

Bishop Alfredo Novak, C.Ss.R. and his coat of arms (*above*), which features footprints walking over water toward a mountainous region with the inscription, “He has sent me to proclaim.”

IN REMEMBRANCE: ALFRED ERNEST NOVAK, C.Ss.R.

After suffering from multiple health complications for a number of years, Bishop Emeritus Alfred E. Novak of Coari died on December 4 in Brazil. A talented and faithful missionary, he served the people of Brazil for 56 years. Born on June 2, 1930, Alfred was the youngest of Frank and Mary Novak’s six children. His father managed a bank in Dwight, NE and his mother was an accomplished pianist and vocalist. During the Depression in 1934, the family moved to Omaha, where they became active members of Holy Name Parish.

Four of the Novak children were called to religious life. His older sister, Lucille (Sr. Mary Elizabeth, deND), joined the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Alfred followed in the footsteps of his two older brothers, Frank and Henry, and joined the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Alfred attended St. Joseph’s Preparatory College Seminary in Kirkwood, MO and novitiate at St. Clement’s in DeSoto, MO. He completed theological studies at Immaculate Conception Seminary in Oconomowoc, and was ordained to the priesthood on July 2, 1956.

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Above: Fr. Alfred Novak (standing, second from right) with his class of 11 on ordination day behind Archbishop Albert Meyer of Milwaukee (later Cardinal of Chicago), Provincial John McCormick, Rector Henry Sutton and Fr. Greg Lahey, student socius.

Right: The four Novak brothers (left to right) Alfred, Philip, Henry and Frank.

Below, left to right: Fr. Frank, Bishop Al and Fr. Henry in 2006.



1958-1968

In his first assignment, Fr. Alfred was sent to Brazil as a missionary to serve people living in tiny villages deep in the interior along the Amazon River. He traveled up and down the Amazon, evangelizing and ministering to the spiritual needs of the faithful, for 10 years.

1968-1975

Padre Alfredo's ministry eventually brought him to Belem, a seaport city on the Atlantic Ocean. About the same time, the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (NCBB) launched a nation-wide evangelization program, *Campanha da Fraternidade* (CDF). The "Campaign for Brotherhood" was designed to strengthen Catholics in the faith and implant Gospel values into daily life. Padre Alfredo was chosen as director in the city of Belem. His campaign was so successful that the bishops nominated him to be the national coordinator.

The NCBB recognized his outstanding organizational skills and chose him as national executive secretary of CDF. In five years, he transformed the CFD from a seasonal Lenten program into a truly national fixture of the Brazilian church and state, showing how faith touches everyday life.

The Campaign for Brotherhood received instant national attention with a series of 30-second video spots on radio and television. Religious hymns were aired throughout the country, and colorful posters were hung throughout the State of Parana proclaiming the Church's concerns about social issues.

1979-1989

Padre Alfredo was appointed an auxiliary bishop in the

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Archdiocese of Sao Paulo by Pope John Paul II on May 27, 1979. He obediently accepted the fullness of Holy Orders and was ordained by Cardinal Evaristo Arns. Cardinal Arns gave him the Episcopal Region of Lapa to shepherd in his new role. With his usual vigor and initiative, he worked first among the poor and most abandoned, who were struggling to survive. Following his heart, Bishop Novak focused on the street kids, many of whom slept under viaducts, stole food from street markets and were targets for the police. He added a trade school to the Campaign for Brotherhood to give these lost children a sense of dignity.

1989-2007

Pope John Paul II appointed Bishop Novak as Ordinary of the Diocese of Paranaguá on March 15, 1989. He achieved many notable accomplishments during the 18 years he served. He welcomed three congregations of religious women to work with the poor: St. Francis Missionaries of Mary, Sisters of St. Francis and St. Joseph, and Sisters of the Congregation of the Little Mission for the Deaf. He revitalized Leo XIII Middle School, which grew from less than 200 students to 1,000, and instituted high academic and disciplinary standards. To accommodate the large increase in enrollment, he built new classrooms and a first-class gymnasium.

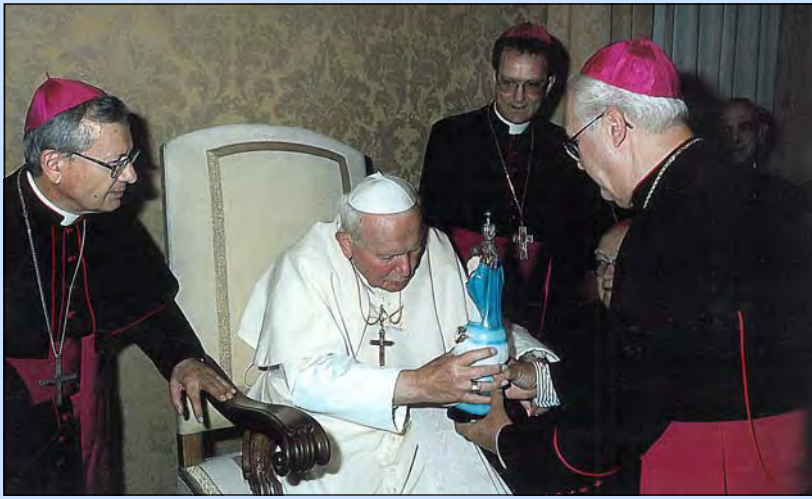
He assumed control of *Radio Serra Do Mar, 1520 AM* in the nearby city of Antonina and negotiated with local television to air the Catholic *Rede Vida* program to evangelize, communicate family values, promote the Church as “communion,” develop responsible citizenship, teach and defend the sacredness of unborn life, and promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

He created the Institute for Faith Education, devising a Catechism for children and youth with Vatican Council II and papal teachings to integrate the truths of faith with real life, helping the next generation to commit to live exemplary Christian lives.

