

RICHARD WILLIAM TIMM, CSC

RICHARD WILLIAM TIMM was born in Michigan City, Indiana, USA, on March 2, 1923 to parents of German descent. His father, Joseph, was paymaster at the Pullman Company, the manufacturer of railway cars; his mother, Josephine Otten, was a housewife. Both were devout Roman Catholics, and TIMM recalls that he and his three siblings—an older brother and two younger sisters—“were raised with a strong sense of duty, including fidelity to our religion and its practices.” TIMM served the local church as an altar boy, and attended St. Mary’s Grade School and then St. Mary’s High School, where he was taught by Holy Cross Sisters.

His first awareness of missionaries came when he was just four. Having tagged along to St. Mary’s with his brother he met Sister Cleophas—who gave him a silver-framed picture of St. Therese, patroness of the missions. Sister Cleophas later became his first grade teacher and inspired his love and devotion.

For TIMM the missionary vocation—rather than parish—always matched his personal inclinations. From earliest years he loved adventure; indeed his first memory is of being lost in the city at age three. In subsequent years he remembers his father gathering his sons into a great armchair and reading them stirring yarns of physical heroism and moral valor in exotic places. Among such tales were *Winnetou the Apache Chief* by Karl May, in which a white man became blood brother to an American Indian. Although in childhood games the Indians “were the bad guys,” from stories such as these TIMM imbibed an “impression of the brotherhood between all peoples.”

TIMM took an early pleasure in nature, as well, going off for long solitary walks in nearby woods and fields and cultivating a small patch of wild flowers in his backyard. This love of nature later led him into biological research.

Studying hard, he also led a vigorous life outside the classroom, playing football and basketball at St. Mary’s High and, although shy,

competing successfully in debates and in state-wide Latin competitions. During summer vacations he worked at various jobs, one summer soliciting door-to-door for a furnace cleaning company, another selling ice cream and milk shakes at a tourist stand on the lake front of his home town.

TIMM felt very much in the shadow of his older brother, who preceded him in school by a year and a half and was brilliantly successful in all his endeavors—a loquacious, winning salesman, a natural leader, and a football and basketball hero. Nevertheless he learned to be successful in his own right.

In his final high school year TIMM clarified his religious ambitions. He considered the Jesuits, and indeed won a four-year scholarship to a Jesuit university, but was drawn to the “obvious holiness and intellectual depth” of Father William Robinson, a Holy Cross priest who gave the Lenten series in his parish. After meeting Robinson TIMM visited Moreau (Holy Cross) Seminary at Notre Dame University where he was assured he could study for a Bachelor of Science in biology. Therefore on September 9, 1940 TIMM entered Moreau to take the path to the priesthood, a path from which he never wavered.

To his disappointment, however, a new Superior of the order had been appointed, who required the seminarians to study for the degree of Bachelor of Arts. TIMM did so but squeezed into his academic program as much science as he could, including zoology, organic chemistry and histology (a branch of anatomy that deals with the minute structure of plant and animal tissue). In these courses he was often the only seminarian and very conspicuous, with his six feet two inches of height covered by a black habit and cape. He graduated *magna cum laude* in 1945 with a B.A. in Philosophy.

In April that year his brother was killed in World War II. The day he heard the news TIMM promised himself to work twice as hard “so my life could make up for the shortness of his.”

In preparation for ordination TIMM now embarked upon four years of theological studies at Holy Cross College in Washington, D.C. The attitudes at the college struck him as both anti-intellectual and anti-scientific: the church had not yet made its peace with evolution, and the study of science generally was still viewed as “dangerous.” The young scholar might have rebelled against theology altogether had he not read the works of French philosophers and theologians Etienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain and others who were the spiritual forerunners of the

Second Vatican Council. Their approach to theology comported better with his own evolving faith.

