

More Information About The Mother Of God Brothers And Their Work

By one of them.

General Pamphlet No.gen0009 (Date Unknown)

CARITAS - VERITAS

Introduction:

The Mother of God Brothers are a small community of Catholic men, who live a consecrated life the same as that of Religious. We form part of the core group of a large Christian Community at Albury on the N.S.W.-Victorian border. It is called Guadalupe House. We are particularly interested in inviting into the Community younger men who want, or need, to belong to a Christian community. We are especially open to men who are in some way handicapped and who want to belong to a spiritual family.

The majority of the members of our Community in Albury are intellectually handicapped.

Qualifications

1. Potential Brothers:

- a) A potential Brother ought to be at least a dedicated and practising Catholic.
- b) Willingness to participate in the life of the community as much as he can.
- c) He must have a willingness to develop a real love and concern for other community members.
- d) Reasonable mental, physical and emotional health is also required.

2. Voluntary Helpers

A voluntary helper is a dedicated Christian man who lives in the community and helps the Brothers with their work for a period of at least one year. Voluntary helpers are given all the necessities of life but are not paid. If you think you might be called to be a voluntary helper please contact us for further information.

By giving you will receive:

It is easy to think of a year or two spent in a community such as ours primarily as a sacrifice. While this point of view has some merit, it is only part of the story. Most people gain a great deal from a year or two in a community such as ours. Firstly, you grow enormously as a person. You would learn to be more open and to give and receive love more freely. Secondly, you could gain a greater insight into yourself and your own needs and the needs and problems of others. You would learn how to serve others better and in the process you would become more mature yourself. Thirdly, you would grow in your knowledge and love of God. These three things could enable you to approach the future as a more open, loving, mature person. As the years pass, you might well come to realize that, in many ways, you had received more than you had given

Some thoughts on the word "handicapped"

So far we have used the word "handicapped" to describe those members of our community that do not have the same abilities as the average person. However, the label "handicapped" sometimes has overtones of the person being of less value as a person or being somehow a reduced human being. In this way the word "handicapped" can convey an unjust and false impression. A truer description would be: "People who are less able than most to meet some of their needs in the less important areas of life". As far as the important areas of life are concerned the "handicapped" have exactly the same needs as we have. They need to love and to be loved and so does everyone. They need to feel that they are accepted and have somewhere they can call home, and so does everyone. In these areas, which are the most important ones, all of us need help, love and understanding, and empathy from others. None of us can stand alone, none of us are self-sufficient.

Consequently, in these areas, we have an essential equality with the "handicapped". It is in other areas that our "handicapped" members need special help. Some have problems with their mental health from time to time. This is certainly a very important area of life, but it does not make such a person somehow inferior to others. Other members need help to cope with epilepsy. Some members need help with washing their clothes, with keeping themselves clean and tidy, or with understanding simple (to us) ideas. However, are any of these things the most important things in life and do they somehow, reduce a person's dignity as a human being? The answer is a flat 'no'. Like all other human beings the "handicapped" are made in the image and likeness of God. As Christians, they are adopted children of God. They are sons of God, brothers of Christ and children of Mary. They possess immortal souls and are called to an eternal love relationship with God. Before these realities, any illusions of superiority to the "handicapped" quickly vanish.

A Missionary Community

One expression of love is the willingness to share our most precious possession with the one loved. For a Catholic, his most precious possession is his Faith, especially his relationship with Jesus. As a Christian community, we work to share our Faith with others. We do this by welcoming others to share prayer with us. We do it by talking with others and by giving them literature. Some of the Brothers go into the streets and into parishes and share their Faith with those who are open to such sharing. Sometimes others help them with this work. In sharing our Faith, the freewill of others is always respected. Other people are never pressured. What we are offering to them is a precious gift. Gifts are given, they are not forced on people.

This is a very important part of our work. As Catholics, the Faith we share with people is the Catholic Faith. In conscience, it could never be otherwise. Members are required to support this work according to their calling and ability. Australasia is in great need of the Gospel of Christ. We are, and always will be, a missionary community.

The success of this work: Some comments by others.

A consultant psychiatrist of many years experience is the principal medical advisor to the Community.

Here are some quotations from his report:

"I have been very pleased by the excellent therapeutic results, the overall moral, emotional and physical improvement every one of the developmentally disabled people has had since coming to Guadalupe House.

"I see you and your community members doing your work from motives of Christian charity. Let me tell you that from my point of view I see your work as a vital human service and as a unique service, too. Let me explain this last point. People admitted to institutions, even briefly, are at risk of suffering emotional, moral and physical dilapidation. This fact is well documented in research and the risk increases when the length of stay increases and the impersonal nature of the institution is exaggerated."

"There is a great need, and a great lack, of places providing close contact with ordinary society, simplified rules and conditions of living and loving and a family atmosphere for:

- 1) People who are mentally and intellectually retarded and who are moving into adult years beyond parental capacity to care for them.
- 2) People who are, because of emotional disadvantage, unable to live in their own family home.
- 3) People who, following psychiatric care, need a sheltered domicile within the community for their rehabilitation.

"I want to add a personal comment on your work. I see your work as a very special, very needed apostolate within the Catholic Church.

"In my experience many Catholics are engaged in education, care of the economically poor and other traditional good works. A few are engaged in the care of the mentally ill. Fewer still in the after care of the emotionally and mentally handicapped. You are the only community I know prepared to undertake the arduous but, as you have demonstrated, rewarding and successful task of within-the-community residential rehabilitation of mentally handicapped Christians.

"I congratulate you and your community on your work and offer you every encouragement and support I can.

"I hope you will be able to expand your residential care units and establish others because of the great need there is for them.

"I most genuinely commend your work to any person, body or institution for support, especially the practical and financial support which you most surely deserve and need."

Some comments by Francis Carroll, previously Bishop of Wagga Wagga, (now Archbishop of Canberra-Goulburn) on our work with our handicapped members.

"These people need the support of a Christian Community that will care for them in their physically and/or mentally disadvantaged condition. During the past few years, the Brothers have accepted quite a number of such persons on a permanent basis. There is every indication that their work is achieving its aim. A number of people who would have found it extremely difficult and even impossible to live without special care and support, have been enabled to live much richer lives as a result of their association with the Community.

"The value of the Brother's work has been testified to by qualified medical opinion. For my part, I see it as a work of great Christian charity in an area of need that is seldom adequately met in our society. I do trust therefore, that the Mother of God community will be given support in continuing its work. This support, both financial and moral is needed now. Too often, promising works have failed to achieve success because help and encouragement were not given early enough. I

personally have great hopes for the future of the Community and work of Christian service; I do trust that this future will be made even more secure by the generous support of others."

Comments by Bishop William Brennan, Bishop of Wagga Wagga

"It was a great joy to give canonical recognition to the Mother of God Brothers. Their work is a clear and unequivocal response to the Gospel call to brotherly love. Their acceptance by Church members and the wider community is a touchstone to their commitment and sincerity in their work as it is perceived by those among whom it is exercised. Any man who is called to join them and walk along their path will be offering himself to a truly Christian work."

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WITH ECCLESIASTICAL APPROVAL
