bob.

Clair Tan, the former NDDU-IBED Librarian also said,

*Br. Bob is a tatay (father) to me. Before I could tell him my problem, he already had a solution for me!*

Kranz Espartero, Accreditation Office Coordinator shared,

*Whenever I met Br. Bob, I will make “mano”, after which he will shake my hand firmly, look at me and say, “How are you doing, Mr. Espartero? How are you helping the community?” He repeatedly asked what are my contributions to the community. How I helped the people as a Marist nurse. After I finished narrating my stories, he would end our encounter with “Well done, Mr. Espartero”. This means so much to me, he remembers my name and my stories. He would always wave at me whenever he saw me.*

These are just a few examples of how Bro. Bob valued people, that those he met will never forget him. His gentle personality always leaves a mark.

Leni Bagarinao Nayre, former ECE (Early Childhood Education) Staff, now faculty of NDDU-IBED Lagao Campus said,

*My recollection of Bro. Bob is his being “a man for others”. He was always concerned about us, the staff working on his programs. His genuine love and generosity will never be forgotten.*

Rebecca Marcos Coquilla, former ECE Staff, now Guidance Counselor, remembers this about Br. Bob,

*Br. Bob has touched many lives, especially the poor, I was one of those. I worked at the ECE Center then, I was a recipient of his kindness and generosity. I finished my studies through the RE scholarship program and was given a job after graduation. He is heaven sent to me, he is always there when I am in need spiritually and materially. He was ready to catch those who were falling. He was a living St. Marcellin Champagnat to me.*

The NDDU-Espina Campus was opened in 1996 through Br. Bob's desire to provide quality Marist education to the low-income groups. As the Principal then, I had to work closely with him. Starting a school is indeed challenging, but with Br. Bob's support, everyone was inspired. We gave our best for the school. His all-out support to the school inspired us to also give our best for the

school. His presence was inspiring. He made himself available to all activities from graduation, intramurals, family days, and JS Proms. After 25 years of the existence of the Espina Campus, the vision of Br. Bob of uplifting the children of low-income group became a reality. They have joined the ranks of professionals now serving the city and the neighboring places. These alumni are forever grateful to the scholarships granted to them. Br. Bob opened the opportunities for them.

Evelyn Demape, former Principal of NDDU-IBED Espina Campus, now part-time college faculty, had this to share,

*I was then teaching kindergarten at NDDU main campus when I witnessed how committed Bro. Bob was in developing the teachers of the Day Care Centers of the city. He made sure that we, the teachers, were properly trained before he invited the Day Care teachers to observe our classes. I learned much from these experiences of teaching the Day Care workers and monitoring how they applied what they learned from us.*

*When I was assigned in Espina Campus in 2005, most of the children enrolled are scholars of the different funding agencies – CCWA, ASSISI, and others. These are children from poor families, and they would refer to Br. Bob as the “Big American Brother” whenever Br. Bob is in the campus. They would greet him and tell stories in their broken English. Bro. Bob was always delighted when pupils tried to communicate with him in English.*

Br. Bob was also instrumental in the professional development of teachers. Using his connections, teachers were sent for scholarship to universities in Manila, to finish their masters and doctoral degrees. These had a big impact to the faculty qualifications of NDDU.

We fondly remember Br. Bob as a compassionate person. A man who worked in the footsteps of St. Marcellin.

In closing, we sincerely and lovingly say thank you, Br. Bob, for all the good learnings gained from you. You are gone but you will always be remembered as the generous person, the Marist Brother, whose legacy will live on.



## *Photos during Wake, Funeral Mass, and Burial*





*Br. Robert "Bob" McGovern, FMS*  
*Photo-Collage*





