

# The Rev. William (Padre Guilherme) Tracy, CSSR

*As a Roman Catholic school student half a century ago, I learned about St. Martin of Tours.*

*In those days, St. Martin was heralded as a “Patron Saint of reformed drunkards.” In today’s vernacular, he is revered as a “Patron Saint of Recovering Alcoholics.”*

*The ministries of Saint Monica, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Jude and the Venerable Matt Talbot also brought light into the darkness of alcoholics of bygone eras – and continue to inspire those seeking to recover from addictions today. But in no book have I encountered a “Patron Saint of Recovering Alcoholic Clergy.”*

*Then it dawned on me that whether or not such a title has ever been — or will ever be — bestowed upon a mortal, the Rev. William Tracy has, by word and deed, exemplified what it is to be the latter.*

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“Hey, Ma! I just found a priest who speaks Portuguese!”

The announcement by Brazilian exchange student Marcio Melo in the summer of 1972 that he’d bumped into a Roman Catholic missionary from South America on the streets of Ballston Spa, NY certainly got host mother Audrey Hauprich’s attention. And since Mrs. Hauprich is my mother, it simultaneously got mine.

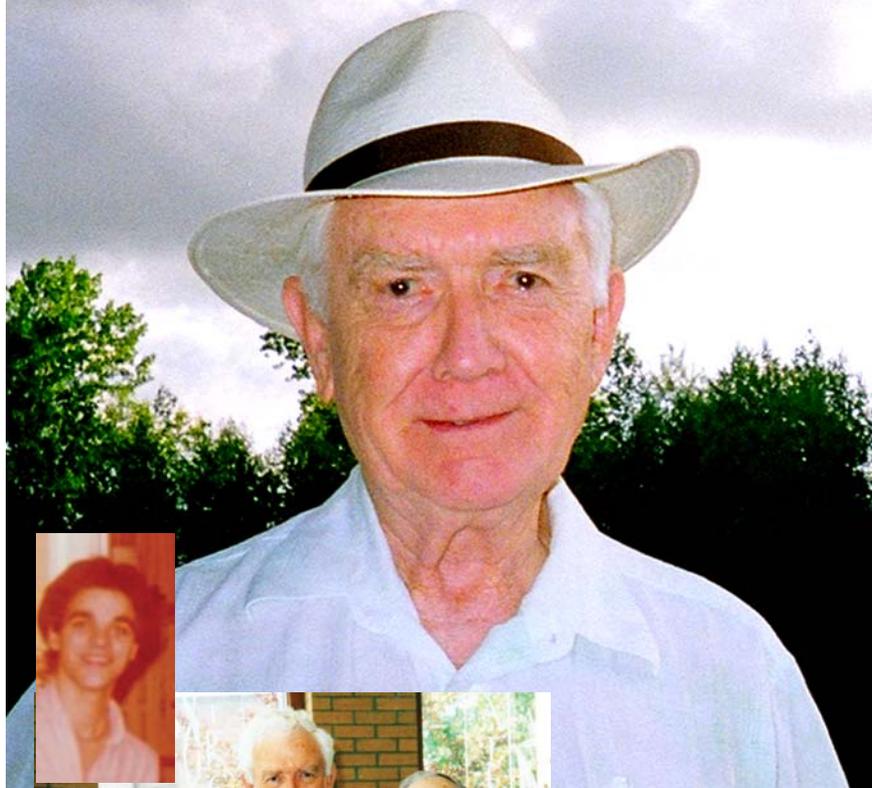
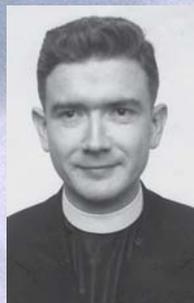
Had that chance encounter between the teen and the padre not occurred, I might never have been blessed with the opportunity to share the padre’s inspiring story inside the covers of **The Prayer Lines Behind the Bylines**.

It was in the mid-1980s that the Rev. William Tracy, CSSR confessed in what would be the first of our many interviews that he’d had been carrying an invisible – but exceedingly heavy — cross when he met Marcio on that fateful long ago day.