After his ordination on June 8, 1949 Holy Cross assigned TIMM the responsibility of establishing a department of science at St. Gregory's, its newly opened college in Dhaka, East Pakistan. In order to do so he had first to acquire a Masters Degree. Enrolling at Catholic University of America (also in Washington), he plunged into the study of biology with such fervor that in two years he had completed not only the requirements for his masters, but the course work for a Ph.D. The order permitted him a year to write his doctoral dissertation on nematodes ("elongated cylindrical worms parasitic in animals or plants, or free-living in soil or water," commonly called roundworms). His paper, "The Marine Nematodes of Chesapeake Bay," was published by the Marine Biological Laboratory at Solomons Island, Maryland.

Having completed his formal education the young priest traveled to Dhaka in 1952, traveling via France to visit the mother house of the Holy Cross Fathers, and Rome where he and his companions had an audience with Pope Pius XII. He arrived in Dhaka, East Bengal (Pakistan) in late October.

As a naturalist TIMM delighted in the exotic birds and blossoms he found in Bengal, but his new home took adjusting to. In the beginning he suffered from dysentery and worms. He found traffic so maddening that he gave up driving a car, and yet found using hand-pulled rickshaws repugnant. Consequently, he began getting around the crowded city lanes on a bicycle; today he uses a motorcycle.

For the next two decades TIMM's life would center around Notre Dame College (as St. Gregory's was renamed) and science, establishing the science curriculum for the college, teaching many of the courses, and devising appropriate teaching materials. The latter necessitated writing a biology textbook based on the local flora and fauna.

TIMM also taught at Dhaka Medical College under a Fulbright Lectureship in Parasitology (1953-54), and continued his research on jute and rice nematode parasites at the Agricultural Research Institute, Tejgaon and under a grant from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Pakistan (1954-70). At the same time he served as external examiner in zoology for the University of Dhaka, and in parasitology for the Bangladesh Agricultural University.

Throughout the 1960s his religious responsibilities were also heavy.

He served as Religious Superior of Notre Dame's Holy Cross Fathers, Secretary of their Vicariate Council and Director of Seminarians.

On his first scientific trip in Bengal (1956 to Cox's Bazaar, near the Burmese border) TIMM collected specimens of nematodes with path-breaking results. Of the 89 species of marine nematodes he collected, 56 were new to science! His findings were published as the first issue of the *Proceedings of the Pakistan Academy of Sciences* (1961).

In 1963 TIMM joined a team of Bengali, American and European scientists to investigate the Sunderbans—a crocodile and tiger infested mangrove swamp in the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers—where he gathered materials for four scientific papers in which he described 2 new genera and 14 new species of nematodes.

Some of TIMM's research had important ramifications for Bengali agriculture. At the invitation of the Central Jute Research Institute (1960) he studied the influence of nematode parasites on a wilting disease affecting jute, East Pakistan's most important export crop. He discovered that certain nematodes stimulated root growth and enhanced yields if a common soil fungus (*Rhizoctonia solani*) was suppressed; other research done in collaboration with a plant pathologist at the Jute Institute showed that a common imported nematicide failed to produce higher yields commensurate with its cost. For the Food and Agriculture Council of Pakistan TIMM conducted a survey in 1963 of parasitic and soil nematodes affecting other local plants, and in the same year he won a SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) Postdoctoral Research Fellowship to make an extensive study in Thailand and the Philippines of parasitic nematodes affecting commercial plants such as rice, jute, papaya, pineapple, wheat and coffee. He toured these countries for two months each and collated his data at the University of California at Davis when he was there on home leave; his findings were published as a book by SEATO in 1965.

TIMM attributes his prodigious output during the 1950s and 1960s (over 70 scientific papers) to the fact that he was the only nematologist in Bangladesh. His fellow priests barely understood what he was doing but they respected his work and helped him by assuming his religious and educational responsibilities when the demands on his time were too great, or when he was away.

