

# HOPE



Salvatorian Newsletter Fall 2022

One of my most meaningful spiritual “A-ha!” moments came to me several years ago during a course in moral theology. The professor masterfully helped us make connections to the realities of daily living as he discussed virtues. We talked about Faith, Hope, and Charity, but what stood out for me that day was the virtue of Gratitude.

We have so much for which to be grateful as we think about the many gifts our loving Father bestows on us. Recognition of those gifts—and the gratitude for what we have received—is what should inspire us to perform

our own acts of loving kindness toward others.

As we approach Thanksgiving and remember the gift of the One who came among us at Christmas, I hope that you will take time to look back over the past year and offer a prayer of thanks for all that God has given you. We Salvatorians certainly have much to be grateful for, including your friendship and support of our ministries.

In the Divine Savior,

*Bro. Silas, SDS*



## RIP FAITHFUL SERVANT

Mar 16, 1938-Aug 31, 2022



With Sadness in our hearts but hope in the promise of the Risen Christ, Fr. Gregory Coulthard, SDS, was laid to rest on Wednesday, September 28th during special celebrations in Wisconsin.

Fr. Greg served in many roles and ministries for the Society, including as spiritual director and face of our Hope Newsletter for nearly 30 years. We wanted to share again the story of his life and legacy.

Life-Legacy-Memorials at:

<https://bit.ly/rest-in-peace-Fr-Greg>.

## BRUSHSTROKE PRAYERS

Sitting in an Eastern Catholic Church in San Francisco, CA roughly 20 years ago, Fr. Reed Mungovan, SDS, became enthralled with the small icons displayed throughout the tiny church. There were many icons in the church that day and it fevered his love of these little paintings. “I love them,” he said. “One summer

*continue ...*

# LIFE OF SERVICE

## Fr. Hugh Birdsall, SDS

With six daughters and a son, Mr. Hugh Birdsall Sr., and his wife, Marion, worked and lived on a farm in rural Wisconsin. This close-knit family had two priests in their extended relations. So, it was not a big surprise when their only son, Benjamin, who eventually took the religious name of Fr. Hugh Birdsall, SDS, in honor of his father, followed this same priestly path.

Initially, life as a seminarian was not top of mind for Fr. Hugh. He was merely thinking about it. However, one day, he felt a connection while doing his morning chores on the farm.

"I began to feel a call to serve God as a priest. Other things funneled into my decision, but they were subtle," said Fr. Hugh. "It was my cousin and uncle who went to seminary and they were major influences for me." He left for high school and the Salvatorian Seminary at St. Nazianz in 1949. Toward the end of his minor seminary years, the prospect of religious life came more to the forefront. "The routine

of daily life in the seminary with early morning Mass, meditation, classes, meals with the other seminarians, and regular prayer became a part of me – my way of being. It allowed me to say yes to this life permanently for myself and the Church," he shared. "Religious life opened the door to the idea of teaching, which was of great interest to me. Deciding to become a Salvatorian was seamless."

Fr. Hugh entered the novitiate in 1955, made his first profession of vows a year later, and was ordained at Divine Savior

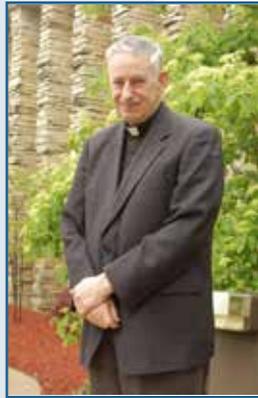
Seminary in Lanham, MD, in May 1962. His first assignment led him to St. Pius X Seminary in Sacramento California. "I wasn't adequately prepared but challenged myself to teach algebra, world history, English, and Latin courses," he said. "Looking back, I did a pretty good job relying on what I learned during minor seminary." Having attained a degree in Philosophy, he moved to Waukesha, WI and began teaching at Mount St. Paul College. Admittedly, he again felt stretched by the curriculum. "I

worked hard to understand the materials I was to teach, so I could effectively communicate them to my students. I wanted them to succeed."

Fr. Hugh's next assignment was campus ministry in the Archdiocese of Baltimore: This was a shift out of the classroom. "I wondered what my ministry would be beyond celebrating the liturgy with students and faculty," he said. Fr. Hugh recalled setting up his first Mass on a predominantly black campus, waiting to see if anyone

would show up. Three students came and over time a community grew. "I learned much and found purpose in a community where I was a distinct minority. I gained a great appreciation for the marginalized, which has been persistent throughout my ministry." Fr. Hugh would spend nine fruitful years in campus ministry, serving on different campuses in Maryland. As a campus minister, he realized how much he enjoyed counseling and working with people.