“At the time, I carried with me everywhere I went the shame of being an alcoholic priest,” reflects Father Tracy, who since 1981 has devoted his life to saving members of the clergy from addiction agonies at a pioneering treatment center that leads participants to sobriety through daily therapy and prayer.

*“The greatest proof in my life that God really loves me is that I am sober today and free from the living death of active alcoholism. I am grateful that what for 20 years had been my greatest shame has been transformed into the precious gift of helping others.”*

-- The Rev. William Tracy



It was Brazilian teen Marcio Melo (above left) who introduced the Rev. William Tracy to Rotary host parents Audrey and Donald Hauprich in 1972. Author Ann Hauprich was on hand to snap the picture of her mother and father with the priest in 1990 and upon the Redemptorist padre's arrival at the railroad station in Saratoga Springs two decades later. Portrait at top right was taken around the time of Father Tracy's ordination in 1955.

In the early days, Father Tracy was timid about discussing the journey that led him to establish Associacao Comunidade Vida Nova (New Life Community) in Curitiba, Brazil.

That changed when the now 87-year-old padre realized that he could not expect people in his hometown to care about his foreign mission unless he came clean about the reasons he decided to make it his life's work.

"When I celebrated my first Mass on the altar of St. Mary's Church in Ballston Spa the summer of 1955, I never dreamed that my life's work would one day include saving the lives – and souls — of priests who, like myself, had become addicted to alcohol," muses Father Tracy.

"If a businessman who is encouraged to wine and dine his clients has a hard time admitting he has a drinking problem, imagine the anguish of a respected priest who has become a slave to alcohol," notes Father Tracy, who studied theology, philosophy and psychology after graduating with the Ballston Spa High School Class of 1946.

"The feelings of shame and humiliation experienced by an alcoholic priest are so great that the initial reaction is to strongly deny that there is a problem. To be an alcoholic priest is to go against everything a priest is supposed to be. It's a heavy cross to carry and the road to recovery is a long one. I was blind for 20 years – never able to see clearly that alcohol was ruining my life and taking the joy out of my priesthood and my life in Christ," observes Father Tracy.

The Redemptorist priest, who took the first steps to sobriety in 1978 following an intervention by the Rev. Francis Sullivan, Associate Pastor of St. Clement's Church in Saratoga Springs, said the New Life Community has thus far helped more than 500 members of the clergy (seminarians and nuns as well as priests) plus about 500 lay individuals.

Modeled on "Guest House" near Detroit, Father Tracy's program is truly a pioneering endeavor because prior to its establishment there had not been any adequate treatment program for ANY alcoholic in Brazil – much less for priests and nuns! Father Tracy hopes sharing his story will help illustrate "how the good Lord prepared me for this mission by allowing me to suffer for 20 years the anguish and despair of my own alcoholism. I didn't know it then, but the seeds of my new life – a life of sobriety – would be sown when God sent a good and gentle friend to beg me to go for treatment for the disease of alcoholism."

The multi-tiered treatment center overseen by Father Tracy in conjunction with Sister Irma Terezinha de Jesus Dias, DM, includes a chapel with a view of the beautiful city park, an office, a dining room, and six spacious dormitories with five beds each. Assisting the American priest and South American nun are additional psychologists, physicians, some former patients and volunteers from Alcoholic Anonymous.

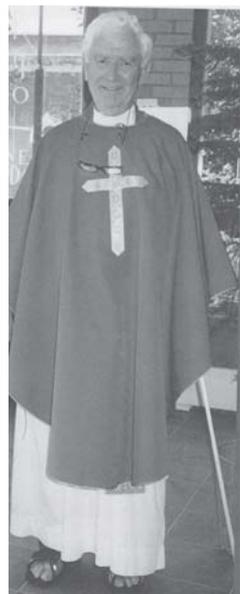
Father Tracy is eternally grateful to his late sister, Mary Lou Tracy, who willed the family homestead on McLean Street to him knowing it would ultimately aid his missionary work abroad. Proceeds from the sale of the village property made it possible for a much-needed addition to be built onto the treatment facility in Brazil several years ago.



