



# MISSIONARIES IN ACTION

## DOMINICAN MISSION FOUNDATION

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### FATHER FELIX CASSIDY, O.P.

#### *All Souls' Day Remembrance*

*November is the month to pray especially for our departed family members and friends. We invite you to list the names of your loved ones on the enclosed slip and send it back to us. It will have a place on the altar at St. Dominic's Church in San Francisco through the end of the month.*

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

*The feast day of St. Martin de Porres, our patron, is November 3, and in his honor Masses will be offered at St. Dominic's Church in San Francisco on November 1, 2, and 3. We invite you to fill out and send in the enclosed list of petitions and it will have a place on the altar at St. Dominic's through the end of the month.*

*Please join us each day in praying the Triduum (back page).*



He  
acted justly,  
loved kindly,  
and  
walked humbly  
with his God,\*

*smiling  
all  
the  
while.*

\* Micah 6:8 (Paraphrased)

Dear Mission Friends:

When you receive this newsletter, the season of autumn will have already begun, as nature prepares to go into a deep sleep in order to awaken in the springtime with fresh new life.

And it is no accident that the Church calls us during this time of year to meditate on that theme of life through death as we pray for

our departed loved ones in a special way on the feasts of All Saints and All Souls. I invite you to include in your prayers two of our recently departed friars whose numerous assignments included serving as missionaries for us in Chiapas, Mexico: Fr. Paul Scanlon, O.P., our former provincial, who will be the subject of our next newsletter, and Fr. Felix Cassidy, O.P., on whose grace-filled life we will reflect this month.



Fr. Felix Cassidy had an amazing way of remembering the names and faces of many of the countless people he met during his six decades of Dominican service. And that is probably one reason why so many of those whose lives he touched remember and love him dearly to this day. When someone recognizes you from years ago, it's gratifying and uplifting. Indeed though, Father exuded happiness all the time, which explains the name chosen for him by his superiors upon entering the Order: *Felix*, which is from the Latin for *happy*.

**I suspect Father's mission, and gift, was to bring happiness to the world**, or at least to the places he served, which included Vallejo, Reno, Portland, San Francisco, and Chiapas, Mexico. Fr. Felix arrived in Chiapas in 1970 to serve as a missionary to the Tzeltal Indians who inhabited the vast expanse of jungles and mountains on the outskirts of our mission territory.

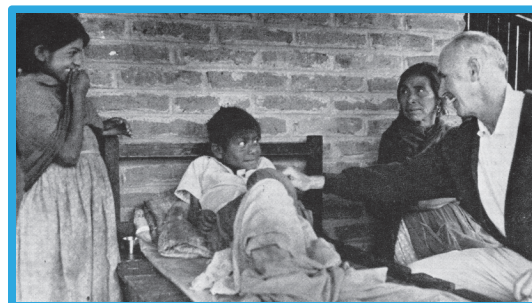


*Left, Fr. Felix greeting parishioners after Sunday Mass.*

*Bottom left, parishioners in the village of Lucumilja, 6,000 feet above sea level, awaiting a visit from Father, always bearing gifts of Sacraments and joy.*

Everyone anticipated that communication would be a difficult obstacle to overcome. Father had studied Spanish but was far from fluent, and most of the Indians spoke only their native Tzeltal language anyway. But it didn't take long before Father and the Indians grew to understand each other. Ever positive, Father thought he'd discovered a pretty good method by just adding an 'o' to the end of English words. Actually though, they communicated well because he spoke a universal language, conveying thoughts clearly with his expressive hands, his bright eyes, his constant smile, and his empathetic heart.

Moreover, he made the effort to learn about the Indians' social habits and traditions, not by watching and listening, but by diving in to them himself. He became the life of the fiestas from the first time he sat in with the band, playing his makeshift maracas. Made by filling empty beer cans with pebbles and attaching a stick on one end of the cans, his maracas and joyful rhythm were must-haves at every celebration.



*Above, from top, Juanita giggling at Fr. Felix who is trying to cheer up her brother Manuel.*

*Center, Father helping baby Petrona and her mother with a lesson from the Milk Program.*

*Bottom, the original mission hospital, founded by our Fr. John Flannery, where Fr. Felix visited faithfully.*





Adventure seemed to seek him out, because he invariably had new stories to share at dinner, one of which is still talked about: His favorite pastoral duty was riding horseback along the jungle trails to visit the many indigenous people living in remote villages. Since they had no means to travel even short distances from home, no less get to church, Father would fit in as many confessions, baptisms, and blessings that he could before having to head home.

