

A WAY INTO THE FUTURE

Congregation of Christian Brothers - 2020



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A misty landscape with a sun flare at the top and a quote in the center. The scene is a valley filled with fog, with dark silhouettes of trees and hills in the background. The sky is a mix of dark blue and grey, with a bright sun flare at the top center. The quote is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

**"THE TIME IS NOW
THE PLACE IS HERE
YOU ARE THE PEOPLE"**



**OW!
ERE!
EOPLE!"**



**“The time is now! The place is here!
You are the people!”**

With these words the Christian Brothers’ 2008 international delegate gathering called the Congregation to embrace a new way of living in our world. We dare to risk being different and become hope for the world. We see this as a cry from our times to become a vibrant example of Religious life that is responding to the urgent needs of our world.

For us, the status quo is not an option. We are aware of the need to undertake a bold journey towards a new place to which we are being led by the spirit of Jesus.

Philip Pinto CFC

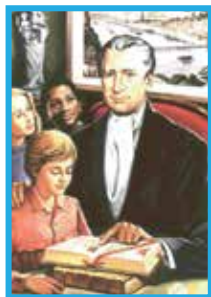
Christian Brothers Congregation Leader



BACKGROUND

Over recent years the Christian Brothers' Leadership Team visited every part of the Congregation, listening to the Brothers, their leadership and many members of the Edmund Rice Network. They witnessed inspiring examples of dedicated service, some of it with people at the margins. They recognized too that fundamental change in the approach of the Congregation to its work – and to its community living – has to happen if Brothers are to respond more urgently to the cries of suffering people in our world.

INSPIRATION



We started this journey with our founding story. Over two centuries ago Edmund Rice, the founder of the Christian Brothers and Presentation Brothers, responded to the needs of poor people in Waterford, Ireland.

He formed communities of Brothers who set up schools. He soon sent his Brothers overseas to work wherever there were poor Irish migrant families. Those Brothers educated generations of boys from low income families on every continent, providing high quality Catholic education at little cost. Many of these schools and colleges are flourishing today.

We returned to look again at the life and mission of Jesus. At a critical moment, he left his settled life in Nazareth and chose to spend his time with marginalised people, bringing them healing and hope. He formed a community of men and women to continue to live out his vision by their lives and compassionate action.

We looked at the world around us and saw the desperate state of many poor people and of the environment. We became aware of a new global interconnectedness arising from scientific and technological advances. It became clear that our traditional belief system and our classroom focused workplace were no longer able to contain the response we wished to make to our world.



A NEW APPROACH

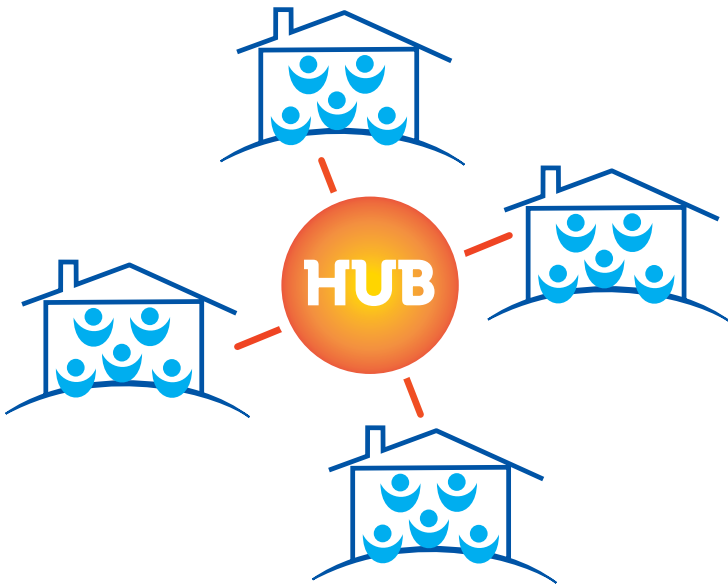


A Way into the Future offers a global response. It seeks to focus the energy of the whole Congregation in addressing the situation of poor people, most of whom live in the developing world. We will adopt a Community Engagement approach to our work because it has been shown to best address the real needs of marginalized communities. It promotes human development by enabling such communities to find solutions to their own problems. It is based on the conviction that each person has the ability and opportunity to improve their own future. It seeks to empower people and to promote sustainability and resilience within their community. In practice it means the Brothers will spend time listening to local people to discover current urgent needs before they collaborate to create a new activity to address those needs. The activity may be of an educational, social or spiritual nature and will have an agreed timeframe.



THE PLAN

By **2020**, we will create twenty new Brothers' communities in marginalized areas within the developing world. Each community will consist of five Brothers; some will have volunteers. From these communities the work with local people will happen in a collaborative, culturally sensitive and co-ordinated way. Each group of four new communities will be located near enough to a "Hub" for easy access (diagram below). The Hub comprises a team of Brothers and colleagues who will support the members of the new communities. They will offer hospitality, supervision, spiritual direction and facilitation to Brothers and volunteers alike.



