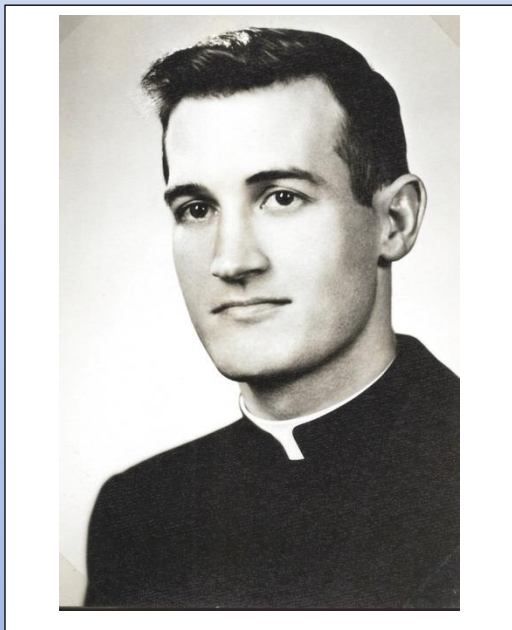
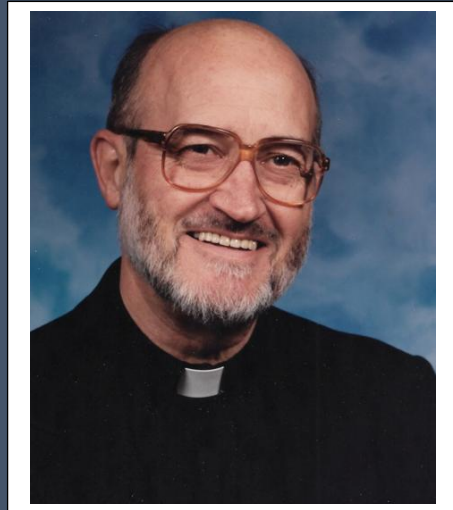


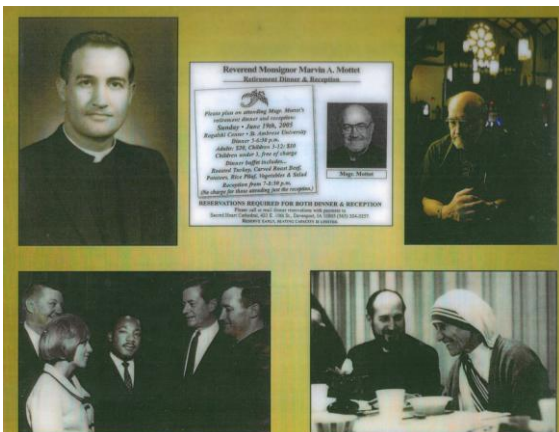


Msgr. Marvin Mottet's legacy continues:

Two Feet of Social Action ... on
the move.

[Learn about the
Two Feet of Social Ministry](#)

August 2026



A 10th anniversary call to action Carry on the legacy of Msgr. Marvin Mottet

By Barb Arland-Fye

Msgr. Marvin Mottet taught us how to walk using our Two Feet of Social Action – one for meeting immediate needs and the other for working to bring about systemic change to address those needs. On Sept. 16, we commemorate the 10th anniversary of the death of this leading voice for social justice and action in the Diocese of Davenport and far beyond.

This month's Two Feet of Social Action newsletter features the stories of people and organizations inspired by the example of Msgr. Mottet and who carry on his legacy, meeting people's needs while also working to bring about change that serves the common good. On his deathbed, Msgr. Mottet, who preferred to be called Father Mottet, told his close friend and colleague Dan Ebener that he wanted the faithful to "get to work."

We have our marching orders, which remain relevant and even more urgent during this time in our nation's history where some are thriving at the expense of so many others. People's needs go wanting, funding cuts at the state and federal level hinder efforts to effect change that serves the common good, and many of our neighbors are not being treated with human dignity.