He renewed devotion to Our Lady of Rosio (Our Lady of the Morning Dew) among the faithful. Some 200 years ago, a group of fishermen noticed that a statue of the Virgin Mary holding the Child Jesus had washed ashore and was caught in a thicket of seaweed near Paranaguá. They untangled the seaweed and named the statue, which was wet with the morning dew, “Our Lady of the Morning Dew.” Devotion spread rapidly – the faithful reported miracles, healings and conversions of hearts – but had declined over the ensuing centuries.

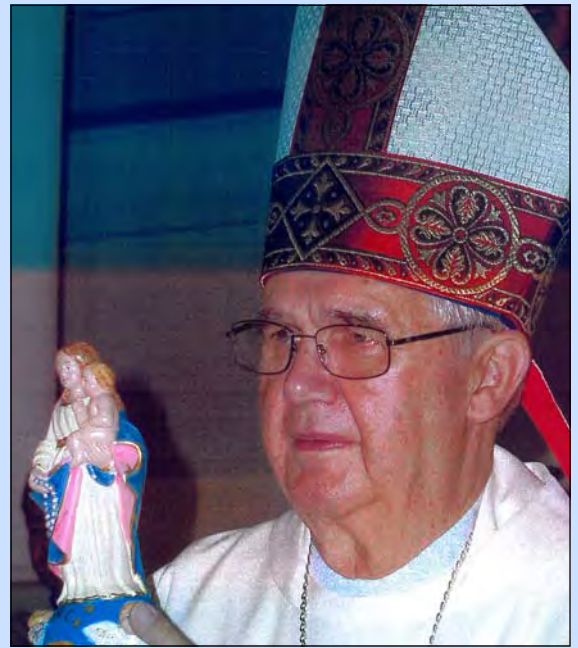
Recognizing the importance of Our Lady of Rosio, Bishop Novak transferred his strong devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help to the local patroness. A new fervor spread, increasing devotees from a few hundred to hundreds of thousands throughout the entire State of Parana. He took Our Lady of the Morning Dew on tour to all 17 dioceses within Parana in 1998-2000, preaching first in the large cathedrals and then visiting 399 cities and towns. The city and diocese of Paranaguá and the State of Parana have been solemnly dedicated to Our Lady of Rosio, Patroness, Queen and Heavenly Advocate of the People of God.

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Above: Bishop Novak presents a statue of Our Lady of Rosio to Pope John Paul II.

Right: Bishop Novak with the statue of Our Lady of Rosio.



Bishop Novak conducted negotiations with the Mayor of Paranaguá for a Marian Center of Pilgrimage in honor of Our Lady of Rosio. Each diocese takes a turn to organize a pilgrimage to her in Paranaguá on the 15th of each month. As many as 30 to 300 buses bring pilgrims from throughout Parana and neighboring states to honor Our Lady of Rosio and invoke her loving motherly help and guidance. Tourism boosts the local economy, and the freewill offerings of pilgrims are helping to build the impressive Marian Center.

Even in his retirement, Bishop Al continued to promote devotion to Our Lady of Rosio throughout Brazil: 130,000 attended the novena for her solemn feast day on November 15, 2011. An estimated 1 million people have venerated Our Lady of Rosio, imploring her to “cover” them with the “dew” of her Son’s divine graces.

Bishop Al’s body was venerated in the Church of Our Lady of Fatima and the Redemptorist Shrine of Our Lady of Rocio. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at the Cathedral of Paranaguá and Bishop Al was buried as he wished – in Brazil. May he rest in eternal peace.

Adapted from an article Fr. Frank Novak wrote in tribute to his beloved brother in 2011.

Photos courtesy of Fr. Frank and Denver Province Archives

PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF ROSIO

Glorious Lady of the Morning Dew,
Mother and Queen of all your children.
Look upon us here to praise and bless
you for all we are, all we have, and
for all we are called to be.

Humbly we ask, O kind Mother,
to look with mercy on all our
moments of lack of love and our sins.

At your feet we implore you,
dear Mother of the Morning Dew,
rain grace upon grace on us,
our country, our families,
our sons and daughters,
the aged, sick and afflicted,
the depressed and excluded.

Strengthen our communities;
may they grow from the “dew” of peace,
justice, love, pardon and mercy.

Virgin Lady of the Morning Dew,
dear, holy Mother, bless us,
protect us, and bring us to eternal
union with your Son, Jesus.

Amen, so may it be!