

in a

# Word

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**THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE  
I'M GONNA LET IT SHINE**

Photo by: Father James Pawlicki, SVD

# TD BOUCREE WAS A BRIDGE BUILDER

by  
Father Jerome Ledoux, SVD

Thaddeus and Addie Boucree had no clue as to why their baby Thaddeus had no power in his right hand or side. Figuring he would outgrow the weakness, they resigned themselves to living with the problem. However, the child got only marginally stronger.

Not even the doctors knew why Thaddeus (*known as "TD"*) had a very weak right hand and side. Since medical spinoffs from space exploration were not available, the best medical minds remained clueless. Still, Thaddeus looked on the bright side of his lot in life:

"I am convinced that I would not be a priest today if I were not crippled from my very childhood on. I always wondered why I could not play the piano or violin nor work with cement as my father wanted me to because of my very weak right hand and side. Of course, I could use only one hand in playing or in holding bricks."

So, how did he come to desire to be a priest and live his life in service as a priest? It was the time-honored axiom coming alive: "Words move. Examples draw." "As a small boy, when I saw Father Maurice Rousseve, SVD saying his first Mass, I immediately had a great desire to be what he was and do what he was doing. I was happy that my weakness did not prove to be an obstacle to my entering the seminary."

I knew Thaddeus since 1951, and at no time did I see him give in to the weakness of his right hand. In baseball, I would bite my lips as I watched him use a handkerchief to cushion the shock of the bat when he took his turn at the plate. He made no excuses and gave no ground to anyone challenging him. It was flat-out fun playing with him.

Unbowed by his hand, Thaddeus soon became known as TD and threw himself whole hog into his priestly studies, displaying through his demeanor and resolve that he was just old enough to be heavily affected by the Famous Four, the first black SVDs ordained on May 23, 1934: Anthony Bourges, Maurice Rousseve, Vincent Smith and Francis Wade.

A true generational border walker and bridge builder, TD often conversed with the Four and had the great blessing of working at times with them. It was obvious that their cumulative knowledge and wisdom were not lost on him, for he parlayed those into the fabric of his spirituality, conduct and ministry wherever he was privileged to serve.

In part as a legacy from the Famous Four, TD was an

inveterate storyteller, adept at spinning a yarn about the days of yore and the days of now. He gravitated toward other storytellers and swapped shoptalk about the missionaries and their missions in the field.

In his earliest days in the major seminary and priesthood, when the whole atmosphere was rife with racism and hatred, TD was one of the fiery ones who met fire with fire, all the while remaining firmly grounded in faith in God and the spiritual ideals of Jesus. The older he grew, the more the name Jesus was on his lips, especially as a revivalist.

I can still hear him saying "Je...sus" in a slow, long, savoring manner. I remember his quaint story about the burglar who broke into a house, only to be challenged by a parrot: "Jesus gon' git ya!" As the burglar threw a cloth over the cage in a rage, the parrot said: "Git 'im, Jesus!" And a huge dog named Jesus jumped him and tore him up.



TD was 72 in 1996 when a doctor detected the source of his weak hand. Hospitalized after sleeping nonstop two nights and a day, an X-ray revealed a small shadow that indicated an artery had burst in his brain while he was still in his mother's womb.

Although TD worked in some parishes, his relish by far was doing revivals. His motto could easily have been: "Have revival and suitcase; will travel!" And, of course, the proof of the pudding was invariably that the people were inspired by his revivals. Always a gentle, congenial, spiritual man, these qualities burst through in all his revivals.

TD was easy to get along with among his SVD confreres. He was not plagued with an evil, gossiping tongue, but rather spoke well of others. Nothing delighted him more than a lively conversation with missionaries about experiences along the mission trail.

There is no mystery about the roots of TD's sterling character and personality. Just look back to his beloved mother and father, two faith-filled, loving people who enjoyed a 63-year-plus life of devotion and service to each other and their 9 children. TD's social and spiritual pedigree had their roots in the kind of functional home all people desire.

"I have had 4 heart attacks, multiple bypass heart surgery and several mini-strokes," TD confided. "I retired 4 times, but do an occasional revival." TD was a living witness of what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:10: "When I am weak, then I am strong."

