

Cristo Rey Network Expanding with Grant from Bill Gates

by Amy Hudec

The Cristo Rey model for secondary education, started in Chicago in 1996 by the Jesuits, has been so successful that it's now being replicated by ten high schools around the United States. In fall, 2001, *Partners* reported on the opening of De La Salle North Catholic High School in Portland, OR, and Verbum Dei, a Jesuit High School, in Los Angeles, CA. Those two schools joined Cristo Rey as charter members in the Cristo Rey Network, a national group of schools utilizing Cristo Rey's unique corporate internship program. The network was started when California philanthropist B.J. Cassin pledged \$20 million to create a foundation dedicated to replicating the Cristo Rey model in the United States.

"Our whole premise," says Mr. Cassin, "was that the Cristo Rey work-study model could bring Catholic college-prep education to urban children. The model, we felt, was dead on, and could fill a big void in Catholic education." Cristo Rey Network schools serve economically disadvantaged children. Many of the students could not otherwise afford to attend private school and come from families whose incomes fall far below national averages. The majority of students attending Network schools qualify for federally-funded free or reduced lunch programs. Each school in the Network employs Cristo Rey's innovative corporate internship program, which allows the students to defray the cost of their education by working five days each month at local businesses. Thanks to creative scheduling and an extended school year, Cristo Rey students



Four of the faculty and staff members at Arrupe Jesuit High School were also part of the team that built Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago: Stephan Graham, science teacher, Dan O'Brien, director of the corporate internship program, Steve Planning, SJ, president, and Brent Dexter, social studies teacher.

are able to work without missing any instructional time.

Before the Cristo Rey Network schools opened in their neighborhoods, these students would have attended high schools with low graduation rates and even lower rates of graduates attending college. The Cristo Rey Network is changing all that. In fact, their motto is "changing urban America one student at a time." At Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago, nearly 60% of the students from the school's six graduating classes have either graduated from or are enrolled in 4-year colleges. Many of these students are the first in their families to attend college.

After the success of the first three schools, a fourth high school, San Juan Diego, opened in Austin, TX, in 2002, and a fifth, Arrupe Jesuit High School, opened in Denver, CO, in 2003. Arrupe's opening came on the heels of an announcement that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation had pledged \$9.9 million to the growth of Cristo Rey model schools from 2003–2008. The Cassin Foundation then pledged an additional 9 million.



B.J. Cassin, founder of the Cristo Rey Network, and John P. Foley, SJ, President of Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, at the opening of Arrupe Jesuit High School in Denver, Colorado.

By fall, 2005, six more Cristo Rey Network schools will open (see list), and new feasibility studies have been initiated in Kansas City and Indianapolis. Fourteen other groups in the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands are considering launching feasibility studies. "No one ever expected this to take off the way it has," says Fr. John P. Foley, SJ, founding president of Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago. "It means we're tapping into something vital. This is where the Holy Spirit is working." ■

A photograph of a white sign with black text that reads "WELCOME ARRUPPE JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2007". The sign is mounted on a wall.

Existing Cristo Rey Schools

- Arrupe Jesuit High School, Denver, CO
- Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, Chicago, IL
- De La Salle North Catholic, Portland, OR.
- Juan Diego Catholic High School, Austin, TX,
- Verbum Dei High School, Los Angeles, CA

Schools that Will Open in 2004

- Cristo Rey New York High School, New York, NY
- North Cambridge Catholic High School, Cambridge, MA
- Notre Dame High School, Lawrence, MA
- St. Martin de Porres High School, Cleveland, OH
- St. Martin de Porres High School, Waukegan, IL
- San Miguel High School, Tucson, AZ



Rev. Eugene L. Watrin, SJ
B&B Hospital
Kathmandu, Nepal

Rev. Eugene L. Watrin, SJ, 83, long-time Jesuit missionary to Nepal, pioneer in educational and social work there, founder of a Jesuit college, celebrated athlete, and beloved "bicycle priest", died February 29, 2004, after a prolonged battle with pancreatic cancer.

Fr. Watrin, a Dayton, OH, native who attended St. Mary's Parish and Chaminade High School, entered the Jesuits in 1939, at Milford, Ohio. During his studies to become a priest he was assigned to the Patna Jesuit Mission in Northern India, where he was ordained in 1952. His principal assignments as a Jesuit were at the Jesuit schools in the Kingdom of Nepal, where he was assigned in 1955.

In the 48 years he spent there he taught and served as principal of St. Xavier's Godavari, a Jesuit school on the outskirts of Kathmandu. In 1969 Fr. Watrin was appointed director of the Godavari Alumni Association, which he reshaped into a substantial social service outreach through which graduates of the school traveled regularly into far-flung Nepali villages to provide food, medicine, and care for the poor.

In 1988, Fr. Watrin founded St. Xavier's College, Nepal's first Catholic college. He successfully spearheaded efforts to raise funding for the school's two state-of-the-art classroom buildings. The school now offers a variety of courses as well as bachelor's programs in sciences, information management, and social work.

Fr. Watrin helped start a Nepali chapter of Habitat for Humanity and in 1996 was named National Chairman of the organization. In 2001, he was selected by Nepal's prime minister to receive the kingdom's annual Social Service Award, and in 2003 the King presented him with the "Tri Shakhti Patta" (Thrice Powerful Medal). He regularly traveled to sensitive areas in the Middle East, where he ministered to Christians, many of them expatriates, who were discouraged from openly practicing their religion.

Over 1,000 people attended the funeral Mass, held March 1, in Nepal. A local memorial Mass will be held in May. Memorial gifts may be made to the Jesuit International Missions or Jesuit Partnership, 2059 North Sedgwick St., Chicago, IL, 60614. Visit www.jesuits-chi.org/tributes to view full obituary and to sign guestbook. ■