

# Interchange

**Father William McIntire, MM**  
**Servant of God's People in Peru and Bangladesh**

Gerald Grudzen '67

**FIRST MET BILL MCINTIRE** when he and I entered the second year of theology in the fall of 1964 at Maryknoll, NY. Bill joined Maryknoll after earning degrees at Harvard in political science (BA, 1953) and in international relations (MA, 1957). While at Harvard, Bill was secretary of the Harvard United Nations Club. He interrupted his graduate studies at Harvard to spend two years (1954–1956) as an enlisted man with the U.S. Army in Germany. After getting his Master's at Harvard, he worked from 1957 to 1961 in the Foreign Service Division and as Latin American specialist, US Department of Labor, Washington, DC. During the years in Washington, DC, Bill was secretary both of the Washington Catholic Interracial Council and of the Washington Catholic Roundtable.

Bill's concern for social/political issues became one of the hallmarks of his later work as a missionary priest in Latin America after his ordination in 1967. One of the unique aspects of Bill's study while at the major seminary was his

continued work with the Department of Labor during the summer months when school was not in session at Maryknoll. For this reason, Bill's Maryknoll classmates nicknamed him "Senator." The summer of 1964, he traveled to

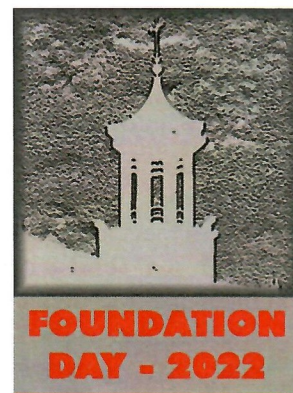


Bill met with Mother Teresa in Calcutta several times from October 1979 to December 1980. This photo is from a meeting in March 1980.

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**"No one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid: that foundation is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:11)**

On June 29, 2022, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, the Society's General Council wrote the letter below to their brothers in Maryknoll



Dear Brothers,

May our 111<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day be filled with many blessings for you.

In his Foundation Day address on June 29, 1913, James Anthony offered the Society both assurance about the Triune God meeting our needs and direction for finding our life's purpose in the cruciform standard of Christ and his apostles.

*What, then, is our position? We are working hard, striving to blaze a path to what will, in God's good time and with His help, be fruitful for souls and conducive to His glory.... Looking at our trials and sacrifices we might be tempted to conclude that they are considerable.... For all we know, they may be nothing compared with what God has in store for us. He may have really severe trials, greater than we dream of.... We do not know. We only know that He will give us the strength to bear whatever he sends....*



Bishop J.A. Walsh

*We are celebrating the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul. When Fr. Price and I received from Cardinal Gotti... the assurance to go forward.... Peter and Paul, both of whom died for Christ, examples of sublime sacrifice...that stops not until it reaches death. "Greater*

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Latin America and studied Christian trade unions in eight countries.

I always enjoyed interactions with Bill because of the depth of his understanding of world affairs and his ability to relate contemporary political events to Catholic social teaching. We became close friends and found ways to connect regularly with each other from 1967 to today.

Another dimension of our friendship over the years has been the sense of community inspired by the founders of the Maryknoll Society, which has endured through the changes brought about by Vatican II and new forms of affiliation with Maryknoll.

### Assignment to Peru

After ordination, Bill was assigned to Peru where he worked on social issues with which he had become familiar. He also began a relationship with the emerging movements in Latin America based on the theology of liberation and the seminal writings of Gustavo Gutiérrez. Bill's first meeting with Gustavo was in the summer of 1966 when he spent six weeks in Peru. From 1967 to 1970, Bill worked with a social justice and labor action institute in Chimbote, Peru, in collaboration with Dominican Father Enrique Camacho. It was in January 1969 at Chimbote that Gustavo changed the title of a talk Bill was typing for him from "Theology of Development" to "Theology of Liberation."

The fall term of 1970, Fr. William D. McCarthy, MM, invited Bill to teach seminars on Latin America at Maryknoll and (Anglican) General Theological Seminary in Manhattan. In 1971–1972, Bill returned to Peru and served as vicar general under Bishop Edward Fedders, MM, in Juli Prelature in the altiplano of Peru.

During Maryknoll's Sixth General Chapter, fall 1972, Bill was elected secretary general of Maryknoll for a six-year term. Under the leadership of Superior General Fr. Raymond Hill, MM, this was a period of expansion for Maryknoll into new areas including Bangladesh, Brazil, Nepal, Samoa, Sudan, and Yemen. Bill first met and talked extensively with Mother Teresa in Calcutta in September 1975. This meeting signaled a change of focus in Bill's spiritual life to a more prayerful and contemplative approach. He facilitated the travel of the first Polish diocesan priests to work with Maryknollers in Tanzania. He traveled with Fr. Larry Schanberger, MM, to Poland in May 1977 and along with Cardinal Karol Wojtyla (the future John Paul II) gave a talk to 200,000 Polish workers at the Our Lady of Piekary Pilgrimage Mass in Polish Silesia on Pentecost Sunday, 1977.

Bill's term on the General Council was also marked by his support for the Joint Committee of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers with former members of the community.



Nepal, October 1979. (l-r) Fathers Larry Schanberger, Ray Hill, Bill McIntire, Adam Gudalefsky, and Joe Thaler. (The person directly behind Bill is unidentified.)

