



MISSIONARIES IN ACTION

DOMINICAN MISSION FOUNDATION

Fr. Martin de Porres Walsh, O.P., Director Lesley Warnshuis, Office Manager Nancy Keating, Finance Manager

2506 Pine Street P.O. Box 15367 San Francisco, CA 94115-0367 415-931-2183 www.dominicanmission.org

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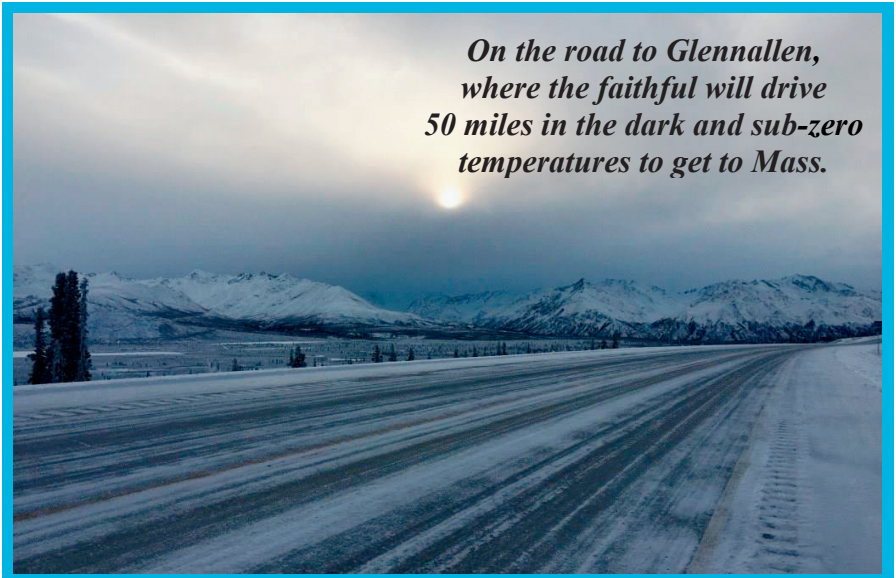
Dwelling at Earth's Farthest Bounds



Fr. Steven Maekawa, O.P.

Dear Mission Friends:

Alaska is often referred to as the state of extremes. It is our biggest state—Rhode Island could fit into it several hundred times. It boasts North America's tallest mountain, Mt. Danali (previously McKinley), as well as its strongest earthquake, a 9.2 in 1964. It holds the United States' record for both the coldest temperature—minus 80 degrees in Prospect Creek in 1971—and the most rain—more than 160 inches a year in Yakutat. In locations such as Barrow in the north, there is no daylight from November to January; even more central towns such as Fairbanks can have less than four hours of daylight on a winter's day. **It is indeed a land of wonder and awe-inspiring beauty, along with which, however, come unique challenges.**



On the road to Glennallen, where the faithful will drive 50 miles in the dark and sub-zero temperatures to get to Mass.

The footprint of the Western Dominican Province in Alaska began in 1974 at Holy Family Cathedral in Anchorage, and over the past 46 years our commitment to serving the faithful has radiated to the far reaches of the state, to towns and villages so remote and rugged that they have no resident priests and often go for months at a time without seeing one. And the few-and-far-between priests who do reside at their parishes are stretched past their capabilities with little or no hope of relief.

So last year, the four of us Dominican friars assigned to Holy Family Cathedral made the scheduling commitment to celebrate Sunday Masses once a month in several of these outlying towns and villages.

And in an especially historic eight grueling months, from July through March, we completed 57 Sunday missions to 19 different locations, from the far north in Barrow on the coast of the Arctic Sea to Dutch Harbor in the southern Aleutian Islands, from Nome on the Bering Sea to Kodiak Island in the Gulf of Alaska, racking up over 26,000 miles on land and in the air.



The area of Alaska relative to the contiguous United States.



It all took very careful planning. This past Christmas Eve, for example, our newly ordained Fr. Andy Opsahl, O.P. drove 116 miles north to Trapper Creek to celebrate the 5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass, pushed on 34 miles to Talkeetna to celebrate their 8:00 p.m. Vigil Mass, and woke up at 5:00 a.m. the next morning to drive 217 miles to Glennallen in time to celebrate their 10:00 a.m. Christmas Day Mass. Meanwhile, Fr. Pius Youn, O.P. had travelled the 800 miles to Dutch Harbor to celebrate the Christmas liturgies there, and Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P. and I celebrated the seven Masses here at the Cathedral.

This past January, I spent ten days in Kotzebue and Nome, in the far west, so that the single pastor responsible for these parishes and three other mission churches could visit his family.

The area's weather at that time "fluctuated" between a high of -15 and a low of -17, with a wind chill of -30. Was I glad when the pastor came back to relieve *me*!



Above, dawn at Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians; below, landscape of a typical town.



But we were on a roll and vowed to continue our mission work throughout the state, adding plans for the great celebration of Holy Week at five remote locations—Fairbanks, Talkeetna, Trapper Creek, Glennallen, and Dutch Harbor—in addition to maintaining our Holy Week traditions at the Cathedral. **It all came to a screeching halt, however, with the arrival of Covid-19 in March.**

As throughout the world, churches were closed and we all scrambled to implement live-streaming liturgies, homilies, and prayer sessions by which communities of the faithful could remain committed and connected. Then as soon as we were given the go-ahead in early June, the Anchorage Dominicans began assisting with the re-opening of churches in approved areas, including Trapper Creek, Talkeetna, Glennallen, Willow, and Big Lake—a 500 mile circuit.

