

in a

WordTM

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**HOW GOOD TO SING PRAISE TO OUR GOD;
HOW PLEASANT TO GIVE FITTING PRAISE
-Psalm 147**

Pastoral Musician of the Year

Congratulations to Richard Cheri who was honored at the National Pastoral Musicians (NPM) Conference. The Conference was held in New Orleans from July 27-30.

After holding a virtual convention last summer in the throes of the pandemic, NPM returned to an in-person conference that drew 540 music ministers to New Orleans, with another 260 accessing the workshops and other presentations online. The association represents 3,500 cantors, instrumentalists and choir members in Catholic dioceses across the U.S.

One of the highlights was the conferring of the NPM's Pastoral Musician of the Year Award on Richard Cheri, the choir director at Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in New Orleans, who also has directed the Archdiocesan Gospel Choir for the last 37 years.

"It means a great deal because it validates a whole bunch of firsts for me," said Cheri, whose compositions of "Good Ground" and the responsorial psalm "Teach Me Your Way, O Lord" have garnered wide praise. "My pride and joy has been the musicians I've brought together to teach our music all over the country."

Richard is the brother of Bishop Fernand Cheri, OFM Auxiliary Bishop in New Orleans, Louisiana. The two brothers have always been involved in music. They have archived Black religious music with over 6,000 recordings of gospel music with books and files of gospel music. They are heavily involved in the Archbishop Lyke Liturgical Conference. The next conference will take place June 14-18, 2022.



Richard Cheri at home

Richard Cheri lives with his wife Cynthia, and son, Richie, in Montz, Louisiana, near his place of birth, New Orleans. Richard has earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, a Master of Arts in Theology and a Master of Science in Teaching Mathematics. Formerly an adjunct professor of theology at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, a mathematics professor at St. Joseph Seminary College in St. Benedict, Louisiana, a member of the faculty at the Xavier University's Institute for Black Catholic Studies and a high school teacher (retired May 2018), Richard is currently an adjunct professor of mathematics at Loyola University in New Orleans and South Central Louisiana Technical College.

He also serves as the Director of Liturgy and Music at Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church, the coordinating director of the Archdiocese of New Orleans Gospel Choir, and the Executive Director of the Lyke Foundation which sponsors the Archbishop James Patterson Lyke Liturgical Conference. He has toured with the Moses Hogan Chorale and is a composer, arranger, and producer with World Library Publications.

Congratulations Richard! It is an award well deserved.



Are We Fishers of Men or Just Keepers of the Aquarium: An Invitation to Support Vagabond Missions

-Dr. Ansel Augustine

Pope Francis continues to inspire and challenge us as all people of varying faiths around the world. He continues to witness to us how we are called to minister to those on the “peripheries” of society. Those that are many times ignored, unseen, or forgotten by society, and sometimes, even by our Church. Since starting ministry over 20 years ago at my home parish, St. Peter Claver in New Orleans, I would receive the random call, or even engage in the community conversations, centered around how we as a Church only minister to those that fit a certain “Catholic image,” and tend to judge and ignore those that do not fit into this “image.” This has always been the work I have done with our Black Catholic communities around the country, specifically with our youth and young adults who continue to try and figure out where they fit into the Church, and our Church trying to figure out where to include them in an authentic way.



One of my ministry colleagues and I used to talk about this ongoing tension in our Black Catholic community, and would use this question for our Catholic parishes and institutions, “Are we fishers of men, or are we just keepers of the aquarium?” Do we, as followers of Christ get out of our “boats” (comfort zones) and connect with our brothers and sisters that may not look, act, speak, or have as much finances as, us, or do we just maintain the status quo? Would we be welcoming if the “lost sheep” actually attended our Masses or church events? Are we challenging the faithful to go out into the community and share God’s love or are just making sure we, and those we know, are made to feel comfortable?

We must remember that we are called to share, to rejoice and to support our brothers and sisters that are most at risk. As Black Catholics, our ancestors and elders sacrificed much for us to be here, and we are called to do the same for our community as well. We must continue to do what we can to build a better world for those coming after us. We must figure out new ways to empower our youth and young adults to take leadership roles in the church. How are we equipping them to be evangelizers of their peers?

This is why I joined the team at Vagabond Missions. They work to create safe spaces for our most at-risk youth in our communities. They go where many of our churches are afraid to go and connect with those that sometimes are ignored by our institutions. The overall goal is to encounter these youth where they are at while

empowering them to see the gift that they have as God’s creations. It is not easy work. It is work that needs funding in the world that we live in (housing, youth centers, transportation, food, etc.). All this is used so that we can be the “fishers of men (and women)” that we are called to be in a population that needs it. My personal hope is to raise missionaries that would join us in this work from our own communities so that our own young adults continue to use their gifts to create a better society (Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility): building and maintaining our community— solving problems together. Nia (Purpose): work collectively to build communities that will restore the greatness of African people.). Also, it is in this work that we are not only bringing Christ to the peripheries but engaging with the Christ that is already there. We are not saving anyone, but we are saving ourselves through this work.

