



An Introduction to
Rev. Michael Nartker S.M.
SFDS' Next Pastor



*"What I hope to bring to any parish I might be called to serve,
is my openness, willingness, and excitement to work with a
parish team in the charism of the Marianists with my brothers
both lay and religious."*

Fr. Mike graciously submitted the following summary of his life
experiences as an introduction to our community.
Please review and share with others!

Fr. Mike's Bio

Late Fall 2014 to Present – Governor's Island Community and Chapel

In 2014, went on Sabbatical in Italy at Manziana, from Aug to Dec 2014. It was a wonderful experience before starting full time, mainly Chaplain Ministry to the local people around the Island and helping out at the local parishes during the summers, taking the extra mass on Sundays. Our mass schedule was 8:00 AM daily except Saturday, 8:00 AM on Sundays. We usually had full capacity for a 70-80 capacity chapel. Speakers were installed outside of the chapel to accommodate the extra 100 people for Sunday mass.

I offer talks during the Advent and Lent seasons on a variety of topics, drawing from my experience in Africa for 16 years as formator and teacher at the local major seminary, Saint Dominic's, and minor seminary at the Franciscan School of Philosophy, Saint Bonaventure.



1998 to 2014 – Missionary work in Kenya for 10 years & Zambia for 6 years

I was mainly responsible for Formation and Teaching at the local seminaries, Major and Minor. In Kenya I taught for ten years at the Consolata School of Philosophy and was Dean of Students. I also headed the Inter Novitiate Program in Karen, Kenya, where average of 350 novices attended from about 45 different women and men congregations / religious orders. During this time I also assisted at the local parishes in Kenya as needed.





Fr. Mike's Bio (continued)

1996 to 1998 – Saint Aloysius Parish in Cleveland, Ohio
Associate Pastor, with Bro. Michael O'Grady as Parish Administrator

1992 to 1996 – Seminary at Saint Michael's in Toronto, Ontario, and finishing last two years at Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, California.

1990 to 1992 – taught at North Catholic HS, Pittsburgh, PA, in Math and Science.

1986 to 1990 – University of Dayton, MS in Teacher Education, and Teaching Certificate qualifications.

1984 to 1986 – Marianist Novitiate in Dayton, Ohio.

1980 to 1984 – Degree in Chemistry at University of Dayton and Employed at the Research Institute of UD.

1970 to 1980 – Communications Interpreter in Russian, USN, Six Years, and College Education at Hartnell College in Salinas, California

1964 to 1969 – High School at Brunnerdale HS, Canton, Ohio, grad in 1969.

Fr. Mike's Ministry Reflections

After my First Profession I continued with my education obtaining a Teaching Certificate in Math and Science which put me in good stead at North Catholic, Pittsburgh. Even though math and science were my first teaching assignments at this school, I was also involved in the LIFE Program and Liturgical Preparations for in-school Liturgies. I mention 'in-school' since previously the liturgies were at the small local parish, and since we couldn't fit the whole school we needed two liturgies. With the help of the Art Teacher, we were able to appropriately decorate the gym and hold future Eucharists there with the whole school body in attendance.

This was my first taste of being on a Liturgy Team and I enjoyed it immensely, especially choosing the music and decorating the gym for the appropriate seasons of the year. It was the sense of team work and what we could accomplish together that later impressed on me the importance of having more than one person who was expected to have all the skills. I was at North Catholic for two and a half years when I was called to begin my studies for the priesthood.



Fr. Mike's Ministry Reflections

After ordination, my first assignment was in Cleveland at St. Aloysius Parish under Brother Mike O'Grady who was the Parish Administrator. For me it was the ideal situation since all the administration work and running of the everyday parish life was in his hands. I had simply to prepare for the Eucharist and involve myself in some baptismal preparations, some school and elderly-care center masses, and local visits to shut-ins. Brother Mike, however, handled the marriage preparations, since he knew most of the people personally. That was OK with me, since I was very new to parish life and still trying to find my way around.

What that period at St. Al's Parish has taught me was the importance of a good working parish team with experienced members, contributing not only to their areas of concern and specialty, but also contributing to the overall picture of the whole parish. My extended involvement with the churches around me in the neighborhood and the greater Cleveland area, both Catholic and non-Catholic, helped me realize that we are all one Body of Christ working for the less fortunate brothers and sisters beyond our own parishes and neighborhoods. Instead of duplicating or re-inventing the wheel, we could combine resources with each of the various churches to better help the needy.

During that time at St. Al's in Cleveland I have grown in my love for this style of team parish work and, more directly, a deeper love for my parishioners, which expressed itself in the frequent visits and the offers to 'break bread' with them in their homes. It was at this time that I let it be known I was available for future missionary work in Africa, if that was the Council's decision. They took me up on that offer after only two and a half years working in Cleveland.

I spent the following 16 years in Africa in Formation Work, about 10 years in Kenya at the Novitiate and about 6 years in Zambia at our Aspirancy House. Again, as I look back on those years and reflected on how that might help me in parish ministry, I see at least two areas of growth that have become my strong points here at the Gov Island Chapel Community, as an educator and as a homilist. The first area is my love of teaching, especially Scripture and the History of the Church and Religious Life. Other topics from my experience in teaching was available here at the Gov Island Chapel Community like Mariology, History of the Eucharist, Ethical Topics, and Prayer Life.

In Africa I also helped out at the local parishes most Sundays with the novices or aspirants accompanying me. Being able to celebrate the liturgy in Kiswahili and/or in the local dialect has been interesting to say the least. In comparison to the liturgy here in the US, Africans know how to celebrate with their whole body and not just simple gestures, but with dancing and singing where there is no such thing as sitting quietly and let everyone else do their thing.



Fr. Mike's Ministry Reflections

As a formator, my praxis was always more intense than a pastor in a parish who might see his parishioners maybe once a week. Therefore, in this respect, I believe my time as a formator has strengthened my preaching skills, since how I live them out will be on display for the rest of week with the young brothers that I lived with, some for two years depending on the formation program.

Here at Gov Island, I have been able to extend myself somewhat more with several baptisms over the five-year period that I have been here with also one marriage, several funerals, and many anointing. I have never had the experience of a parish administrator to the extent that any Marianist priest in formation or other ministry other than a parish would have had.

What I hope to bring to any parish I might be called to serve, is my openness, willingness, and excitement to work with a parish team in the charism of the Marianists with my brothers both lay and religious.