In 1968 TIMM left East Pakistan to spend two years' leave in the United States. With the title of Visiting Professor he joined the faculty at Davis, California where he taught nematology and zoology and pur-

sued his research. His years there coincided with great societal upheavals in the U.S. concerning the Vietnam War, civil rights, black power, and Cesar Chavez's efforts to organize the farm laborers in California. These issues gripped both the campus and the parish of St. James, where he officiated on weekends. Harkening to the liberal teachings of the Second Vatican Council, TIMM took a stand. He helped organize an ecumenical memorial service for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose stand for "oppressed people's God-given rights and human dignity" TIMM considered, "an act of radical Christianity." As part of a group called Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam he opposed American participation in the war; some Saturdays he joined student volunteers who were aiding a self-help housing project for low-income Mexican-American farmers. In his sermons he addressed the issues of social justice and the war, a fact not always appreciated by his more conservative parishioners, and he spoke on behalf of the Holy Cross missions in East Pakistan. At the same time TIMM managed to complete a major work, *Revision of the Nematode Order Desmoscolecida*, published by the University of California Press (1970).

During his second year at Davis TIMM spent 10 weeks with a National Science Foundation team at McMurdo Naval Base in Antarctica. The first nematologist to be part of Operation Deep Freeze, he collected soil, freshwater and marine nematode specimens, including three new genera and nine new species. His research led eventually to three publications. While residing at the base TIMM also served as Catholic chaplain, and grew a beard which he decided to keep on his return to California, "mainly to show people in the parish who despised 'hippies' that I was no different from the person I had been without a beard."

Returning to Bengal in October 1970, TIMM participated in the International Symposium of Nematology in Italy enroute. On his arrival in Dhaka he learned that he had been appointed college principal "effective immediately." But a natural catastrophe intervened which was to change the direction of his life.

With his colleagues at the college TIMM listened to the radio on the night of November 12, 1970 as storm warnings were issued. When the signal reached 6 the announcer abandoned numbers altogether and began warning urgently of "grave danger." The winds along the coast that night reached 120 miles per hour, and a tidal bore 20 feet high swept over the coastal villages, drowning some 250,000 people. The government was not prepared to respond; it was 17 days before relief units of the Pakistan army were mobilized. In the meantime individuals and

organizations did what they could. With volunteers from Notre Dame, TIMM organized a relief team. When the government declined their assistance they joined HELP (Heartland Emergency Lifesaving Project) which had just been set up by Fazle Hasan Abed (1980 Magsaysay Awardee for Community Leadership), and Viquar Chowdhury and others to assist the cyclone victims. TIMM and his colleagues, along with American doctors and their wives from the SEATO Cholera Research Laboratory, rushed aid to Manpura Island, a low-lying region in one of the most heavily damaged areas. More than half Manpura's population of 30,000 had perished—in particular its children, women and elderly; the waters and coast were dotted with their bloated bodies and the bodies of drowned animals. TIMM and his group made their headquarters in a local primary school whose battered brick building could still be used as a makeshift storehouse, but they slept in tents outside.

SEATO doctors handled problems of health and the distribution of relief goods, and the Notre Dame team conducted a survey to ascertain who had survived and what assets they still possessed, e.g. cows, ducks, tools, building materials. The team set up 1,000 tents for the homeless survivors, and after the doctors left TIMM himself became an acting paramedic.

TIMM found much to admire in the island people's stoic yet enterprising response to disaster: men soon constructed dwellings from the flood's debris, and journeyed to the mainland to seek new wives. On the other hand, despite HELP's efforts to distribute relief goods equally, village leaders often took the lion's share: one village headman commandeered 17 blankets for his immediate family.

By January the Manpura relief volunteers felt they could return to Dhaka, and TIMM took up his post as principal at Notre Dame. Shortly thereafter HELP asked him to become Field Coordinator for the rehabilitation (in contrast to relief) program of Manpura Island. Leaving his college chores in the hands of a willing colleague, TIMM went happily, counting on the fact that his colleagues considered an absent superior a good one.

On the island again TIMM was actively involved in assisting the government in a crash program to build new housing before the rainy season, and in acquiring cattle and water buffalo to replace those drowned. HELP decided to follow the directive of government that all rehabilitation projects be carried out through cooperatives, an interesting but highly idealistic experiment at the time, but one which TIMM was later to assess as successful.