In the early 1960s the four daughters of Paul and Marilyn Pastore of Hyde Boulevard in Ballston Spa (L-R: Sue, Robbie, Debbie and Nancy) hosted a backyard bazaar benefiting Father William Tracy's missionaries in South America. During the summer many neighborhood children participated and/or attended the bazaar. Charging a small nominal fee for each venue, individuals enjoyed such activities as fortune telling, outdoor bowling, pulley rides and walking on homemade stilts (shown in the picture). The picture above captures the moment when the family presented their earnings to Father Tracy. In more recent years, members of the Saratoga Knights of Columbus have hosted an annual dinner to benefit the New Life Community that was founded by the Redemptorist padre in Brazil in 1981.



Father Tracy's sister Mary Lou (above left with Sister Terezhina) was a steadfast supporter of The New Life Community in Brazil from Day One. Mary Lou's decision to bequeath her property to her brother upon her passing just over a decade ago, made it possible for a much needed addition to be built to the treatment facility for alcoholic clergy.



*“The importance of the New Life Community is all summed up in the name. When you see Father Bill, Sister Terezhina and the others persevere to restore new life. The new life Father Bill received when he accepted treatment. The new phase, new direction, new ministry. It is overwhelming to me that God chose me to be a part of this transformation that led to the New Life where the harvest is great in terms of the number of priests who have been restored to the ministry.”*

-- The Rev. Francis Sullivan

“Mary Lou willed the property to me knowing the proceeds would be put into the New Life Community. In some ways, New Life is a monument to my sister’s memory. Our biggest challenge now is maintaining sufficient funds to keep the facility going after I’m out of the picture. It’s 30 hours from door-to-door each time I come home, as I do each summer, but now that I’m an octogenarian, I must also be realistic,” says Father Tracy, who underwent cancer treatments during a return visit several years ago.

Father Tracy is grateful to the Knights of Columbus in Saratoga Springs and others from New York’s Capital Region for supporting the New Life Community. “I have been deeply moved by the generosity of humble people who have made contributions to the cause. Small donations add up and we are very appreciative of all help, no matter how large or small the amount,” says Father Tracy.

Past Saratoga Grand Knight Stephen R. Toussaint says Father Tracy “has long been an inspiration and support to others, not only in his priestly ministry, but also in his founding and sustained direction of a recovery program for priests and other religious persons in their fight against substance addiction in Brazil. Father Bill is a special priest to the Knights of Columbus Council 246 for the untiring efforts he has made but also because he is a Ballston Spa native and member of the Redemptorist (CSsR) Order which provides staff for St. Clement’s Parish.”

Adds Toussaint: “Father Bill is a role model to us all. His personal brand of kindness, sense of humor, positive outlook and most importantly his faith provide all with a sense of the importance of caring for the well-being of others. We are encouraged by his determination and his spirit of hope in the face of many obstacles of daily life. We consider it an honor to give him our support.”

Fellow Past Grand Knight Rich Gorman considers it a special honor to welcome Father Tracy home to upstate New York each summer.

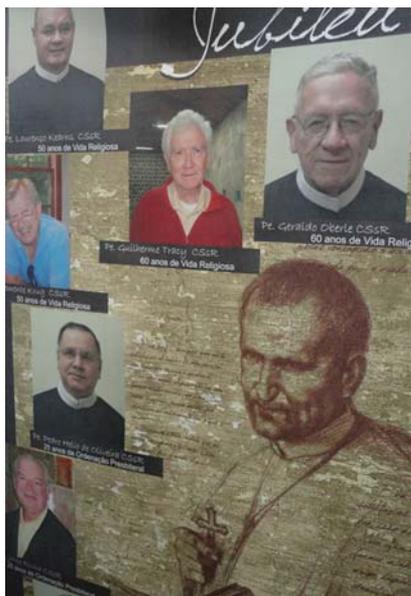
Like Marcio Melo, Gorman was a teenager when he first met the Redemptorist padre in Ballston Spa. “I used to work as a groundskeeper at the village cemetery during my summer vacations and would see Father when he came to say a prayer at his parents’ graves. Father Bill impressed me because he would always take a moment to say a kind word before he left to attend to his priestly duties elsewhere,” recalls Gorman. It has been an honor for Gorman -- and legions of others -- to bear witness to the fact that the padre still does.