How can you get involved in the work? Go to www.vagabondmissions.com and see where there is a mission and see if you can volunteer or reach out to them to see if you can start a mission in your area or Diocese. For me specifically, I am writing this article to raise funds for the work New Orleans. If are willing to donate, please select “New Orleans Local Area” under the drop-down menu on the donate link. If you are connected with a religious or secular organization that would be interested in supporting this work, please connect them with us.

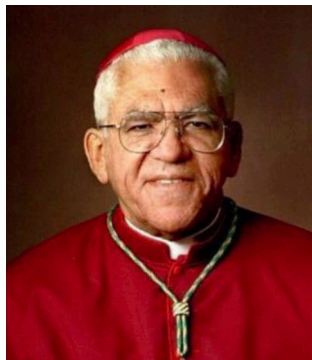
In Matthew 9:37, Jesus said to his disciples, “The harvest is ripe, but the laborers are few.” There is much work to be done with our youth. I am regularly sickened by the watching the violence, attacks, hopelessness that surrounds them that we continue to see in our neighborhoods or are updated on via our local news channels. I am tired of hearing the complaints, even from myself, but feeling helpless in trying to address the problem. Vagabond Missions has offered me an opportunity to make an impact with this population in my own community. I invite you to join me in sharing our God give gifts, whether financial or spiritual as we go out and “fish” for souls.

Dr. Ansel Augustine is the New Orleans Area Director for Vagabond Missions.

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in a word or two



Retired Auxiliary Bishop Guy A. Sansaricq of Brooklyn, who had ministered in the Diocese of Brooklyn since 1971, died on August 21, 2021. He was 86.

"Bishop Sansaricq was the first Haitian American bishop in the United States. He was a symbol of the progress of the Haitian people here and, as someone who served as a bishop, gave the Haitian

community some recognition and stature as immigrant people, a ministry he served very well," said Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio.

The Haitian Apostolate held an Oct. 5, 2019, celebration to mark Bishop Sansaricq's 85th birthday and honor him for his nearly 60 years of service as a priest. In an opening speech, Dr. Pierre-Paul Cadet, president of the Association of Haitian Physicians Abroad, heralded the bishop's efforts for Haiti.

"Bishop Sansaricq has really fought for justice, and has been the forefront of all messages of hope, especially for our brothers and sisters in Haiti who are suffering, pressed for justice, peace, equality," Cadet said. "He has been a powerful voice in the struggle."

Andrew Lyke is a well known nationally renowned Catholic leader in the areas of Family Life Ministry, Anti-racism, Community Organizing, and Black Catholic Outreach. From 2011 to 2015 he was the Director of the Office for Black Catholics in the Archdiocese of Chicago. With Terri, his wife since 1975, Andrew founded Arusi Network, a national apostolate for Black Catholic marriage.



Mr. Lyke recently announced in a letter to his friends that he was resigning from ministry. In that letter he wrote:

"After much discernment over the past two years, I have come to the decision to exit my ministry efforts in the Church. As you may know, I have been battling acute myeloid leukemia since the summer of 2015. That personal campaign diverted my attention to basic survival. After a relapse in 2017, I underwent a bone marrow transplant, which effectively rid me of my cancer concerns but introduced another set of issues, including a compromised autoimmune system."

"To say the least, the past 20 months have been rich with ministry initiatives. And for that I am very grateful. However, the long battle back to restored health has shifted my vocational aspirations. Ironically, cancer's challenges were also blessings. Three of my six grandchildren were born during that time. The long hospitalizations took me into a more intimate walk in the Spirit, and the

calling of that same Spirit now beckons me to turn my attention away from ministry efforts in Catholic family life and Black Catholic leadership, and to attend to living my best life with my family and close friends."

"I have struggled with accepting this instigation of the Spirit, especially with the Catholic anti-racism efforts. The work of the past nearly two years has given me the opportunities to speak up with timeliness. The proverbial iron is hot, and I have been happy to contribute to the Church's mission in this peculiar moment in history. I have been enriched by and grateful for those opportunities and it's comforting to exit on that note. I was inspired by Simone Biles' decision to take care of herself in the 2021 Olympics."

"Whatever the amount of time I have left on this side of life, I will spend it taking care of myself, physically, mentally, and spiritually. I walk into a new season in which I will continue to grow and become and walk even more intimately with the Spirit."



CNS photo/Bruce Gilbert, Fordham University)

Father Bryan Massingale is Pax Christi USA's "Teacher of Peace" award recipient for 2021.

"White nationalism is the existential, visceral conviction that this country -- its public spaces, its history, its culture -- belong to white people in a way that they do not and should not belong to 'others,'" Father Bryan Massingale said in remarks accepting the award July 31 during Pax Christi's national conference.

"The brutal mob violence of Jan. 6 was a clear declaration that many white Americans would rather live in a white dictatorship than in a multiracial democracy. If democracy means sharing power with people of color, and especially Black people, they want no part of it."

White nationalism's "commitment to racist political and cultural supremacy is obvious, manifested in voter suppression laws, crusades against 'critical race theory' -- which most of its opponents have never read -- and public vitriol," he added.

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Florida and Arkansas. IN A WORD is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center. Rev. James Pawlicki, S.V.D., Director and Editor; Cathy Green-Miner, office manager; consultant.

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