# SUPREME KNIGHT SPEAKS ON THE OCCASION OF KING HOLIDAY: WHO IS YOUR NEIGHBOR?

F. DeKarlos Blackmon

F. DeKarlos Blackmon The Supreme Knight of the Knights of Peter Claver traveled throughout the country in January to speak about not only the life and work of the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, a man of faith and deep conviction, but also about the necessity to realize the challenges that all Catholics have as baptized members of Christ's faithful.

In communicating the fundamental guiding principle which governs the conduct of all people, the young Supreme Knight spoke about the love of God and love of neighbor. He asked, "How are we to express our love of God? How are we to put love of neighbor into practice?" He reminded the faithful that everyone is our neighbor, as the parable of the Good Samaritan clearly communicates.

Recognizing that people of color have been victims of inequality, discrimination and oppression, Blackmon acknowledged the travesty and unfortunate circumstances of finding ourselves in a contemporary society where the discriminated themselves further prejudice, unfairness, and inequality on others. Using a personal example, he said, "I have felt the sting of prejudice and discrimination by those who even look like me."

Acknowledging his tenure at Pope John Paul II Catholic High School, he said that as a teacher of sacramental and moral theology, he hoped that his students would be able to truly say about him, "Mr. Blackmon loves us; he does not judge us; and he meets us where we are." Blackmon acknowledged that life is an ongoing process of conversion, and if we truly intend to be caught up to meet Jesus face to face, we must understand and embrace the reality that the only way this will be possible is to live the gospel values, one of the first of which is to love our neighbor.

The Supreme Knight further reminded all Catholics that the sacraments of initiation are catalysts of unity. Through our participation in Christian life, through this union of Sacramental life, we are united to Christ. He stated, "As illustrated by our Lord's words and deeds in the gospels and the early Church's reflection on the mission, our faith in Jesus Christ is not as much about us as individuals as it is about us as a loving family. Christ remains truly present in our world today through the Church."

Blackmon encouraged Catholics to remember the words of Pope John Paul II in his address to African Americans while in the Archdiocese of New Orleans in

September 1987, "It is important to realize that there is no black Church, no white Church, no American Church; but there is and must be in the one Church of Jesus Christ a home for blacks, whites, Americans, of every culture and race."

The Supreme Knight stated, "Contrary to popular opinion, we have not made it over. The anthem of King and the Civil Rights movement is still our objective, our aim, our target, and our end: to overcome some day. By the grace of almighty God, by the arduous work of our hands, by the standing up to be a witness to the saving power of God, we will overcome prejudice, racism, intolerance, bias, narrow-mindedness, and chauvinism." Blackmon went on to say, "We, the Christian faithful, must be ever mindful of our role in welcoming 'the stranger.'" He challenged all to remember that attention must be paid to the dignity of every human person and beatific hope for the future.

Conceding that we may sometimes find it difficult to accept the radical statements that Jesus shares with the disciples, Blackmon said, "If we call ourselves believers and followers of Christ, we must stand up for what is right and just, we must be willing to lose our lives for the sake of the gospel. We must be willing to go on record for taking the hard right as opposed to the easy moral wrong." Blackmon closed most of his addresses in similar fashion: "Jesus tells us, 'Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this faithless and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him or her when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.' Well I don't know about you, but I want to be in that number with the communion of saints."

*The Knights of Peter Claver, Inc. is the nation's only African-American Catholic fraternal organization and the world's largest historically Black Catholic lay organization. The Order was founded on November 7, 1909 in Mobile, Alabama for men of color who were barred from other organizations in the Catholic Church. Blackmon was elected the Sixteenth Supreme Knight and Chief Executive Officer of the Knights of Peter Claver in August 2010. With a background in management and pastoral ministry, he serves as a lay ecclesial minister in the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama, serving Saint Joseph Church in Huntsville.*



# in a word or two



## National Day of Prayer for the African American and African Family 2011

"Celebrating God's goodness and mercy" (cf. Psalm 23), is the theme for the 23rd Annual National Day of Prayer for the African American and African Family to be held on the First Sunday of Black History Month, February 6, 2011, stated Father James E. Goode, OFM.