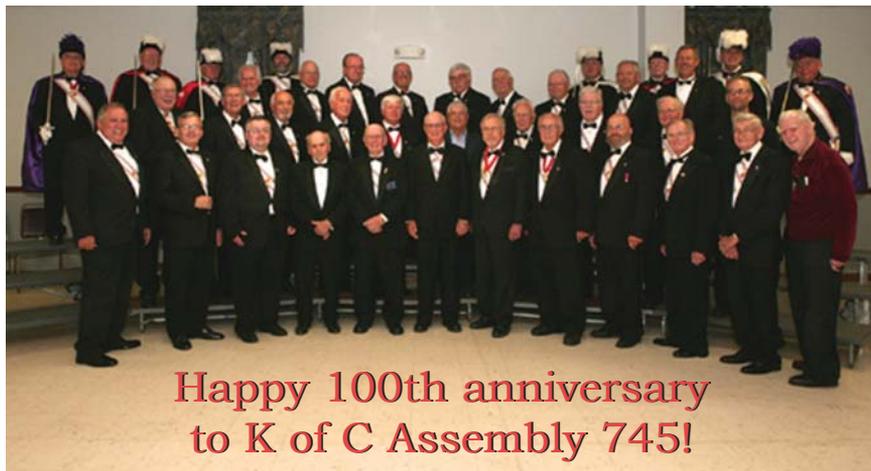


It was an honor to photograph Father Tracy's 2009 arrival at the Saratoga train station. That homecoming was extra special because the padre was accompanied by both Sister Terezhina Jesus Dias and Neuirvaldo Ribeiro de Sousa – who was just a baby when the priest and nun became his legal guardians. Neuirvaldo was raised at the New Life Community after he was orphaned under tragic circumstances. Fluent in English as well as Portuguese, he is pursuing a university degree. Flanking the trio in Saratoga are John and Hazel Carey. The Brazilian collage below honors Padre Guilherme Tracy on his "60 anos de Vida Religiosa." Those interested in supporting The New Life Community may send donations made payable to Reverend William Tracy, c/o St. Clement's Roman Catholic Church, 231 Lake Avenue, Saratoga Springs, New York 12020.

While celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his Redemptorist ordination in 2015, Father Tracy shared he was drawn to the order because of its belief "that the saving love of God touches the whole person and calls for the transformation of social injustice into respect for the dignity of all men and women."

Redemptorists are involved in a broad spectrum of social problems and justice issues around the world, explained Father Tracy. He noted others in his order tackle issues ranging from immigration and refugees to homelessness, poverty, unemployment, workers' rights, women's issues, exploitation of child labor, racism, genocide, indigenous peoples, the environment, war and violence, weapons of war and human trafficking.





## Happy 100th anniversary to K of C Assembly 745!

The Saratoga Knights of Columbus Assembly #745 celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2015. Instituted in 1915, members provide services and donations to veterans and other patriotic causes. Photographer Terri-Lynn Pelligri captured the members for posterity in the above portrait that was taken at the Assembly's June 2015 meeting. FRONT: Richard Gorman, Mark Phillips, Sam Taylor, Manuel Ballestero, James McConkey, John Tuohy, Dr. Richard Grimm, Deacon William Gaul, Edward Connelly, William Joubert, LaVern Utter and Thomas Alberts. MIDDLE: Thomas Boehlert, T. David Tarity, Donald DiBiase, Jack Whitney, Stanley Drosky, Joseph Matrazzo, George (Jack) Eckert, Stephen Toussaint, Donald Ellis and Robert Przedwiecki. BACK: Arthur Nolan, David Daignault, Kenneth Davis, Michael Breen, Joseph Powers, Thomas Gurka, Robert Badaszewski, Frank Turo, Rick Schwartzbeck, William Staudinger, Earl Duell, Michael Planko, James Hart, Kenneth Humiston, Joseph Fredette, Ralph Flinton and Roger Lampron.



