



**SERVING IN BERTIE COUNTY:** Brother Jack Henn, top, and Brother Curt Kedley, above, are settling into their ministry in North Carolina. Brother Jack works with several programs in the county that serve the elderly, including the Bertie County Council on Aging. Brother Curt works at a local day-care facility for mentally and emotionally challenged adults.

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**GLENMARY** BROTHERS

# LIVES OF SERVICE

*Since Glenmary's founding in 1939, brothers have played an integral role in the society's home mission ministry. Today, the ministry of Glenmary brothers is as unique as the vocation itself.*

**By Margaret Gabriel**

**B**rother David Henley's ministry has always had a special focus on social justice, especially those issues affecting Spanish speakers living in Glenmary missions. As a way to connect with these folks, as well as others in the community, he is currently working at a poultry plant in western Arkansas. Not quite a job most would envision for a religious brother! But he says his religious vocation is an integral part of his work processing and packaging chickens.

"As (Glenmary) brothers, we live out our vocation in the world, not just in 'churchy' settings," says Brother David. "My coworkers at the plant know I'm a brother and while we're working, I get questions about religious life, the Church, Mary, the pope—I call it 'chicken line theology.'"

The ministries of Glenmary brothers like Brother David are as unique as the missionary vocation to which they are called. And that vocation isn't always understood by non-Catholics or even some Catholics! Although the charisms of religious orders vary, all religious brothers make a promise, by Oath or vows, to a community and dedicate ▶



PHOTO / COURTESY BROTHER DAVID HENLEY

**CHICKEN LINE THEOLOGY:** Brother David Henley, who professed his Final Oath in 2006, says his work at a western Arkansas chicken processing plant is a great way to establish relationships with others. Often he fields questions from his coworkers about the Church, the pope and Catholicism in general.

◀ their lives to ministry. Glenmary brothers take an Oath of poverty, chastity, obedience and prayer and they dedicate their lives to service in the home missions. They describe their home mission ministry as more about “being” than “doing.”

In Glenmary’s early days, “brothers took care of the temporalities of missions or houses,” says Father Dominic Duggins, Glenmary’s development director and first vice president. “They worked as farmers, carpenters, plumbers or typists. Around 1962, there was a general recognition that not all brothers were suited for this type of work.

“Although some brothers continued to work in trades,” Father Dominic, who entered Glenmary as a brother in formation in 1961, says, “we also began study-

ing English, theology and social work. In the late ’60s, brothers began to take secular jobs as a way of giving witness to their Christian values.”

**B**rothers Jack Henn and Curt Kedley are giving that witness in Bertie County, N.C. To the curious, they explain their vocation by simply telling folks they are with the Catholic Church and involved in community outreach.

“As we develop friendships with the people,” Brother Jack says, “they feel more comfortable asking questions and I answer them. By our presence, we bring a perspective of the Church and of brotherhood to people who may never have met a Catholic let alone a religious brother.”

Glenmary brothers locate themselves within a Glenmary mission area and then search out creative ways to address the needs of the local church and the wider community.

When Brother Jack and Brother Curt arrived in the county last summer, neither knew where there ministry would lead them. Today, both have become involved with specialized ministry and in the civic life of the community.

Brother Jack spends his days working with those in local nursing homes and with senior citizens through a local hospice.

Brother Curt calls himself a “sanitation engineer” at the Mary Alice Adult Day Care Center. But recently his job title was clarified.

“One of the center’s clients told me the other day, ‘you’re the best janitor we have!’” Brother Curt laughs. For 20 hours a week, he mops floors and wipes table tops, as he interacts with mentally and emotionally-challenged adults who spend their days at the center.

Brother Curt has always worked to build relationships with members of African-

American communities in the mission areas he has served. For his efforts, he was recognized with the 2001 Call to Brotherhood Award from the Religious Brothers Conference for building bridges between the black and white communities in Sparta, Ga., a ministry he continues today in Bertie County.

## Choosing Brotherhood

**E**ight years ago, my parish priest in Monticello, Iowa, invited me to consider a vocation to the priesthood. Although I greatly reverence the priesthood, I did not feel God was calling me to that vocation.

The associate vocation director of my diocese later introduced me to Glenmary Home Missioners and religious brotherhood. I learned Glenmary brothers serve as nurses, parish brothers, workers for Habit for Humanity. Some do prison ministry and work in justice and peace ministries. It seemed I had found my calling!

