

'My Name Is ...'

Book shares stories of the lives of those who gather at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen

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The Michigan Catholic

DETROIT — "I've come to believe that part of the reason some people are called to ministry is that's the only way God can convert them," says Capuchin Bro. Vincent Reyes.

He considers himself one of those people.

The place of his conversion was at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit, where he served as one of three chaplains from 1998 until 2006. Initially, he admits, he wasn't that excited about the new assignment after being chaplain at a Chicago emergency room. In retrospect, he says, "the experience of being at a soup kitchen was a gift from God."

The stories he'd heard from those at the soup kitchen and his background in photojournalism meshed to inspire him to put together the book "My Name Is ...: Portraits and Table Stories from the Capuchin Soup Kitchen."

A total of 48 people who use the services at the soup kitchen tell their own stories in the coffee-table style book.

One who tells her story is Sarah. She tells of her alcoholic and very abusive father who tied her younger brother in a sack, tied it to a tree and lit a fire underneath. Bro. Reyes says that as she was talking, "I'm listening and thinking 'This is what hell is like.'

"She goes on to say her father passes out and she was able to cut her brother off the limb and they were able to get away.

"She's got to have an incredible sense of faith. She struggles with the fact that although she has forgiven her father, she still feels anger at him. I'm thinking to myself that this woman tells me so much more about what it means to be forgiving. I think to myself that I could never do that! And she feels bad that she can't."

Bro. Reyes worked with four professional photographers: Chip Somodevilla, who was at the Detroit Free Press; Ed Haun, now retired from the Detroit Free Press; and Elizabeth Conley and Steve Perez from The Detroit News. "They offered a different way of seeing what I was seeing. I needed their skills and their perspectives."

A simple draping was set up at

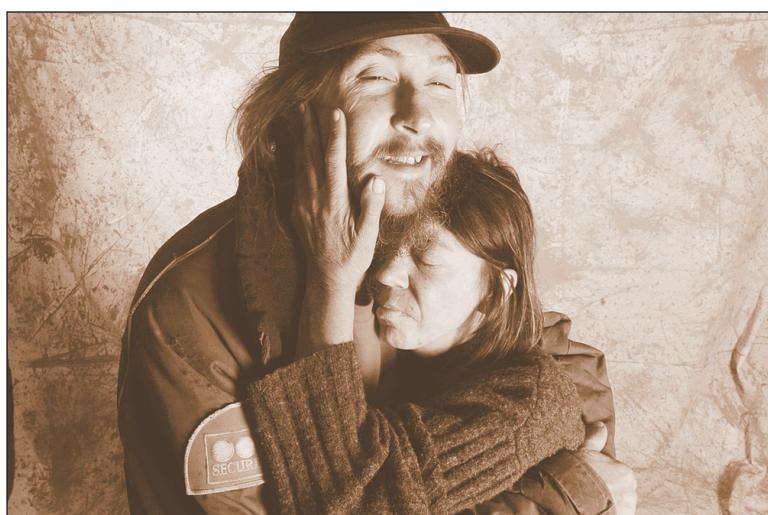
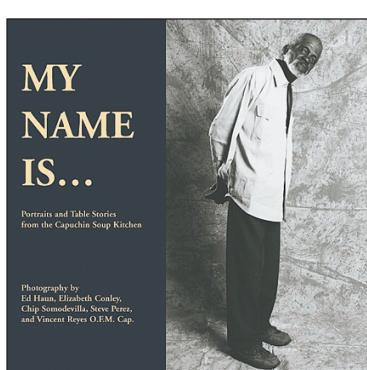


PHOTO BY STEVE PEREZ | COURTESY OF "MY NAME IS ..."

John, with Marge, says "We weren't always homeless ... I got a skilled trade, but I just can't get a job now."



the soup kitchen and the guests were given the offer to have their picture taken. They were told that if they came back two weeks later, they'd get an 8x10-inch portrait and Bro. Reyes would interview them. During the course of 18 months, 148 people had their picture taken. Less than half came back.

"I think part of it has to do with when you are really poor, everything is the moment. And if it's not the right thing at the moment, you're not going to do it," Bro. Reyes says.

Perez, a photographer for 24 years, the last 13 at

The Detroit News, says during his career he's been "invited into many different people's lives." What struck him about the work on the book is that "even though someone gets lifted up and finds a place and finds a way, there's always someone right behind them to take their place. It just seems endless and there's more you could do."

Of those he photographed for the project, the couple that stuck him most was Marge and John. "I talked to them quite a bit when I was taking their photos. You just see they really loved each other for

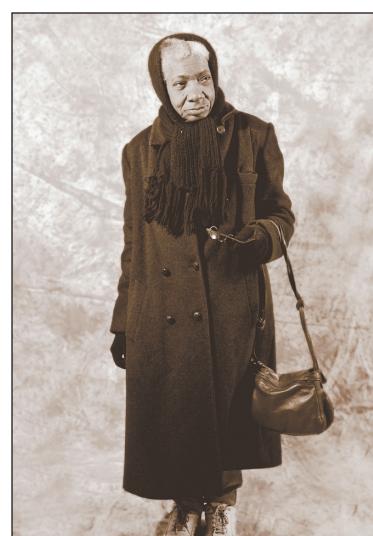


PHOTO BY ELIZABETH CONLEY | COURTESY OF "MY NAME IS ..."

Willie Pearl says "I'll be remembered for just being me."

the way they embraced. It's amazing that even though you don't have anything, there's still love."