Father Goode, who is the founder of the National Day of Prayer and President of the National Black Catholic Apostolate for life, stressed that on that day African American and African families, will be encouraged to rededicate their families to protecting human life at all ages, and upholding the dignity of the family.

The National Day of Prayer for the African American and African Family is supported by the three historical Black Religious Communities of Sisters, all the major Black Catholic Organizations in the U.S., the USCCB: SCDC African American Affairs, and the Black and Indian Missions. The materials for the National Day of Prayer for the African American and African Family 2011 including the catechetical reflection prepared by Ms. Therese Wilson Favors can be downloaded directly from the website:

[www.solidgroundministry.com](http://www.solidgroundministry.com) or [www.usccb-\(SAAC\).org](http://www.usccb-(SAAC).org)

### Sodexo Lead Organizer Grants: (Deadline: February 10)

Youth Service America (YSA) is accepting applications from organizations across the United States to serve as 2011 Sodexo Lead Organizers, supported by a \$2,000 planning grant from YSA and the Sodexo Foundation. Sodexo Lead Organizers will work with partner organizations to engage at least 500 youth volunteers in learning about and addressing the issue of childhood hunger in their communities, beginning on Global Youth Service Day (GYSD) (April 15-17), and continuing through Hunger Action Month (September) and Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week (November 14-20). Sodexo Lead Organizers will also build new partnerships in their community and increase public awareness about the issue of hunger and young people's role in solving the problem. Applications are due by midnight on Friday, February 10. Learn more at: [www.YSA.org/grants/sodexoleadorganizer](http://www.YSA.org/grants/sodexoleadorganizer)

### Sodexo Youth Grants (Deadline: February 25)

Over 17 million children in the United States live at risk of hunger; that's 1 in 4 children who rely on free and reduced-price school breakfast and lunch programs as their only guaranteed meals. YSA (Youth Service America) and Sodexo are calling on

young people, ages 5-25, to help make sure your peers don't have to worry about where their next meal will come from, and can instead focus on learning and leading healthy and productive lives. YSA will award 100 Sodexo Youth Grants of \$500 each to support youth-led service projects that address the issue of childhood hunger on Global Youth Service Day (April 15-17, 2011.) We're looking for projects that engage your peers, friends, families, neighbors, Sodexo employees, and other community members in creative, youth-inspired solutions to ending childhood hunger in your community. Applications are due February 25. Learn more at: [www.YSA.org/grants/sodexoyouth](http://www.YSA.org/grants/sodexoyouth)

**Disney Friends for Change Grants (Deadline: March 10)** YSA (Youth Service America), together with Disney, is now accepting applications from youth around the world for the Disney Friends for Change Grants. The grant funds youth-led service projects that focus on making environmentally friendly changes and engage youth on [Global Youth Service Day](http://www.YSA.org/globalyouthservice), April 15-17. The Disney Friends for Change program will award 50 \$500 grants to youth-led service projects around the world that demonstrate youth leadership, creativity, and the commitment to making a positive impact on the environment. Applicants must be between the ages of 5-25 and be associated with a school or organization. Applications are due March 10. Learn more at: [www.YSA.org/grants/disney-friends-change-grants](http://www.YSA.org/grants/disney-friends-change-grants)

### President Position Announcement

The Board of Directors of Xavier University Preparatory School (XUP) seeks a qualified candidate to serve as the President of the School. XUP is a Catholic college preparatory school open to female students in 7 thru 12 grades. Founded in 1915, XUP is located in uptown New Orleans on historical Magazine Street, and serves as an anchor in this area of the city. Recognized twice as an Exemplary Secondary School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education, Xavier University Preparatory School inherits a tradition of high quality Catholic education from its foundress, St. Katharine Drexel, and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Review of applications begins on **February 15, 2011 and continues until the position is filled.** Qualified candidates may apply by submitting a letter of interest, a resume, salary requirements and the names of three persons who can provide references to: Eleanora Bazile, Chair of the Search Committee [eleanora@bellsouth.net](mailto:eleanora@bellsouth.net) For a complete job description, please log on to: [www.xavierprep.com](http://www.xavierprep.com).

**Divine Word Missionaries** is an international missionary community of over 6,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.  
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