Glenmary’s founder, Father William Howard Bishop, desired that a Glenmary brother be “a jack of all trades” in the missions. Feeling this described me, I applied to Glenmary as a candidate for brotherhood in 2005 and am now in my second year of novitiate.

I chose brotherhood because I desire to give more of my time to serving God’s people; to walk with people in their struggles; to be that Catholic presence in areas of the South where there are so few Catholics.

My years of formation have helped affirm my vocation to Glenmary brotherhood. As I do fix-up projects for those in need, visit and assist the elderly, minister to prison inmates, teach religious education and do whatever else needs to be done, I realize that I am receiving much more than I give.

A religious brother has the freedom to focus on many different ministries by using his gifts and talents to do what God is calling him to. To me, brotherhood can be summed up in one word: *servant*. A servant to God and his people.

—Craig Digmann



**M**ost people who know Glenmary associate Glenmary brothers with the Brothers Building Crew. From the mid-1960s through the mid-1990s three crews of brothers traveled throughout the home missions building churches, rectories and church halls. And today several Glenmary brothers continue that building ministry, including Brother Virgil Siefker.

Nearly a year ago, the word went out that Brother Virgil was available to assist with building projects in the missions or to do general repair work. In the months since that announcement, Brother Virgil hasn't been idle. He has worked on projects in Windsor, N.C.; Louisville, Ga.; Idabel, Okla.; Treadway, Tenn., and Logan, W.Va.

He most recently finished converting a storefront in Stillmore, Ga., into a worship space for the local Catholic community. His carpentry talents have helped this mainly Hispanic community of about 40 people create a suitable worship space. Prior to obtaining this storefront, the community met in private homes or at a community center.

"This work reminds me of working with the building crew," Brother Virgil says. "The people are so welcoming, they welcome you into their family."

Brother Ken Woods was a member of the Brothers Building Crew in its early days and has also served as a parish brother. He has spent the past 15 years providing patient care in clinic and nursing home settings as a licensed practical nurse with a specialty in geriatrics.

In 2004, Brother Ken moved to Cincinnati to help provide care to Glenmary's senior members, a ministry he shares with Brother Dennis Craig.

"I always said that I received more from the nursing home residents than I gave," Brother Ken says. "They were enjoyable



**SERVING SENIOR MEMBERS:** Brother Dennis Craig gives Brother Tom Kelly a haircut as Brother Ken Woods visits. In their ministry as care providers for Glenmary's senior members, Brother Dennis and Brother Ken frequently visit the Cincinnati nursing home where many of the senior members, like Brother Tom, live. In addition, they annually visit senior members still living in the missions.

to be around and the same is true of Glenmary's senior members."

In addition to those in the Glenmary residence, Brother Ken and Brother Dennis care for senior members living at Mercy Franciscan Terrace (a Cincinnati care facility) and annually visit senior members living and working in the missions.

Brother Dennis also oversees the schedule of visitors as the guest master for the Glenmary residence in Cincinnati. He ensures guests have a room and helps them feel comfortable and welcomed.

"I try to put myself in someone else's shoes and anticipate what they would want," he says. "I try to be a true brother to people, not just a religious. I want people to see that I really care about them."

Caring is an integral part of the ministry of Brother Larry Johnson in Hartford, Ky. Brother Larry is Glenmary's personnel director and spends a week or two each month visiting Glenmary priests and brothers in the missions.

He also serves on the board of directors of "Together We Care," a

coalition of schools, churches, law enforcement agencies and businesses that work together in his Kentucky county to prevent substance abuse in young people.

"Some of the other board members have a hard time understanding what a brother is," Brother Larry says, "but they know that I do service because of my vocation as a brother and that's the important thing."

**S**ervice is at the heart of the vocation of Glenmary's 14 brothers: service to the Church, to Glenmary, to the community, to the world. Brother David says it's a vocation that calls him to be a "brother to all," and explains that his life of service is a path to relationships.

"Service is a way to form solidarity with people," Brother David says. "I work alongside the people and while I'm doing that, we enter into a relationship. Through that intimacy I might learn about their needs which leads me to service as I try to find ways to work with them to help meet their needs. Service is what ties it all together." ✚