Photographer Conley said working on the project made her "look at the circumstances of my life. As a single mom I've been very fortunate with the support system that I have, but don't see myself that far removed from that moment that it could go all down."

As a photographer for 10 years, the last four for the News, she said she was especially taken with Willie Pearl "as soon as she walked in the door."

Pearl spoke very little about her life but did say "I'm already in heaven." Conley says Pearl posed for two pictures and then said, "I'm done." "It was such a gift for her to do this."

"Something I've always looked at and appreciated being a newspaper photographer is you see all types of people in all types of situ-

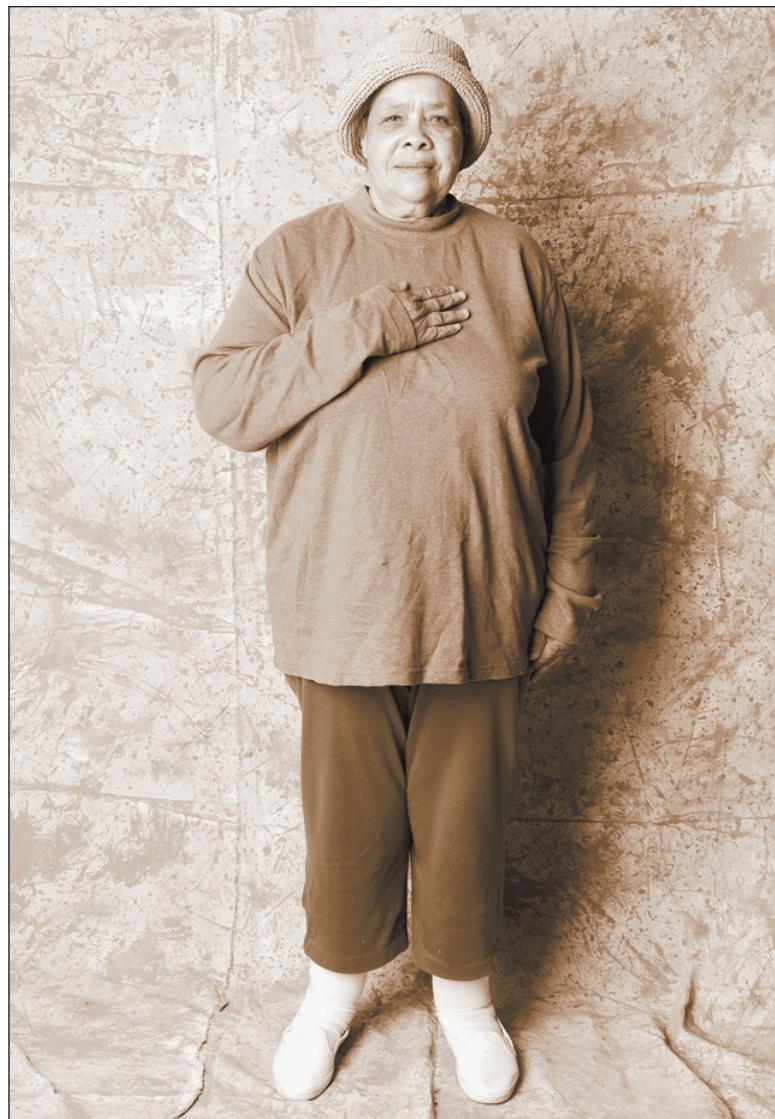


PHOTO BY ED HAUN | COURTESY OF "MY NAME IS ..."

Sarah tells the story of growing up poor and the strength the Lord has given her.

ations. You are documenting them for just that one moment."

Conley, a member of St. Peter Claver Parish in Detroit, says she hopes that

others looking at the book will realize "these aren't just someone you'd walk by on the street, or see standing with a sign. They have a story."

Another who returned to tell his story is Pops, pictured on the book cover. "He is dying and he's also losing what faculties he has," says Bro. Reyes. "He has

Parkinson's and the beginning of Alzheimer's disease."

When he saw his picture, he proudly showed it to others at the center and told Bro. Reyes he "didn't want some of them to touch it because their hands were dirty." Handing it back, he commented, "Now I won't be forgotten."

Bro. Reyes says he hopes that people who see the book "would

come to see the folks in there as normal human beings with gifts and foibles and riches. They have their stories. They have incredible value telling us about God. Their strength in spite of their brokenness is an inspiration to me.

"Some of these people are so precious. The Bible says 'The poor you will have with you always' and I'm fully convinced that they left out part of what Jesus would say with that and it's that

"you will learn to see my face in them."

Bro. Vincent Reyes, OFM Cap. and Ed Haun talk about "My Name Is ..." with Cardinal Adam Maida on "Dialogue" airing 7 p.m. Feb. 25; 11 a.m. Feb. 26; 1 p.m. Feb. 27; 9:30 p.m. Feb. 29; 7:30 p.m. March 1; 7 p.m. March 3; 11 a.m. March 4; 1 p.m. March 5; 9:30 p.m. March 7; and 7:30 p.m. March 8.

Get it

"My Name Is ..." is available:

- Autographed copies by writing to Bro. Vincent Reyes, OFM Cap., Capuchin Soup Kitchen, 1820 Mount Elliott, Detroit 48207. The book is \$25, plus \$3 for shipping and handling.

- Copies offered through Wayne State University Press at <http://wsupress.wayne.edu/>. Type "My Name Is ..." in the search field.
- All proceeds go to support the hungry of Detroit at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen.