

# Brothers made missions of lives

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

**IRONDEQUOIT** — When Bernard W. Brown was attending Aquinas Institute in the 1930s, he loved to spend hours in the Rundel Public Library in downtown Rochester.

But he didn't spend his free time amid the stacks of books because he aspired to become a bookworm.

In fact, Brown spent much of his teen years in the library because he wanted to spend his adult life beyond its confines — preferably sledding, fishing and trapping in northern Canada.

"I just loved the north," said Brown, a Catholic missionary now living at Our Lady of the Snows Mission in Colville Lake, just inside the Arctic Circle in the Northwest Territories (NWT).

Brown's brother, Father Thomas Brown, OMI, took up the missionary life at nearly the opposite extreme of the Western Hemisphere in Brazil.

"I think I have an adventurous attitude," said Father Brown who celebrates his 40th year as a priest this year.

The Brown brothers reunited to celebrate Father Brown's ordination anniversary at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Greece on April 30, and Bernard's receipt of the Distinguished Alumni Award from Aquinas Institute. The school presented the award to Bernard Brown May 2, as it has recognized distinguished graduates since 1991.

And Bernard Brown certainly has done much to merit his alma mater's recognition. Ordained in 1948 as a priest in the order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate — the same order his younger brother later joined — Brown has spent most of his life with the Hareskin Indians who inhabit the NWT.

Traditional hunters and trappers, the Hareskins converted to Catholicism in the last century and have incorporated their native drumming into the Mass and other Catholic rituals, he said. They like in particular to sing to "Yaki Gotine" — "The People of Heaven."

Until about five years, many of the Indians continued to live in log cabins, he remarked, but that lifestyle has begun dying out since the government built modern homes for the Indians.

Television has also made inroads among the Hareskin, he said, and with it English, which now threatens to replace the Hareskins' native tongue.

"Some of them want to retain their language," Brown said, "but the influence of TV is so strong it looks like a losing battle."

Indeed, much of the old rugged Indian way of life is losing out to modern conveniences, Brown said, adding that he now spends much of his time recording the Indians' traditional lifestyle in his paintings.

## Deacon Corriveau will be ordained June 3

**ROCHESTER** — Deacon Kip Francis Corriveau, an Auburn native, will be ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Matthew H. Clark 10:30 a.m. Saturday, June 3, at Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park.

A Mass of Thanksgiving is scheduled for 2:30 p.m., Sunday, June 4, at Deacon Corriveau's home parish of Sacred Heart Church, 90 Melrose Road, Auburn.

In addition, another Mass of Thanksgiving will take place 11 a.m. Sunday, June 18, at Elmira's St. Mary's Church, 224 Franklin St., where Deacon Corriveau served his pastoral year.

The ordination and both Masses are open to the public.



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

**Bernard W. Brown (right) serves as a Catholic missionary at Our Lady of the Snows in the Arctic Circle, while his brother Father Thomas Brown, OMI, serves as pastor of two parishes in Sao Paulo, Brazil.**

Brown is an accomplished oil painter, and his paintings have sold for several thousand dollars apiece. His work currently graces the pages of the 1995 calendar of the Catholic Church Extension Society of Canada.

The missionary's artwork simply caps a career whose other accomplishments are far too many to list on one page. In addition to his distinguished painting, Brown has built several missions; published a newspaper; served as a medic, dentist, surgeon and postmaster; and transported himself about in both dog sleds and airplanes.

Brown could have left the missionary life when Pope Paul VI granted his request for laicization so that in 1971 he could marry Margaret Steen, who is part-Eskimo. Yet, unlike many of his colleagues who left the Canadian missions as well as the priesthood, Brown stayed in the NWT.

"I just have no intention of leaving there," he said. "I'll do as much as the church will allow me to do there."

As a laicized priest, Brown can no longer celebrate Mass or hear confessions. However, he can perform baptisms, witness weddings and perform funeral services. He still conducts weekly prayer services for the Hareskin.

Brown commented that only seven priests are now working in the whole of the NWT, which encompasses more than 50,000 residents. He added that lay Catholics are now being trained to assume many more roles in the future, a

task they must assume if Catholicism is to survive in the mission regions.

His brother, Father Thomas Brown, works with such a lay-directed church in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where he serves as pastor of two parishes — one made up mostly of affluent English-speaking foreigners, and the other comprising mostly poor Portuguese-speaking Brazilians.

Father Brown said he wished he had as many priests to help him serve Catholics in Brazil as his brother did in the NWT. In Brazil, the ratio of priests to lay Catholics is about 1 to 50,000, he said, noting that a single priest in Brazil is responsible for the same number of Catholics as live in the whole NWT.

Although many of his fellow Catholics in Sao Paulo are wretchedly poor — unemployed, and underemployed, living in tin, wood and cardboard squatters' shacks — they nonetheless have a rich tradition of lay church leadership. That tradition developed out of necessity in that country, which has far fewer priests than the United States, Father Brown said.

One hundred lay administrators help Father Brown serve his flock, he added, noting that he had learned the Rochester diocese had named its first-ever permanent lay parish administrator last year.

"Brazil is a third-world economy," Father Brown said. "But pastorally speaking, it is first world because it has met these problems that the Diocese of Rochester has just met now."

## 'Jesus March' set for May 27

**ROCHESTER** — Even though the 1995 March for Jesus in Rochester is scheduled for Saturday March 27, Bernice McGrath says she is already enjoying a successful march.

As of May 19, 23 Catholic parishes had registered to take part in the march, which has the theme "Together for the Gospel." In contrast, only four parishes registered for the 1994 march.

McGrath, a parishioner of St. Joseph's Parish in Penfield, credits a supportive letter from Bishop Matthew H. Clark and cooperation from the Bishop's Office in getting information about the march out to parishes as keys to greater Catholic involvement this year.

The Catholic parishes will join the more than 50 other churches that have already registered for the march. Organizers say that registration is not mandatory for participation.

Participants are asked to begin lining up at 9 a.m. at the corner of Broad and West Main streets in downtown Rochester. The march will begin at 10 a.m. and proceed down Main Street en route to Manhattan Square Park.

The annual march is part of a worldwide effort by Christians of all denominations to celebrate Jesus Christ. It is not intended as a protest.

The June 25, 1994 march drew some nine million participants in 170 nations — including approximately 10,000 marchers in Rochester.

Organizers throughout the world generally schedule their marches on the same day, all beginning at 10 a.m., then moving around the world through the time zones.

This year, however, marches in Syracuse and Auburn took place May 20 because organizers feared a retreat program in Syracuse May 27 would draw away participants, McGrath said. She added that Buffalo also held its march May 20.

Beyond registering for the march, McGrath noted, a number of the Catholic parishes have been very active this year. St. Joseph's, for example, hosted an April 22 fundraising dinner for the march. The dinner drew 400 people she said.

For information about the march, call March for Jesus Rochester at 716/234-1522, or 458-9083.

— Lee Strong

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