Catholics here have always managed to hold strong to their faith despite their limited resources and an insufficient and unpredictable number of clergy during normal times, and so it was especially gratifying for us to be able to once again serve these undeterred and patient parishioners live and in person—hearing their confessions, celebrating Masses, and bestowing upon them the Body of Our Lord.

The parish of St. Philip Benizi in Trapper Creek found unexpected rays of light during the dark days of the church closures. For years their church was furnished with folding chairs and kneelers made from padded 2x4's, but some resourceful parishioners found pews available within the state and installed them in the church during the shut-down. When the community reunited for Mass on July 5, they were greeted by genuine pews and kneelers (*see 'before and after' below*).

Gradually, some of the more outlying villages have been allowed to reopen as well.



But many of the more isolated ones, reliant on the fishing and canning industries for their livelihood, are still struggling to contain Covid-19 outbreaks brought in by the seasonal work force, and they remain under tight quarantine restrictions. Summer quickly turns into winter in Alaska—the first snows are expected at the end of October and will last till April—and the friars are keenly aware of the importance of helping restore access to the Holy Mass and the Eucharist before the cold and darkness of winter set in.

Top center, first visit from a priest in 2 months for St. Francis Xavier, Kotzebue; top right, Fr Justin Gable, OP, assisting us at St. Bernard's, Talkeetna; right, Fr. Steve on a -31degree day in Kotzebue; below, from left, Fr. Dismas, Br. Andrew Lang, Fr. Pius, Bishop Andrew Bellisario, C.M., Fr. Andy, and Fr. Steve, after live-streaming the Easter Vigil in the empty Cathedral.



So as soon as restrictions become lifted in a region, our friars take to the road or skies to help re-establish the community's in-person connection to their faith. In addition to Covid challenges, the Archdiocese of Anchorage is under-resourced and cannot afford to compensate our friars for their work. Fr. Martin Walsh, O.P., Mission Office Director, has enthusiastically promised his support for the revitalized mission work in Alaska. We are grateful for any assistance you can offer.

In Christ's Peace,
Fr. Steve Maekawa, O.P.
 Pastor, Holy Family Cathedral





Downtown Nome

**By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,
O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas. By your strength you established
the mountains; you are girded with might.
You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples. Those who dwell at earth's farthest bounds
are awed by your signs; you make the gateways of the morning
and the evening shout for joy (Psalm 65: 5-8).**



*Greetings from
Mexicali!*



In our summer *Missionaries in Action* newsletter, Fr. David Bello, O.P. gave our readers a glimpse into our modified life here in Mexicali during these difficult times. All of the sickness and death around us brings great sorrow into the lives of our team of Dominican friars and sisters and parishioners, but it also challenges each of us to do everything in our power to safely alleviate the suffering of those in need here. While I cannot yet cross the border to make my regular visits to the Mission Office in San Francisco, I am in touch with Lesley and Nancy by phone or email every day to stay abreast of the news and the needs in the Office. And while I have had to postpone this past summer's assigned mission appeals, I will be that much more eager and enthusiastic when they resume next year. Please allow me to take this opportunity to thank you for your donations that continue to come in to the Mission Office each day in spite of everything. Be assured of my daily prayers for you and your loved ones.

In Christ's Peace,
Fr. Martin de Porres Walsh, O.P.

***St. Martin de Porres
Feast Day Triduum***

In honor of the November 3rd feast day of St. Martin de Porres, the patron of our missions, Masses will be offered at St. Dominic's Church in San Francisco on November 1, 2, and 3. We invite you to fill in and return the enclosed list of petitions which will be placed on the altar and remembered each day. And please join us in praying the Triduum in his honor (right).

***All Souls' Day
Remembrance***

November is the month for us to pray especially for our loved ones who have gone before us. You are invited to list the names of your departed family members and friends on the enclosed slip and return it to be placed on the altar at St. Dominic's Church in San Francisco. Your loved ones will be remembered at daily Mass throughout the month.

***St. Martin de Porres Triduum
November 1, 2, and 3***

First Day: *St. Martin, you always had sympathy for the poor and those who were suffering. I need your help and now ask for it with great confidence in your goodness and power. Please remember me, as you adore God. Amen.*

(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)

Closing Prayer: *Dear St. Martin, I turn to you in my sorrow and anxiety to seek your friendly protection. Please intercede for me with our merciful Father in heaven so that I may be truly sorry for all my sins and be freed from the evils that shackle me. Ask that I might have something of your spirit of love and self-sacrifice, and so be at all times reconciled to God's holy will. Oh heavenly Father, in the name of your Son and of His blessed Mother, and by the merits of your faithful servant Martin, help me in my trouble and do not forsake me. Amen.*

Second Day: *St. Martin, we praise God for the manifestation of His love. The favors you received from God encourage us now to seek your intercession and help. We ask you most humbly to befriend and assist us from your place in heaven; but most of all, we beg you to commend us to our beloved Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)

Third Day: *Brother Martin, when you were here on earth, you spent your life loving God and your neighbor. This we know from the testimony of your own Dominican brethren. Now that you live in the presence of God in paradise, intercede for those who stand so much in need of the healing help of God and beg the Divine Physician to give us health of the soul and body. Amen.*

(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)