*Diagram: Example of a Hub and its four connected community houses.
By 2020 there will be five Hubs in total.*

OUR NEW BROTHERHOOD



Brothers with local children in Sangram, India.



A Brother makes his annual vows, Papua New Guinea.



Vocation Day, Lima, Peru.

In order to work and live in a sustainable way in these marginal areas, our experience has shown us the need for a healthy, balanced lifestyle. Healthy celibate living, especially in remote places, is only possible if we integrate certain disciplines and practices into our lives.

We call these The Five Cs of Brotherhood:

Consciousness: the capacity to be aware of all that surrounds us, is in us, and is beyond us in an attitude of wonder, silence and gratitude. **Celibacy:** the free choice to love God above all things and to devote our whole lives to poor people, leaving us free to go wherever we are needed. **Community:** the commitment to live in brotherhood, forming Christian communities where we live together in fraternal affection and mutual support. **Contemplation:** the ability to devote time to silence and prayer, to reflect on our experiences and to become aware of the presence of the mystery called God in our lives. **Compassion:** reaching out with our whole hearts to those who are suffering and lack the necessities of life.



THE DEVELOPING WORLD AND ADVOCACY

Developing world countries often lack the resources to tackle poverty at grassroots level. The new Brothers' work and communities will be located in Africa, Latin America, India and Asia-Pacific. These are the areas where the majority of people referred to in these statistics live:

- **Over one billion people live on less than \$1 a day**
- **Over one hundred million children do not attend primary school**
- **29,000 children die each day because of poverty**

In the chosen marginalised areas, we will collaborate with other groups, in addressing the causes of unjust living situations. These issues will then be brought to the attention of global forums through the Edmund Rice International team, which works alongside other faith-based NGOs at the United Nations in Geneva and New York. This new focus on people in poverty is our contribution to the achievement of the U.N. Millennium Development Goals. The Brothers bring their skills as educators and pastoral workers, in new partnerships with others, particularly in the fields of primary education, HIV/Aids reduction and environmental awareness-raising.



Students at St. George's School, Kolkata, India.

WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL A WAY INTO THE FUTURE MAKE?

We believe that our presence on the ground in marginalised areas will impact significantly on the life and well-being of poor people. Our new A Way into the Future programme is building on the experience of our existing mission work which has adopted a Community Engagement approach:

In 2010 two Kenyan Christian Brothers, working in Nairobi, conducted a survey within Kibera slum. They discovered that children with disabilities were the most excluded within their society. They opened the Mary Rice Centre to offer support to these children and their families. Today, teachers deliver a special curriculum and specialists in occupational and physical therapy work with the children. The staff also works with the parents and the local community to challenge the stigma that keeps these children excluded from their society. The Centre is developing new activities each year and deeply appreciated by the families and community.



Mary Rice Centre, Nairobi, Kenya.

Australian and Indian Brothers moved in 2010 to Maasin in southern Leyte, Philippines, as it is an area with many social needs. They spent time there listening to over seventy local groups and individuals to hear about the needs first-hand. The community then chose three strands to work on: animating pastoral work in needy high schools, supporting Back-to Schooling programmes and setting up a programme for young people with disabilities. Each strand has a team comprised of a Brother and a group of young people. The three teams operate and collaborate under the umbrella of Edmund Rice Services which provides administrative support. Thousands of young people have already benefitted from the work.



Edmund Rice Services, Maasin, Philippines.

PREPARING FOR A WAY INTO THE FUTURE



Brothers reviewing the proposition “A Way into the Future” in Kolkata, India

A Way into the Future requires the retraining of Brothers and volunteers.

Such training will involve:

- Learning about local language and culture
- Community Engagement Training
- Formation for healthy community living
- Learning enhanced communication skills
- Embracing a new spirituality of Jesus and cosmology
- Growing in reflective spiritual practice

Timeline:

The timeline for *A Way into the Future* envisages the establishment of the first Hub with communities by 2015, others following in subsequent years.



Brothers, staff and students celebrate Edmund Rice's 250th birthday, Nairobi, Kenya.

YOUR SUPPORT

A Way into the Future requires the involvement of many people in a variety of activities. Every contribution is welcome. Perhaps you can help by:

1. Praying for all involved in *A Way into the Future*
2. Keeping informed about our progress by visiting these websites and signing up for updates: www.edmundrice.net; www.edmundriceinternational.org
3. If you are inspired by our vision, consider joining the Brothers
– visit www.edmundrice.net
4. Becoming a volunteer on a short or long-term basis - visit www.edmundrice.net
5. Considering how you may be able to help us resource *A Way into the Future*.
Contact Edmund Rice Development: www.edmundricedevelopment.org

Thank you.



Congregation of Christian Brothers

www.edmundrice.net

“Live Jesus in our hearts forever!”