In 1979, after his term on the General Council ended, Bill spent a six-month sabbatical with the Bread of Life Charismatic Covenant Community in Akron, Ohio. He and Fr. Larry Schanberger were then assigned to Bangladesh in September 1979. Awaiting visas for Bangladesh, Bill and Larry spent fourteen months in Calcutta studying Bengali, teaching at the Calcutta minor seminary, and working with Mother Teresa's Missionary Sisters and Brothers of Charity. Bill was with Mother Teresa in Berlin in June 1980, when she received permission to open a house in East Berlin. The next decade, until 1989, Mother Teresa opened more than forty new MC houses in the Soviet bloc countries! When Bangladesh visas finally were granted in December 1980, Mother Teresa said to Bill and Larry: "I am going to pray that you will be put out of Bangladesh because I think you are more needed in Calcutta than in Bangladesh. But obey your superiors and go to Bangladesh!" Larry Schanberger had to leave his parish work in Bangladesh in 1994 for medical reasons, but Bill remained in Bangladesh until his retirement in June 2021.

### "Brothers" in Bangladesh

The first five Maryknollers who arrived in Bangladesh in December 1975 sought to be "brothers," living very simply in community and emphasizing respectful dialogue and service with and to the 90 percent Muslim majority. Father Bob ("Bob bhai") McCahill '64 was a member of this first group; he continues until now his apostolate as the last Society member in Bangladesh. When Bill McIntire and Larry Schanberger arrived in Bangladesh at the end of 1980, the archbishop of Dhaka said he would only accept them if they agreed to take parish assignments. Bill worked then for some seventeen years in Dhaka Archdiocese, serving as assistant or pastor at three different urban or rural parishes and also as spiritual director at the Dhaka minor seminary. From 1985 until 1988, Bill spent six months of the year in Bangladesh and six months with the Mission Planning and Re-



search Department (MRPD) at Maryknoll, NY, doing evaluations of and visiting several Maryknoll overseas regions. He also continued his at least annual visits to Calcutta. At Mother Teresa's request, he spent a sabbatical in 1993 as chaplain for Missionary Sisters of Charity at twelve newly founded Houses in Albania in Eastern Europe.

From 1997 until 2021, Bill served in Mymensingh Diocese (north of Dhaka, near the India border) as secretary for the bishop, spiritual director for diocesan seminarians, and chaplain for a cloistered Poor Clares monastery. The 80,000 Catholics in Mymensingh Diocese are 98 percent Mandi-Garos, a Tibeto-Burmese hill tribe who converted from animism to Christianity in the twentieth century. I had gone to newly liberated Bangladesh in 1975 with my wife and daughter as representatives of the Milk for Bangladesh Foundation formed in Westchester County to help the people of Bangladesh, then facing imminent starvation. In January 2008, I again returned to Bangladesh to organize and participate with Bill at Dhaka in the largest interfaith conference involving Muslims and Christians in Bangladesh's history.

After our interfaith conference in Dhaka in 2008, Bill and I had many other opportunities to interact and collaborate as his schedule permitted. Our older daughter, Corita, had moved with her family to Croton-on-Hudson and this allowed us to continue our contact when Bill was at Maryknoll. Our own home is in San Jose, very close to Maryknoll-Los Altos.

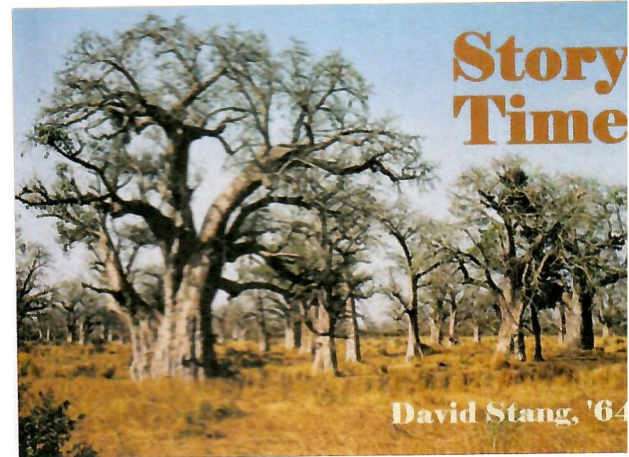
When we visited Bill at Maryknoll, NY, Monday, August 21, 2022, we were able to attend Mass and have lunch with him. After our visit, that same afternoon, Bill enjoyed a visit by a Bangladeshi-American couple and their sons who had driven up from Maryland.

Our lives continue to intersect with each other, as we realize we are all part of one global Maryknoll family!

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Fr. Bill McIntire with two members of the Mandi-Garo tribe, among whom he says he "was privileged to work" in Mymensingh Diocese, Bangladesh, for twenty-five years (1996-2021).



*Dave Stang was assigned to East Africa right after his ordination in 1964 and served there for a little more than ten years. He was given the nickname "Wambu" (child of the rain) because the locals noticed that he enjoyed walking in the rain. Published here are just a few of the many stories he has to tell.*

**ONCE UPON A TIME** there was this "weird man" who came from a country far away and had just moved to Kenya and Tanganyika (later Tanzania), countries in East Africa that became independent the year before this stranger arrived. Speaking only a European language he arrived with little understanding of these new people. Nor did he realize that his color and culture now counted for less in these newly independent nations. But he stumbled forward. Sometimes not knowing is better than knowing. Besides, others like him had been there a long time and they seemed happy and content.



Photos here and on p. 5 show David Stang as a missionary priest in East Africa, 1964.

**Language School.** Four months of language study seemed to be enough of a beginning, at least the priest in charge of the recently established language school thought so. With a little language under his belt the weird man went on his motorcycle up the hill to help a local priest for Christmas. Feeling totally stupid, he stood up in church and uttered a few words. The people's eyes glazed over. Some told him later, "we didn't understand one word you said." As he got ready to return to the language school after Mass a local teacher let him know (in English) that the language he used during his sermon was not theirs.

The poor guy in charge of the language school apologized. "You know," he said, "I am trying to deal with many languages and this teacher lied to me and told me I