HELP workers held meetings to introduce the idea. Since rehabilitation goods from non-government organizations (NGOs) were to flow through cooperatives, virtually everyone joined. Eventually 75 such groups were formed—among fishermen to build new boats, among farmers to rebuild villages and receive needed seeds, tools and animals.

To assure that cattle were distributed fairly, HELP required each cooperative to hold a lottery and submit members' names in the order in which they were drawn. The results were astonishing: in one predominantly Muslim village, all the Hindus came last, in another, members of the leading family held the first four places. Yet villagers swore that the lottery had been carried out fairly. This was TIMM's first introduction to the power structure of the village; in egregious cases he intervened and banned the offenders.

Political tensions between East and West Pakistan, which had been building for some time, were exacerbated by the late response of the government in West Pakistan to the cyclone disaster. Along with the political tensions came heightened ethnic and religious hostilities—between Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims, and between Bengali Muslims (many of whom were originally lower caste Hindu converts) and Hindus (the minority, but often the landed class).

In March 1971, on a trip to Chittagong to buy cattle, TIMM heard news of the slaughter in Dhaka of "120,000 Bengalis" by Pakistan soldiers. Although the actual number later proved to be "several hundred," TIMM was a near victim of the patriotic hysteria that followed. Tanned, bearded and wearing surplus US army pants, he was mistaken for a West Pakistani soldier and escaped danger only by addressing the angry crowd in Bengali, telling them of his relief efforts on Manpura.

During the succeeding nine months the Mukti Bahini (Bengali freedom fighters), armed and trained by India, waged guerrilla war against the Pakistani army and those loyal to the regime. TIMM helped provide accurate information to the outside world about events and conditions in his area of East Pakistan. Letters by him and others in HELP were used to sway the U.S. Senate Armed Forces Committee to call for a temporary halt of U.S. military aid to Pakistan, and to counteract Pakistan's propaganda picture of life as normal in Bengal.

The treatment of Hindus, TIMM found, was one of the most depressing features of the hostilities. After the initial weeks, when the army attacked villages indiscriminately, the full force of the army's wrath fell on Hindus or *kafirs* (non-believers). And when Bengali Muslims saw

that they were safe, many joined in the persecution of *kafirs*. On Manpura, Hindus (who comprised 30 percent of the population) were terrorized by the army and systematically excluded from all government relief and rehabilitation. TIMM boldly attempted to stop such actions by claiming authority from high government officials he either knew or pretended to know. This frequently succeeded.

At the same time he forged ahead with the rehabilitation program, distributing 2,000 pairs of cattle, launching an agricultural loan program, and overseeing the completion of thousands of new homes. In July he returned to Dhaka, “relieved in mind and body,” particularly the latter: he was 40 pounds lighter than he had been eight months before.

When he left Manpura TIMM pondered the problems of disaster relief and rehabilitation. What people needed most, he concluded, was to be partially fed and clothed, and aided in their efforts to house themselves and get a new crop in the ground. The key was to furnish them with *money* as quickly as possible so they could purchase food and other materials within the country (this would have the added benefit of stimulating the local economy) and get the next rice crop into the ground. Baby foods, milk powder, medicines and other items sent by well-meaning donors from abroad were often inappropriate and tied up transport, unloading and storage facilities. A catastrophe, he also realized, is not the time to introduce unfamiliar foods: the Bengal famine of 1943 had shown that even when starving the people did not eat the plentiful but unfamiliar frogs and river dolphin.

The insistence on rehabilitation through cooperatives “was a good experience,” TIMM concluded, but building cluster villages was a big mistake. The erection of three large cyclone shelters was useful, but the numerous smaller shelters—with a ground floor for ordinary purposes, and a second floor and roof for cyclone protection—were more suitable and better adapted to the scattered living patterns of the islanders.