One day while riding between villages, he passed a torrential waterfall with a newly-formed crystal-clear pool at its base, all the result of a week of heavy rains. He caught a glimpse of three well-to-do ranchers enjoying the pool and some Indians watching nearby. He recognized one of the ranchers to be one who was hostile toward the missionaries, so Father gave a quick wave and kept going.



*Left, one of the untamed jungle paths Fr. Felix rode to call on parishioners in remote villages. Man and beast had to rest frequently.*

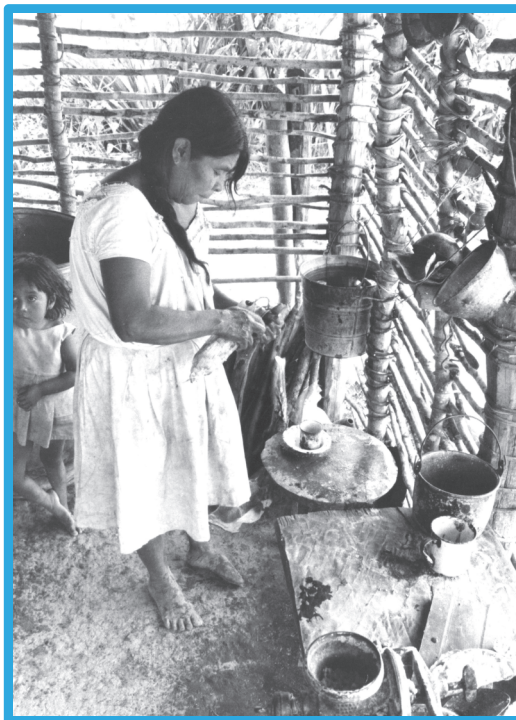
*Below, stripping maize in preparation for making tortillas, in a typical kitchen, when Father came to call.*

He had gone only a few yards when he heard the Indians running after him and shouting that someone was drowning. Father raced back to see all three of the men submerged, one pinned under a rock and the others trying to rescue him, all of them made helpless by the strong current. Fr. Felix, who had been a Bohemian Grove lifeguard in his youth, was an excellent swimmer and in two dives pulled out the rancher he had recognized and one of the others. He hollered to the Indians to help him lay them on a rock and quickly demonstrated how to pump water out of them. It took him four dives with a rope to free the third one from under the rock, but it was too late to save him.

The rancher—the one who resented missionaries—was overwhelmed with gratitude to Fr. Felix for saving his life, and they would become close friends. The rancher had also been known to be abusive to his Indian workers, but **Fr. Felix's nature was such an example to him that he stopped his abuse and learned to respect the dignity of his workers.**

It is with a bittersweet sense of nostalgia that I recall the sadness that permeated the mission when the parishioners learned that his assignment to Chiapas was coming to an end. On the day of his departure, he discovered that his packed suitcases were nowhere to be found. After an hour of panic, it was discovered that the Indians had hidden them to prevent their beloved “Fr. Joyful” from leaving. It was only with a great deal of pleading that they returned his luggage and, amidst the tears of his faithful parishioners as well as his own, he was able to depart.

Fr. Felix Cassidy spent his last years in his hometown, serving at St. Dominic's Church. **Many parishioners felt that something sacred was let forth when he performed his priestly office,** and they would have no other priest baptize their children or bless their new car or business or home. His confessional always had a long line and included people who came from other towns to go to him for confession.



His love for others grew naturally from his love for God, for the Blessed Mother, for the Church, and for the Dominican Order that he served so well—and so uniquely: Substituting the church piano for his maracas, he could be heard many an early morning playing an old standard with characteristic rhythm and pizzazz, just one more way he praised the Lord!

As the feasts of All Saints and All Souls approach, let us remember and pray for our deceased family members, friends, and friars. May the love of the Blessed Mother and the peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ bless and console us and gently wipe away every tear from our eyes. **Fr. Felix, pray for us.**

*Fr. Martin de Porres Walsh, O.P.,*

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the  
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and be a tremendous help.

**Thank you!**

**Upcoming Mission  
Appeals**

*If you are in the area,  
please come and meet our  
preacher  
at any of the weekend Masses.*

**October 29-30  
Salt Lake City, UT**

*Fr. Martin Walsh, O.P.*  
**Cathedral of the Madeleine**

*Fr. Peter Rogers, O.P.*  
**St. Patrick**

***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.)**