Our call to action begins with prayer, Scripture, the Mass, the sacraments and a desire to learn, each element working together to create the foundation for Father Mottet's work in social action and justice. From this foundation, we can move on to the many issues that call us to respond with the talents, skills, resources and faith with which we have been blessed. Among the issues and the resources to help us discern our responses:

*TPS protection for Haitians

Iowa's bishops have written to Senators Joni Ernst and Charles Grassley in support of legislation to require the extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for people from Haiti, according to the Iowa Catholic Conference. TPS offers the right to work, which allows people to support their families. Keep in mind, Haiti remains a country in turmoil. An estimated 350,000 Haitians live in the U.S. and are vulnerable to detention and deportation, National Public Radio reported Aug. 5 (<https://tinyurl.com/358b6u4t>).

"Forcibly sending families to dire conditions is a legacy all leaders should seek to avoid," Bishop Brendan J. Cahill, chair of the USCCB's Committee on Migration, said in a June 26 statement. He was responding to the Trump Administration prevailing in a court challenge to its decision to end TPS for Haiti and Syria. You can [join the bishops and send a message here](#). Learn more about the Catholic Church's commitment to accompany immigrants and their families in need at the Justice for Immigrants website (justiceforimmigrants.org).

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*Barb Arland-Fye
Social Action Volunteer / Editor
Emeritus, The Catholic Messenger*

Nurturing in the neighborhood

Msgr. Mottet's legacy lives on at Project Renewal

By Barb Arland-Fye

Msgr. Marvin Mottet did not create Project Renewal but planted the seeds for the program that today serves 60+ children in grades K-12 with afterschool and summer activities aimed at enhancing their opportunities for success academically, socially and emotionally.

Founded 52 years ago in Davenport's central city, Project Renewal continues the legacy of its founder, the late Sister Concetta Bendicente of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, whom Msgr. Mottet hired when he led the Diocese of Davenport's Social Action Office. She learned the needs of the neighborhood by living there.

"She knew that instead of building fences, you've got to reach out to people, so she got a little house in the neighborhood where she could serve the elderly and children. She named it Project Renewal and it is still there today," Father Mottet, as he preferred to be called, said in the biography "How to Change the World Two Feet at a Time: lessons from the Life of Fr. Marvin Mottet."

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*Ann Schwickerath, executive director of
Project Renewal, Davenport*

"Pray and act," "Pick up the slack"

Dan Ebener shares guidance from Msgr. Mottet

By Dan Ebener

Ten years before he died, Msgr. Marv Mottet asked me to give his eulogy. For the next 10 years, he gave me enough instructions to cover a 32-hour speech. That was typical of "Father Mottet," as his close friends called him. He was concerned about anyone in our midst who was suffering, whether from illness, poverty or any form of injustice.

During my 20-year tenure as diocesan social action director, a position Father Mottet once held, he called me once or twice every week to alert me to some type of local, state or national issue that needed our immediate attention. Sometimes, the call to action came because of an article he had just read in *Commonweal* or *America* magazine. More often, it was inspired by his daily routine of constant prayer.

But on his deathbed, his instructions were very clear. He said: "Don't make the eulogy about me." Make it a call to action, a call to leadership. He told me that while he was leaving, the rest of us were going to have to "pick up the slack" and "get to work."

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Dan Ebener

**Msgr. Mottet was always willing to help
It's our turn to carry on his work**

By Esmeralda Guerrero

I got to know Msgr. Marvin Mottet through my work in the Social Action Office of the Davenport Diocese. When I first met him, he was excited that a young person had joined the office. I did not think I was so young, but I guess I was the youngest in the office. I started learning about him, his work in the community, and his work with healing Masses. I enjoyed having conversations with him. He was very well known and trusted by the many people around the diocese.

He became someone I could trust and go to anytime I needed help. I grew in my faith and became a strong believer in the power of prayer. Father Mottet, as he preferred to be called, liked to learn about a person, their family, and always asked about them.

He was a caring and giving person. It did not matter what time it was or how far he needed to travel, he was always willing to help. He was never too tired to help those in need and to work for justice, and he always told others to become involved. He kept informed about what was happening in the country and came prepared to meetings with newspaper articles on different issues.

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Esmeralda, Sophia, and Fr. Mottet.