After he returned to his responsibilities at Notre Dame in August TIMM continued gathering information on conditions in the countryside. About this time the two founders of HELP, Abed and Chowdhury, started a new organization in London to lobby for independence which they named Help Bangladesh. Afraid the government would crack down on HELP in Dhaka, the Governing Body decided to separate itself from the London operation and elected TIMM chairman. This gave TIMM the opportunity to continue working with NGOs and ensuring that foreign aid reached those for whom it was intended. With his previous experience, and his knowledge of the country and the language, he was

more valuable than most of the hundreds of foreigners who were brought in after the war by various relief agencies. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) agreed, and appointed him its Roving National Field Representative, responsible for helping set up rehabilitation projects in the most war-torn areas. The position allowed TIMM to return to Manpura as needed, where the protection of Hindus was his main concern.

Hostilities escalated toward year's end and on more than one occasion TIMM was in potential danger; but in each case former students appeared to vouch for him. Foreign NGOs, including CRS, began moving their expatriate staffs out of East Pakistan and suspending operations. Undaunted, TIMM—who had committed himself to Bengal from the day he arrived—switched his activities to the Christian Organization for Relief and Rehabilitation (CORR), established in January 1971, which took up the slack left by other relief organizations. By November TIMM was supervising 55 projects and was still moving food and other materials to needy areas. The War of Liberation of Bangladesh reached its climax with the entry of the Indian army into the fray on December 7, 1971; Pakistan's forces surrendered on December 16. Independence for Bangladesh brought 10,000,000 refugees streaming back from India.

As Relief Coordinator for CORR, TIMM now set out to help convert relief projects into a nationwide reconstruction program. CORR drew up a US\$30 million budget and received an immediate pledge for US\$12 million from the Vatican relief committee. On December 28 TIMM and CORR Director Fr. Benjamin Labbé showed their skeletal plans to Bangladesh's new Secretary of Relief and Rehabilitation. By the first of the year they were ready to start work. Their immediate goal was to rehabilitate more than 200,000 families, assist them in rebuilding their plundered homes and in restoring their means of livelihood. CORR distributed oxen, ploughs and seed to farmers; sewing machines to garment makers; and carpenter, blacksmith and goldsmith tools to craftsmen.

TIMM worked seven days a week, traversing the country in CORR's 7-passenger airplane, designed for short take-off and landings, and in fiberglass speedboats furnished by CORSO, New Zealand. He and his CORR teammates developed a reputation for mobilizing relief quickly, with the least possible overhead. Because of their acumen new funds flooded in, including an unsolicited US\$1.5 million from the Dutch Committee for Aid to Refugees. In May 1972, at the peak of its reconstruction efforts, CORR was disbursing more than US\$1 million a

week!

As TIMM's reputation grew, so did the demand for his counsel, and his friend, Dr. Jon Rohde, a colleague in HELP who had returned home, wrote, "We have directed virtually every aid-giving group to you, including the UN!"

The dramatic events of 1971 and 1972 had redirected TIMM's own life, his interests, concerns and his interpretation of missionary work. He had abandoned conventional teaching and life as a research scientist, and with them his cloistered distance from the people. He had learned to speak Bengali fluently, and had rejected his previous aloofness to politics. As he later wrote, "My attitude changed rapidly . . . when it became apparent that politics was resulting in genocide . . . and after the war I learned that even such non-political activities as relief, rehabilitation and development are in actuality highly political and that without some kind of political involvement working for the poor is only an exercise in charity."

In assessing the consequences of CORR's efficient relief efforts TIMM recognized there was a negative side to it: the inculcation of an attitude of dependency among relief recipients. The key to breaking the cycle of dependency, TIMM concluded, was breaking the cycle of neediness itself. This meant economic development. From 1973 on, therefore, CORR redirected its efforts to this more comprehensive goal.

CORR's philosophy of development was non-technocratic. It emphasized understanding people and their needs in the context of their culture and socio-economic structure. It encouraged development based on shared goals, and was pragmatic, undertaking pilot projects, working through small groups, and—in order to help people help themselves—stressing practical training. Like TIMM, other leaders of CORR had been in the country for many years or were locals; they knew the people and their needs and consequently were able to begin programs of help, often before other agencies knew needs existed.