In 1978 he took a sabbatical year,  
*continue ...*



*Fr. Hugh outside the Sacred Heart Seminary & School of Theology, where he taught for xx years.*

## ... Fr. Hugh Birdsall, SDS

spending his time at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, KS. He immersed himself in a 10-month program for clergy. This was a pivotal transition. He earned his Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling from Loyola College and began counseling while also serving as a chaplain at a local hospital. While counseling individuals and couples, Fr. Hugh witnessed great results from this enriching ministry.

He was then needed in Wisconsin in 1983 to serve as Formation Director for the Society. Obediently returning, he asked to continue his counseling ministry, which he did for many years, from the Provincial headquarters in Wisconsin. He served eight years in this capacity until 1991, when he began

to teach pastoral care classes at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology (SHSST). He tried to share the principles of “helping” with his students. “They didn’t always like me due to the workload,” he said while grinning. “But preparing them for down-to-earth interactions and not theoretical or philosophical approaches was fundamental to what they needed to understand.” He remained a teacher at SHSST for 20 years until his retirement in 2011. Reflecting, he shared, “I always felt blessed and pleasantly surprised by these students.”

In retirement, Fr. Hugh remains busy ministering at St. Therese Parish in Milwaukee and at Alexian Village in Milwaukee, where he now lives.



*Fr. Hugh shares Mass (top) and blesses backpacks at St. Therese Parish.*

## ... Brushstroke Prayers



*Fr. Reed's first icon retreat yielded this depiction of St. Luke painting his own icon.*

around that time, I painted my own icon using a book to guide me.” It was the beginning of something special and spiritual for Fr. Reed.

The title of that first painting was “Mother of Tenderness,” an icon of Mary and Jesus, and it took him several weeks to create it. “I felt very grateful to God for having painted my first icon and yet I was longing to learn from someone else,” he said. “It felt like something was missing, I didn’t paint another icon until my first retreat in summer 2011 hosted by an iconographer from Pennsylvania.”

Fr. Reed wanted to focus more fully on the creation of the artwork. That first retreat was an intense experience for him.

Not only was he learning a new way of painting, but the subject matter was complex. The icon being painted was of St. Luke painting his own icon of Jesus and Mary. “It was like painting an icon within an icon,” he said. With 12 guided icons now in his collection, it has become his annual retreat.

It takes five full seven-hour days to paint a single icon. Each day begins with group prayer, and participants continue to pray throughout the day. “I love being on a

*continue ...*

## ... Brushstroke Prayers

retreat and focusing on a single holy image for an entire week," he said. "These paintings are for me widows into heaven. We often proclaim the good news of Jesus with words. Painting icons remind me that we can also proclaim this with images."

Icons, which are religious works of art, are considered an important part of religious devotion. "Painting these



*Fr. Reed laboring with his most recent icon painting ~ "The Soul of Mary"*



icons reminds me that Christ is my light and that he came to bring light to my darkness and the darkness of the world," he said. "Each brushstroke can be a prayer." During his most recent retreat hosted at the Franciscan Spirituality Center in La Crosse,

WI he painted "The Soul of Mary."

Our founder, Blessed Francis Jordan, used many ways and means to proclaim the good news of Jesus to all. "When I work on an icon, I grow closer to the saint that I am painting and can experience salvation by painting it," said Fr. Reed. "It is a real blessing for me to encounter the Holy One by painting an icon, and it is a gift to be able to share the images with people. I can evangelize by sharing my icons with others. I consider it a fruit of my retreat."



### Tuesday, November 29

#GivingTuesday is an International Day of Giving. Join us online to support our ministry and mission.

## Please remember the Society of the Divine Savior in your will

A bequest is a wonderful way to support the mission and ministry of our Salvatorian Priests and Brothers, and is a testimony of your care and concern for them. Our legal name is "Society of the Divine Savior, Inc." and our taxpayer number (EIN) is 39-0806210.

### OUR MISSION

In the spirit of our founder, Blessed Francis Jordan, the Society of the Divine Savior was founded more than 130 years ago and is a Catholic religious community working to share the love and mercy of our Savior, Jesus Christ, through all possible means.

### SALVATORIANS

Society of the Divine Savior  
1735 N. Hi Mount Blvd.  
Milwaukee, WI 53208  
1-414-258-1735  
missionadvancement@salvatorians.com  
More at [www.salvatorians.com](http://www.salvatorians.com)