'We are better for the lives he touched and the people he inspired'

By Father Rudolph Juarez

I first met Father Marvin Mottet when I was a freshman at St. Ambrose College in Davenport. On weekends I would go to Muscatine to help with Migrant Ministry led by then-Father Tom Buechele.

One weekend, Father Buechele was gone and Father Marv was taking his place. I was staying at the house owned by the diocese where Father Buechele lived. Father Mottet (who later received the title Monsignor) asked me if I had ever considered being a priest. I said that I wanted to be a lawyer. His answer, "You can do both, we have priests who are canon lawyers." That was back in 1973. It triggered my desire to pursue my vocation. Also, I remember how unassuming and humble he was.

Another thing I remember about Monsignor was the story he told about his miraculous cancer cure. He was in Texas at a hospital waiting to pass. He told me that one of his visitors was Cesar Chavez, the union organizer. They prayed together. And, while I do not know all the details of that time in his life, I do know that Father Mottet was cured against all the odds of his illness. It was this experience, I think, that re-energized him and got him even more involved in the nascent Charismatic movement.

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*Fr. Rudolph Juarez & Msgr. Mottet
at a Quad Cities Interfaith event.*

It's not about being nice, it's about being kind

Lessons learned from Msgr. Mottet

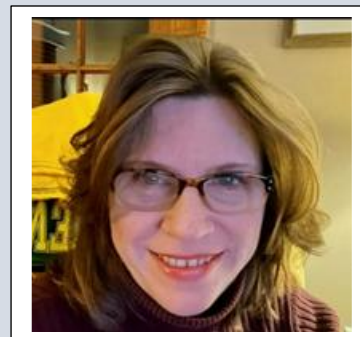
By Barb Arland-Fye

Leslie Kilgannon's involvement in the immigration issue led to her first encounter with Msgr. Marvin Mottet, prior to her appointment in 2006 as director of Quad Cities Interfaith, which he co-founded.

"He was probably fairly newly retired but still very engaged with QCI," Leslie recalls. "He was very soft-spoken but obviously had this gravitas in the room. Everyone listened. It wasn't just because of how he talked but because he walked the talk."

She remembers that Msgr. Mottet had a great sense of humor and was kind toward others. "He taught that it's not about being nice, because nice is overrated. It's about being kind. You can be passionate, direct and tough in speaking out about injustice and also be kind, because you're doing it out of love," said Leslie, who now leads the Quad Cities Housing Council. "Kindness is authentic and genuine and comes from your values."

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Leslie Kilgannon is the Quad Cities Housing Council director

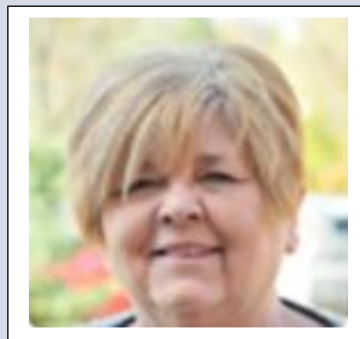
Loxi Hopkins: a conversion story

By Loxi Hopkins, as told to Barb Arland-Fye

A five-minute conversation with Msgr. Marvin Mottet some 30 years ago changed Loxi Hopkin's life forever. She was volunteering at a Birthright International event at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Davenport, where Msgr. Mottet (who preferred to be called Father Mottet) was serving as pastor. During that brief conversation, she recalls, "I found my 'Methodist self' signed up for inquiry in the Catholic Church."

During that inquiry period, which she described as a "terrific experience," Loxi learned about the history and teachings of the Church, including Catholic Social Teaching, which inspired her conversion. "Within three months after I became a Catholic, Father Mottet sent me to Gamaliel training ('where community and faith leaders learn to build political power and create organizations that unite people of diverse faiths' – gamaliel.org/about-us). He also introduced me to Quad Cities Interfaith. The important work with Father Mottet began."

