



NANCY MAY

## A Place to Call *Home* by James Boynton, SJ

*Ste. Anne's Church on Mackinac Island  
is an island of hospitality for many*

**M**AY IS A STRANGE month each year for Michael. He spends as much time as he can with his wife, Rosalee, and his young children, Miguel and Michaela, in the Philippines, his homeland. By the end of the month he leaves Manila, as he has for seven years now, and heads to Mackinac Island, Michigan, where he works until November. He started out as a clerk at one of the island's hotels and is now the manager of the deli there.

Michael comes to Mackinac to support

his family. Most foreign workers on the island make a few dollars an hour above minimum wage; from that comes their travel expenses to Mackinac as well as room and board. In Michael's case, most of what he earns goes back to Rosalee and into savings accounts for Miguel and Michaela's education.

When Michael's workday is over, he is not alone, though home is so distant. He has the chance to meet with fellow Filipinos, other working migrants.

Michael is a Roman Catholic, but his work schedule does not allow him to

attend Sunday services very often. But each Wednesday evening, he and other Filipino workers gather at Ste. Anne's for a Mass, celebrated in Tagalog, their national language, by Jesuit Fr. Rey Garcia, himself a Filipino.

Afterwards everyone gathers in the church hall for a meal of *panseet*, a noodle dish; *adobo*, a dish of braised pork, chicken, or fish; and other Filipino dishes that Michael often helps prepare. His air of gentle confidence has made him the voice of other Filipinos at work; away from work he is a key figure in gathering them

# The summer crowds ultimately leave. Michael...



KATIE CEDERHOLM

Ste. Anne's Church, Mackinac Island, Michigan, is a place with a history—church records date to 1695. It ministers to seasonal workers drawn from all over the world to its summer tourist industry. Mexicans who work in the restaurants and hotels gather on Tuesday nights at Ste. Anne's with Fr. Rey Garcia, SJ, for liturgy, a meal, and fellowship.



ROB JERSTROM

Michael, a large personality among the many Filipino workers on Mackinac Island, finds fellowship at Ste. Anne's. He comes from Manila in May to manage a deli and returns to his wife and daughters in November.

together, especially at Ste. Anne's. After the meal, many of the workers remain around the parish hall to socialize, play pool, or sing Filipino songs with an assist from a karaoke machine. For that one evening each week at Ste. Anne's, the Filipinos there are home with faith and friends.

## A history

Michael's story fits into a long history of people coming to Mackinac to make a living. It started with the fur trade with the French and English, evolved into Great Lakes fishing when many Irish came, and today is carried on with those who come from far and wide to work in the island's bustling tourist industry.

There's a parallel of sorts here with the Jesuits, who also have a long history of work on the island. In 1669 Fr. Claude Dablon, SJ, established a mission for the Native Americans here, and in 1671 Fr.

Jacques Marquette, SJ, moved the mission to the north shore of the Straits of Mackinac, where lakes Huron and Superior meet. The mission was named St. Ignace, and the small town just off Mackinac Island still bears that name.

Though Jacques Marquette was perhaps the most famous Jesuit missionary here, there were many others who served in this area for nearly 100 years. When the fur trade became prominent, Fr. Etienne Carheil, SJ, argued with French officer Antoine de Cadillac over the sale of alcohol to natives. Fr. Pierre DuJau-nay, SJ, pastor at Mackinac for 30 years in the mid eighteenth century, became an expert in the native language (his French/Ottawa dictionary is at McGill University in Montreal). Fr. DuJaunay was present during Pontiac's uprising, when the natives tried to overthrow British rule.

In the 1770s, when the Jesuits were suppressed worldwide, Jesuit presence

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on Mackinac stopped, but Catholic presence continued through the years under the care of Franciscans, Dominicans, Redemptorists, Sulpicians, and diocesan clergy.

## Personal connection

My love for Mackinac Island started early. I was born and raised in St. Ignace. Ste. Anne's hired me in the 1980s to start a museum, and I stayed there while working as a tour guide at Fort Mackinac. My admiration of the early Jesuits in the Straits of Mackinac was a large factor in my entering the Society in 1987, and I wrote a master's thesis on the history of the Jesuit mission there. After the parish published my thesis, "Fishers of Men: The Jesuit Mission at Mackinac 1670-1765," I was invited by the pastor to update the parish museum.

Getting Jesuit involvement at the parish was a high priority for me. For the past ten years, many Jesuits have come to Ste. Anne's during the summer to help with ministries here, including the late Fr. Ron Torina; Fr. Karl Kiser, the president of University of Detroit Jesuit High School and Academy; and Fr. Michael Vincent, classics teacher at Cleveland's St. Ignatius High School, who taught English as a Second Language at Ste. Anne's.

As the vocation director for the Detroit Province, I invite candidates for the Jesuits to live and work with the summer community each year.

