

# Brother Vincent Malham, FSC

**BROTHER VINCENT MALHAM** returned to Memphis on December 1, when he assumed the presidency of Christian Brothers University. A native of Arkansas, Brother Vincent earned his Associate of Arts degree at Christian Brothers College in 1954, his B.A. in English at St. Mary's College in 1958, and his Master of Music in Choral Conducting at Washington University. His doctoral studies took him to Quebec, Canada, where he earned his Doctorate in Music from Laval University in 1977.

Brother Vincent professed his perpetual vows as a De La Salle Christian Brother in 1961. He served on the faculty of CBC from 1973 to 1989, as dean of the School of Arts from 1981 to 1987. In 1990, he was elected provincial superior of the Christian Brothers of the St. Louis District. He was named vice chancellor of Bethlehem University in the Palestinian Territory in 1997, and was named president in 1998. Throughout his tenure at Bethlehem University, Brother Vincent was a strong voice for peace and reconciliation among Palestinians and Israelis.

An accomplished musician, Brother Vincent performed extensively for 30 years as part of a piano duo team with the late Brother Laurence Walther. He has performed as a soloist for the past few years.

Because of his experience living in the Middle East and his leadership of the only Catholic institution in the Holy Land, Brother Vincent has received many invitations for speaking engagements in the United States and Europe to address the conflict in the region and its impact.

The ceremonial inauguration of Brother Vincent Malham, FSC, as the 21st president of CBU will take place on April 23 (see the Summer issue of *Bell Tower* for coverage of the event). In the meantime, JOHN KERR posed a few important questions to the new president.

**Why CBU? What was it that made you decide to return to the University?**

I returned to CBU for several reasons: I wanted to serve at a place I knew and loved and where I thought I could make a difference. CBU seemed to be a perfect fit for me at this time in my life.

**What was the most strikingly different thing about CBU that caught your eye when you came back to work?**

After being away for 16 years, I noticed expansion in several areas, especially in the number of Masters

degrees being offered and in the increased personnel in student and campus services.

**What would you tell alumni and friends are the important challenges the University faces for the next few years?**

Our challenges are obvious: We need to increase student enrollment, both in our traditional day programs and in the evening division; we need to grow the endowment to strengthen our financial base and we need to implement the forward-looking Strategic Plan which includes a new Campus Master Plan [*see related article on page 3*].

**What can alumni and friends do to help in those challenges?**

Our alumni and friends can support us in various ways, including greater involvement and investment in present and future initiatives. If they haven't visited the campus in a while, I recommend a call to the Office of Advancement to arrange a visit. They can also promote CBU by recommending our fine institution to prospective students.

If our alumni and friends are regular contributors, I ask them to consider increasing their level of contribution; if they have not been contributors, I believe this is a propitious moment to consider supporting our Annual Fund, our student scholarship funds or specific campus development projects. We welcome their interest and assistance.

**In conversations and presentations you have been reminding listeners that the University is "Catholic, Lasallian and Distinctive." Why?**

I believe it is important in today's competitive market to state clearly what an institution stands for and what distinguishes it from other similar institutions. The faith-based nature of our mission, the fact that we are a Catholic/Christian institution with a rich international Lasallian tradition, blends the intellectual quest and the yearning of the human spirit while emphasizing professional excellence, leadership and ethical character.

Whenever people talk about CBU, they almost always refer to the academic integrity of our educational programs, the high quality of teaching and availability of our teachers (c. 90% hold doctorates or terminal degrees). Students value and appreciate our small, friendly campus where they are afforded opportunities to develop holistically as persons while prepar-

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ing professionally for future employment and personally for happy, productive lives.

**If the University received a \$100 million gift, how would you like to see it invested?**

What a wonderful question! To start with, I would hasten to use the gift to support the following identified priorities: faculty and staff research and development, construction of a Campus Life Center, improvement of residence hall facilities, remodeling of Kenrick Hall and the Theater, expansion of the Science Center, scholarship assistance to students, growth of the endowment and expansion and beautification of the campus. Is there a chance for *another* \$100 million?

**How would you describe your leadership style?**

I would hope to be characterized as a pastoral pragmatist: a person who has a passionate commitment to an institution and its people, and someone who has the ability to adapt, innovate and to inspire others to work together in a common mission.

**Who are your heroes?**

Among my heroes are St. John Baptist de La Salle, founder of the Christian Brothers, Don Quixote, and all persons who work peacefully for peace with justice, especially in troubled parts of the world.

**You were vice chancellor and president of Bethlehem University for over eight years, virtually in a war zone. What did that experience give you as a Brother, as president, and now as a president in a very different location?**

The most important value I derived was need for a strong spiritual grounding as source and strength for the sacred educational ministry to which I have been entrusted.

**Music has been and is still a very important part of your life and you have performed extensively as a Brother. Will it continue to be an important part of life in Memphis for you?**

I certainly hope so. Music is an integral part of who I am as a person. It nourishes my soul and spirit. It also provides wonderful relaxation and therapy during difficult moments.

**What do you want CBU to be in five years, 10 years?**

I would like for CBU to achieve our vision as stated in the Strategic Plan: "Christian Brothers University

seeks to be the finest Catholic university in the South whose graduates will be distinguished by professional excellence, leadership and ethical character."

**What's the most important advice you would give to CBU students?**

Study, pray, relax and have fun. Take full advantage of the great opportunity you have to be a college student at this time in your life. ■