For example, the war had created many widows, among them a large proportion of Hindus who are not permitted to remarry. One of CORR's most successful projects addressed their desperate need for livelihood. This was the Jute Works, a cooperative handicrafts-for-export project, that capitalized on the cheap raw material readily available in the country, jute, "the golden fiber of Bangladesh." Building upon an already existing women's cooperative and training center founded by Holy Cross Sister Olivia Salazar, the Jute Works promoted

development of cooperatives of village handicraft producers country-wide. Although the work was done by women in their homes, design, quality and the marketing process were firmly controlled by CORR in Dhaka. Today over 30,000 women make Jute Works items whose annual export worth exceeds US\$2 million.

The Jute Works has not been an unqualified success, however. The income provided individual women is usually a supplementary rather than a full income, and efforts to diversify into leather crafting and ceramics failed. Moreover, the Jute Works has had on occasion to confront the wrenching problem of dishonesty in its leadership.

Development in Bangladesh, TIMM quickly discovered, requires like-minded NGOs and international donors to work cooperatively. When they do not, mistakes are repeated, and even well conceived projects are wastefully duplicated. To coordinate the work of the many NGOs, TIMM in 1974, led in the creation of the Association of Voluntary Agencies in Bangladesh (AVAB) and was elected first Chairman of its Executive Committee. AVAB became ADAB in 1978 (Agricultural Development Agencies in Bangladesh), whose name was changed in 1983 to Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh. TIMM served ADAB as director for nine months in 1978, and later as a consultant when ADAB took on the additional task of representing voluntary agencies vis-a-vis the government.

In October 1973 HELP was incorporated into CORR, of which TIMM became Executive Director the following year, a position he accepted on the condition that a Bangladeshi director be found as soon as possible. The search took two and a half years. During this time TIMM changed the name of CORR to Caritas Bangladesh—to remove the words “Christian” and “Rehabilitation” and to express solidarity with similarly named Catholic charities elsewhere.

By this time the organization had 13 senior staff members, three of whom were Holy Cross fathers, and was receiving funding from several dozen donors around the world. The largest amount came from Catholic philanthropies in Holland and Germany (CEBEMO and Misereor). TIMM oversaw a budget of approximately US\$6.5 million. During the next few years Caritas Bangladesh maintained the ongoing Jute Works, a village irrigation project involving some 170 irrigation cooperatives, and made strenuous efforts to encourage cooperatives in commercial fishing. At the same time it: 1) constructed 21 rural roads and 70 bridges; 2) excavated 8 year-round canals; 3) installed 28 ring-wells; 4) dug or repaired 48 water tanks for use as fish ponds and for

bathing, laundry and cooking water; 5) built 417 low cost houses for later cyclone victims; 6) cared for 700 destitute refugee families; 7) rushed rice, biscuits, salt, kerosene, oil and rice seedlings to flood victims in Chittagong; 8) funded 6 orphanages and 4 eye hospitals; 9) set up a feeding camp for vagrants; 10) established an experimental farm to study suitable crops for dry season farming; and 11) trained hundreds of rural health workers to immunize villagers against smallpox, check for tuberculosis, and run “birthing and under five” clinics.

As a hands-on director, TIMM became uniquely familiar with the countryside and its stubborn resistance to social and behavioral change. On every trip, he wrote, “I would encounter at least one instance of corruption or flagrant injustice to the poor and the powerless.” In spite of independence and the democratically elected government of Sheik Mujibur Rahman, he found the government was doing nothing to improve the quality of service or control corruption. Mujibur was proving as blinded by power as the Government of Pakistan that he replaced. In consequence the mores of the people did not change and Caritas continued to face problems of corruption at all levels.

TIMM stepped down as director of Caritas Bangladesh in December 1976 to become its Roving Consultant. For his services Pope Paul VI awarded him the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* medal.

TIMM’s and Caritas’ growing awareness of the intransigence of the rural power structure coincided with a burgeoning awareness of social inequalities by the Catholic Church itself. The Bishops’ Institute of Social Action, meeting in Malaysia in 1975, indicated as much when it voted to examine the “social dimension of the Gospel in the light of Asia today.”

In 1974 the Catholic Bishops Conference of Bangladesh mandated the Bangladesh Justice and Peace Commission (of which TIMM was the organizer) to identify injustices, explain their causes, and suggest practical Christian solutions for the church to act upon. When circumstances warranted, prudent protests could then be registered with the authorities.

Using TIMM’s own studies, the Justice and Peace Commission documented Bengali discrimination against tribal minorities and investigated national corruption and dishonesty. A paper written for the commission by TIMM in 1978 declared that the disparity between the rich and poor in Bangladesh was “one of the most sinful situations of our time.” Finding this declaration a bit imprudent, the Bishops’ Confer-

ence declined to be identified with it, and to TIMM's disappointment, the paper had little local impact.

In project evaluations for NGOs and government donors such as U.S. AID TIMM became increasingly critical of development projects favoring rural elites. To illustrate the problem anecdotally, he mentioned one village in which the largest landowner was also manager of the village's two aid-funded irrigation projects and chairman of the village development committee; perhaps as a consequence of the latter, a UNICEF fish pond also graced his property, the profits therefrom accruing to him.

Because cases like this were all too common, TIMM began steering Caritas Bangladesh to projects that fostered the needs of *homogeneous groups* of rural poor: landless laborers, marginal farmers, tea plantation workers and women. Women he considered "the most deprived general class of the society." He also began promoting awareness-building to help the powerless learn to understand the nature and causes of their lack of power and show them how to take united action to redress the situation. He advocated "active non-violence," concluding hopefully: "When enough people are engaged with intelligence and dedication in the movement for the common people's rights then there will be a 'truth force' (*satyagraha*) which no one can stop."

To plumb these problems more deeply, TIMM turned once more to research. His own study of the socio-economic impediments to development, *Power Relations in Rural Development: The Case of Bangladesh*, was published in 1983. In this paper he showed that elite-led development for modernizing agriculture—with large landowners controlling the distribution of aid-subsidized irrigation, credit, fertilizers and pesticides—actually increased the number of landless peasants and marginal farmers. In three studies made between 1982 and 1984 he documented the harsh, insecure lives of Bangladesh's women workers. In another he examined the government's foreign-aid-funded population program which encouraged sterilization among poor women by offering them material incentives. He concluded that the program was depriving poor women of their "right not to be forced into life-limiting situations" (although he did not prove that material inducements were a deciding factor), and that the program was careless in providing post-operative medical services.

TIMM also organized a series of seminars for women workers in the tea, garment and cigarette industries, nurses, domestics and farm laborers, in which he encouraged the women to learn from each other's

experiences. Many participants expressed the desire to continue meeting, and the result was the formation, in 1986, of the Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh, with TMM as coordinator.

His next project was a study on land reform, designed to stimulate discussion among the voluntary agencies on this important topic. He assessed collectivization—or joint farming of common land as practiced by socially radicalized societies—as having proved unsuccessful, and then analyzed land reform in the Bangladesh context. Giving land to the landless, he stated, had proved impractical, since the landless have no cattle, plough or working capital; without outside help they are soon forced to part with the land. A realistic reform could be “voluntary consolidation of fragmented plots, redistribution of existing excess land to marginal farmers to keep them from swelling the ranks of the landless, and a more equitable system of sharecropping. The difficulty is, however, there is little available land for distribution, and through inheritance land in the second generation becomes fragmented into uneconomic plots. Nevertheless, he states, “the main problem of the rural poor is the power of the rural economic elite, allied with the urban and political elite, to maintain the existing agrarian structure and even enhance it in their favor.”

When the Caritas Development Institute opened in 1983 TMM taught Social Analysis and Bangladesh Analysis in the one-month basic course for Field Extension Workers. His analysis of post-independence problems emphasized that the way to change the pattern of exploitation is for villagers to understand their situation and its causes, organize and work together, and enter into the decision-making process; at the same time, he insisted, they must develop personal virtues such as zeal, self-discipline, self-reliance and a willingness to share.