2014-2015  
Officers of  
Saratoga  
Springs  
Assembly  
745  
Knights of  
Columbus



"In service to one, in service to all" is the motto by which members of the Knights of Columbus live. Photographer Terri-Lynn Pelligri captured the faces of the Officers who provided inspired leadership during the Saratoga Springs Assembly's 100th anniversary year. SEATED: Trustee Dr. Richard Grimm, Faithful Friar Deacon William Gaul, Faithful Navigator John Tuohy, Faithful Captain Rick Schwartzbeck and Faithful Scribe Mark Phillips. STANDING: Faithful Pilot Stephen Toussaint, Outer Sentinel T. David Tarity, Admiral Joseph Powers, Faithful Purser Frank Turo and Inner Sentinel Earl Duell.

## Struggle with Alcohol Led to Priest's Legacy of Healing for Hundreds

### Rev. William Tracy Celebrating 60th Anniversary as a Redemptorist

SARATOGA SPRINGS — When the Rev. William Tracy was ordained as a Redemptorist priest 60 years ago, he never imagined his legacy would include saving the lives of legions of priests and others who — like himself — had become addicted to alcohol.

But that is exactly what the 86-year-old padre, who will be honored at a benefit dinner hosted by the Saratoga Knights of Columbus on Sunday, July 19, achieved in the nearly four decades since he established a pioneering treatment facility and halfway house in Brazil.

In the early days, Tracy was shy about discussing the journey that led him to establish New Life Community — or Associação Comunitária Vida Nova — in Curitiba, Brazil. That changed when the priest realized he could not expect people in his American hometown to care about his foreign mission unless he came clean about the reasons he decided to make it his life's work. Tracy, who took the first steps to sobriety in 1978 following

an intervention by the Rev. Francis Sullivan, CSR, now a retired Associate Pastor of St. Clement's Church in Saratoga Springs, said the New Life Community has thus far helped more than 500 members of the clergy (seminarians and nuns as well as priests) plus about 500 lay individuals.

"The greatest proof in my life that God really loves me is that I am sober today and free from the living death of active alcoholism. I am grateful that what for 20 years had been my greatest shame has been transformed into the precious gift of helping other alcoholics on the road to recovery," said Tracy.

Past Grand Knight Stephen R. Toussaint said Father Tracy, a Ballston Spa native who graduated from Ballston Spa High School in 1946, "has long been an inspiration and support to others, not only in his priestly ministry, but also in his founding and sustained direction of a recovery program for priests and other religious persons in their fight against substance addiction

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Rev. William Tracy circa 1955 on left, and today on right. Photos provided.

face of many obstacles of daily life. We consider it an honor to give him our support."

The fundraiser will take place at Knights of Columbus Council 246's headquarters at 50 Pine Road in Saratoga Springs commencing with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres at 5 p.m. followed by an Italian buffet

at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$20 each and may be purchased at the door or after Masses at several area Roman Catholic churches including those in Ballston Spa and Saratoga Springs. Reservations may also be secured by calling Sir Knight Rich Gorman at 885-3810 or Sir Knight Vern Utter at 584-0034.



The above July 2015 Saratoga TODAY story helped to spread the word about a benefit sponsored by the Saratoga Knights of Columbus to raise funds for the New Life Community for recovering alcoholic clergy in Brazil. Clockwise from bottom right are K of C emcee Vern Utter; Father Francis Sullivan serenading Father

William Tracy as Father Thomas Kelly and Knight Rich Schwartzbeck look on; and Father William Tracy (seated behind donated gold chalices) surrounded by Saratoga K of C Past Grand Knight Rich Gorman, Father Thomas Kelly, Father Francis Sullivan, Faithful Captain Rick Schwartzbeck and Faithful Scribe Mark Phillips.

PHOTOS BY  
ANN HAUPRICH.



*Heaven on earth!*

No other words could describe the curbside beauty of the Saratoga Springs estate entered by guests at a farewell luncheon for the Rev. William Tracy on July 22, 2015.

Within moments of being welcomed at the threshold by hosts Larry and Martha George, it was clear the magnificent landscaping and quality craftsmanship were but a part of the setting's appeal.

It was the UNCONDITIONAL LOVE that filled the rooms where friends of the padre gathered that created the picture-perfect memories Father Bill subsequently brought back to Brazil.