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Marianist brother killed in Haiti had a true missionary heart

Isabella R. Moyer | Apr. 29, 2013 NCR Today

There are two sides to hospitality. The one we are most familiar with is our call to open wide our arms and doors to others, to welcome both friends and strangers. The other side is to freely receive hospitality, to allow ourselves to be welcomed by another. Sometimes, this latter form of hospitality is the more difficult.

When we give hospitality, we are on our own turf. When we receive hospitality, we are called to embrace new surroundings, new people and new ways of doing things. It is an ungracious guest who complains that "this is not how we do it at home," constantly craving and whining for the comforts of the well-known while unwilling to try the new.

A person with a true missionary heart knows this. We can no longer cling to the old colonial mentality of "saving" our sisters and brothers by forming them into persons and cultures in our own image. If we travel to other countries, we do so as guests. We must have willing minds and hearts to embrace the new and unknown. We must allow ourselves to be formed by another culture. And we must have a deep love and respect for the people and country that have welcomed us.

Marianist Br. Richard Joyal had such a heart. In 1983, he left his community in Winnipeg, Canada, and went to work in the newly founded Society of Mary foundation in India. He relished his work in India, which included projects with street children and novice formation. In the midst of the poverty, he saw the beauty in simplicity. He shared with us his newfound passion for growing orchids, transforming our own Western images of India as a land of slums to a land with incredible natural beauty.

In 2004, he moved to the Philippines to begin a new Marianist mission. Again, he fell in love with the people, the land and the culture. He recently returned to Canada and was living with the Marianist community in Québec. He became the director of Le Centre Marianiste d'Éducation de la Foi, injecting the same enthusiasm and passion into this work.

A few months ago, he agreed to travel to Haiti to assist with the closure of the Society of Mary mission in that troubled land. Where others saw only poverty and despair, he spoke enthusiastically of the deep faith and liturgical celebrations of her people. In an Easter message to a friend, he wrote, "I knew all along that Jesus was Indian. I also discovered that he was also Filipino. Now, I am discovering that he's Haitian. "

On Thursday, Brother Richard was killed [1] on the streets of Port-au-Prince just days before he was to travel back home to Québec.

Sr. Laura Leming, a Marianist sister in Dayton, shared this simple comment on Facebook: "Rest in peace Richard, and leave us a portion of your missionary spirit!"

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[1] http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/colleagues-shocked-by-quebec-man-s-shooting-death-in-haiti-1.1255360