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*Loxi Hopkins,
Social Action Volunteer*

Msgr. Mottet “was an outstanding example”

Sr. Mary Bea shares her story

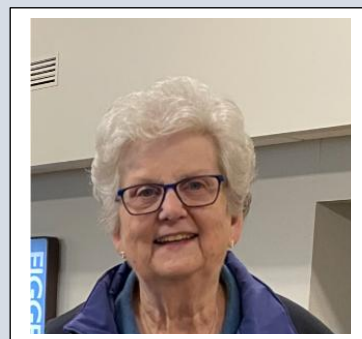
By Barb Arland-Fye

When John Lewis Café, a meal site for the hungry in Davenport’s central city had to close in August 2007 because of financial difficulties, volunteers and several organizations worked together to fill the void.

Among those coordinating the effort to re-open the café under new ownership and management were Msgr. Marvin Mottet, a longtime social justice advocate, Sister Mary Bea Snyder, CHM, diocesan staff and volunteers, and other community leaders.

Sister Mary Bea, formerly the service coordinator at John Lewis Café, had known Msgr. Mottet since she was in her teens and a student at Assumption High School in Davenport where he taught. Although she did not have him as a teacher, his commitment to social justice inspired her and she volunteered in the Diocesan Social Action Office, which he led at that time.

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Sister Mary Bea Snyder, CHM

Biographers describe Msgr. Mottet as ‘a learner to the end’

By Barb Arland-Fye

Suzanne and Arthur Pitz, retired educators with a passion for social justice, first heard Msgr. Marvin Mottet speak in 2008 during the ceremony in Davenport honoring him with the Pacem in Terris Peace and Freedom Award. One year later, Art curated an exhibit at the Putnam Museum in Davenport about the city’s civil rights history. Father Mottet, as he preferred to be called, was one of Art’s advisors.

Inspired by Father Mottet’s lifelong involvement in and commitment to social justice, the couple wondered whether anyone planned to write his biography. In 2014, they asked him that question during a visit to the Diocese of Davenport’s St. Vincent Center, where the retired diocesan priest lived. People had encouraged him to write his story, but he knew he wouldn’t do it, he said. Suzanne and Art shared that they were not Catholic, and he quipped, “Well, I can fix that.”

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Suzanne and Arthur Pitz, PhD

Championing social justice and racial unity

By Thomas Mason IV

Thomas Mason IV, who leads the St. Martin de Porres Society at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Davenport, says his respect and admiration for Msgr. Marvin Mottet, the society's co-founder, began in childhood.

"Msgr. Mottet taught my father in high school and my father had deep respect for him," says Mason. "Throughout my childhood, my father shared with our family Msgr. Mottet's work in social justice and racial unity. In the fall of 1985, my parents told us that Msgr. Mottet and the (Andrew and Dorothy) Edelen family were forming a St. Martin de Porres Society at Sacred Heart Cathedral. My parents, along with Betty Roberts, Ron Pate and Kathy Twyner, became charter members of the society."

Mason describes Msgr. Mottet, who preferred to be called Father Mottet, as a "pioneering force for social justice, not only within the Diocese of Davenport but across the international stage. As a Sacred Heart Cathedral parishioner in the late 1980s and 1990s, I witnessed his service and charity firsthand. Naturally, when my young family returned to the cathedral in 2014, I was eager to rejoin the St. Martin de Porres Society and continue the work of social justice, charitable outreach, and raising awareness of the contributions Black Catholics have made to the Church."

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Thomas Mason IV.

A meal served with compassion

Msgr. Mottet's legacy continues at Café on Vine

By Waunita Sullivan

Café On Vine exists because of Msgr. Marvin Mottet's dedication to serving those in need. Due to the closing of a free meal site at 6th and Vine streets in Davenport in 2007, Msgr. Mottet knew we had to reopen the site, which then became "Café On Vine" under his "Thomas Merton House" 501(3)(c).

His passion and kindness to those in need lives on today at Café On Vine – allowing our community members, volunteers, and staff to ensure that no one needs to go hungry and that everyone has a place where they feel cared for and supported.

The café provides free, nutritious meals year-round – breakfast and lunch Monday through Friday, lunch on Saturday and an evening meal on Sunday.

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*Waunita Sullivan.
Courtesy of The Catholic Messenger*