**Edmund Rice Christian Brothers**

Greetings! It is a great privilege for us to be welcomed to your parish in order to speak about the missionary activity of the Catholic Church and, particularly, the Congregation of Christian Brothers.

Our church has always been a missionary church. From the very beginning, the Apostles were sent out on mission to all parts of the world. By doing so, our church grew and today the Catholic church is bearing witness to the love of God all over the globe. The Christian Brothers who serve as missionaries in various parts of the world are very proud of their witness to Jesus and his Gospel message.

Who are we? We are Edmund Rice Christian Brothers and our mission is the evangelization of youth especially the very poor through the medium of education. We seek your financial help for our missions in Peru and Bolivia in South America; in Dominica, West Indies and in Brownsville, Texas. With your generosity, the poorest people in these mission areas will receive God’s message of love through education, catechesis, Bible study and volunteer immersion programs with the very poor.

Our missionary journey began in 1802 with our Founder, Blessed Edmund Rice, in Waterford, Ireland. Edmund saw the needs of the poor Irish boys with no proper clothing, not much food, no education and no hope for a future. Edmund, with his own financial resources, changed all that when he dedicated his life to serving these poor children. He took the boys off the streets into makeshift classrooms and through perseverance and trust in God he changed the lives of thousands of Irish youth.

From the beginnings in Waterford, Ireland, Edmund Rice’s Brothers totaling 1,400 Brothers today have carried his teaching mission all over the world in 24 countries to Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and North and South America.

Let me share with you our Christian Brother missions in North and South America:

**Peru:**

Once the richest country in Latin America, today it is the third poorest behind Haiti and Bolivia. In Lima, Peru, the Christian Brothers have three communities. First, the Fe y Alegria School has 1600 students in one school which fits only 800 students. Because of this, the Brothers have school in two sessions per day, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Most of the students come from the hills surrounding the school where there is no running water and little electricity. It is truly a remarkable school and your financial contribution today will surely help these students receive a good education and strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ.

**Bolivia:**

In this country we have the Hermano Manolo Center. This is a drop-in center for young boys and girls who work the streets selling items to make money for their families. These youngsters sell candy, gum, crafts and even shine shoes. They do what they can to help their parents put food on the table. The Brothers with their colleagues teach the children life skills, the elements of the Catholic faith and, most importantly, a sense of self-respect and personal human dignity.

**Brownsville, Texas:**

In this border town we have a school Our Lady of Guadalupe Middle School (Grades 6-8) where we teach the children of poor immigrants. These young students work very hard to improve their educational skills while, at the same time , develop a very vibrant faith community. There are many opportunities offered to the students on a daily basis to help them succeed and move on to good Catholic secondary schools in the surrounding areas.

All of our educational programs in Peru, Bolivia, Brownsville and Dominica, West Indies could never happen without the continued support of you, the people in the pews, who generously support our efforts each summer in these mission appeals. The message of Jesus Christ in our world is alive and well because people like you make a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters most in need.

Thank you and I ask you to remember in your daily prayers the Christian Brothers who labor in God’s name in the mission areas of our world. May Jesus live in our hearts forever. Amen.