When the clergy shortage forced the Diocese of Marquette to move Ste. Anne's last full-time pastor to a larger parish, Fr. Rey Garcia, SJ, was freed up for the position; he's now the first full-time Jesuit pastor on the island in a long time. His facility with languages helps him to relate to many groups of international

workers, and his charismatic personality makes everyone feel welcome at Ste. Anne's.

## Mexico . . . on Mackinac

The spirit of hospitality at Ste. Anne's extends to many people. Each week Lydia and Lupita come to the church kitchen to prepare a meal for some of the large Mexican population on the island, more than 200 of whom come each year from Mexico City alone (as do Lydia and Lupita).

Since 9/11 all come with work permits. Most come from the same neighborhoods, are friends or relatives, and end up working at the same hotel. Unlike the Filipinos or Jamaicans, whose knowledge of English gets them jobs in direct service to tourists as wait staff or bellhops, Mexicans usually have behind-the-scenes jobs such as doing laundry, dishwashing, or gardening. Lydia's son, Alejandro, also works on the island, but their work schedules do not allow for much free time together.

Regardless, mother and son and the rest of the Mexican community stay well connected with each other. "Mexican Night"

at Ste. Anne's has traditionally been held at 10:00 P.M. on Tuesdays. Lupita often reads at Mass, and both she and Lydia sing in the impromptu choir, which squeezes in a rehearsal just before Mass.

"Being part of this community puts me at peace," says Lydia. "I look forward to Tuesday every week. Coming to Ste. Anne's strengthens me."

For over ten years both women have been coming to Mackinac Island for work, and Ste. Anne's is their home away from home; it makes them feel a part of a larger community.

## Everybody welcome

Another well-represented group of island workers comes from Jamaica. One of them, Brother Glenn, is a headwaiter at the island's Grand Hotel in the summer and a deacon with his Christian community near Montego Bay in Jamaica during the winter.

Each Wednesday night at 10, he leads a charismatic Christian service at Ste. Anne's. While these worshipers who fill the church with song and prayer are not Catholic, they know they are welcome at the parish.

Many Filipinos on Mackinac Island gather at Ste. Anne's on Wednesday nights for liturgy (pastor Fr. Garcia is Filipino), a meal, and just hanging out with each other.



ROB JERSTROM

# Lydia and Lupita will be in Mexico with theirs.

Still another outreach of Ste. Anne's is to people such as Paul, a tour guide at Fort Mackinac during the summers and a student at Albion College during the school year. He's not a Catholic, but he discovered that Ste. Anne's was a popular gathering spot, a good alternative to the local bar scene. Paul, along with many of his friends from Fort Mackinac's staff, attends the weekly "Summer Worker's Night" in the parish hall. Volunteer help and food donated from area restaurants and hotels provide meals for more than 200 workers each Thursday evening.

It's an opportunity for Paul to meet many of his fellow summer workers, American and foreign alike. This past summer, over 50 nationalities were counted at these meals.

Ste. Anne's is proud host also of a weekly square dance that draws many workers. According to Paul, these dances, held on a deck on the side of the church, are a great way to meet people.

## Summer's sunset

The summer crowds ultimately leave. Michael will be back in the Philippines with his family; Lydia and Lupita will be

in Mexico with theirs. Brother Glenn will be preaching in Montego Bay; Paul will be thinking about going on to law school. Islanders, who work long hours during the summer, will take a rest from the crowds.

I will make it to the island when I can, and if possible even bring up students from the University of Detroit Jesuit High School and Academy to help give a Kairos retreat to the folks there, but, for the most part, Fr. Rey's Jesuit community shrinks to one.

But that community of one keeps busy. It's at that time that Ste. Anne's year-round parishioners, several hundred, carry on church activities. Jodie, who manages a restaurant during the summer, will be in charge of Ste. Anne's Teen Night. Her son, Robert, will be playing at the same pool table that the Filipinos use during the summer and planning on going on the parish's first mission trip to Honduras in the spring. Throughout his life he has seen the world come to Mackinac, now he is thinking of going into the world himself.

Mackinac Island has flown the flag of France, England, and the United States.



KATIE CEDERHOLM

Author (and square dance fiddler) Br. James Boynton, SJ, is the vocation director for the Jesuits's Detroit Province.

It has known war and peace and has been a center for furs, fish, and, more recently, tourism. The mission that Marquette established on the island in 1670 grew and evolved; the parish started off on the island, moved to the Upper and then the Lower peninsula of Michigan, and ultimately ended up back on the island. Its register, on display in the church museum, dates to April 1695.

Today, more than 400 years later, Jesuit priests and brothers still labor along with many laypeople to bring together people of various countries and faiths and to help them understand their importance in a place they call home. ■

Square dances on the deck next to Ste. Anne's draw seasonal workers of many nationalities. On Thursday nights the church hosts meals for them with food donated by restaurants and hotels.



KATIE CEDERHOLM