In 1979 TMM and his colleagues at the First Asian Conference for Justice and Peace in Tokyo set up Hotline, an all-Asia network to collect data on authenticated cases of human rights infringements. TMM joined the advisory committee and, since 1980, has supervised the work of Hotline in Bangladesh; its objective is gathering information, responding to appeals, investigating violations and publishing the *Hotline Newsletter* in English and Bengali. He also helped to establish the Justice and Peace Coordinating Committee for Asia and Oceania—with which Hotline is now affiliated—and serves as its Training Coordinator for South Asia.

TMM’s forthright advocacy of social justice does not always comport with the official stand of the church. “My biggest disappointment,”

he says, "is the reaction of the church in general toward the movement toward social justice and human rights." The church too often, he believes, hides its head in the sand in order not to offend governments. On the other hand, TIMM does not fully go along with the chorus of critics against "international capitalism, multinational corporations, consumerism, etc." heard in some Justice and Peace groups. Nor does he advocate socialist solutions, despite recognizing class interests as impediments to development and the "strong Christian ideal imbedded in socialism." In socialism as in capitalism, he concludes, "the sinfulness of humanity reveals itself prominently." This is why, even as he advocates active non-violence to achieve basic human rights, TIMM does not view class struggle *per se* as inevitable. Rather, both the oppressed *and the oppressors* need to achieve a new awareness.

These days TIMM thinks of himself as a social worker. "I've never done typical missionary activity," he says. "I've never converted a soul, and I've never tried to." Yet from 1982 to 1986 he was Superior of the Holy Cross Order in Bangladesh, and he continues to say Mass daily (in Bengali now) and to perform other priestly functions, just as he has done at every stage of his long and varied career. His deepest sensitivities remain spiritual. For him, living in Bangladesh has distilled theology to its essence. Here, he believes, "you are close to reality, to nature, to simple living, to the reality of the Gospel." Echoing Saint John, he expresses the Gospel simply: "Little children, love one another."

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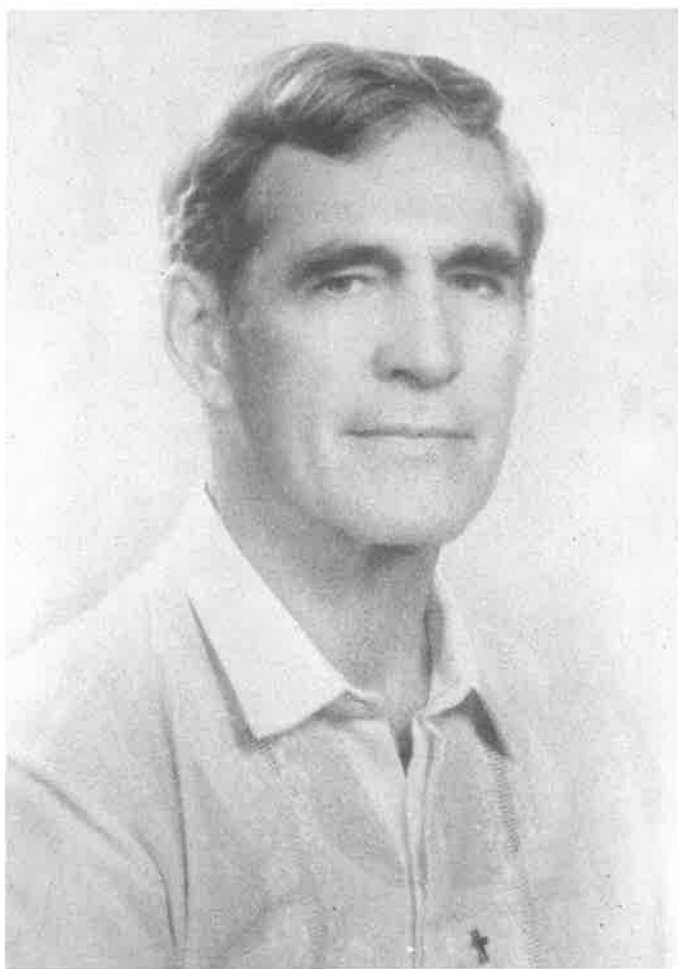
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