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**NEWS 2016** - Jesuit Father Bob Fabing sang at Mother Teresa's funeral in 1997 and arranged the music for her 2003 beatification in Rome. He will do the same for her canonization this Sept. 4.

The two became close friends in the early 1980s when they first met in Kolkata, where Fr. Fabing gave a series of talks to tertians in the Missionaries of Charity's novitiate.

"The street outside was chaos," he recalled. "Then Mother Teresa walked in. She bowed to me and said, 'Hello Father.' I said, 'Hello Mother,' and bowed to her. Then we talked for an hour before she asked about my life."

When Fr. Fabing explained his ministry doing therapy and spiritual direction at the Jesuit Institute for Family Life and at the Jesuit Retreat Center of Los Altos (formerly known as El Retiro), Mother Teresa told him that his job was harder than hers. "I asked her what she meant, and she said that the poverty I dealt with was deeper than the poverty she faced. 'I can take a bowl of rice downstairs and give it to someone in the street, but it's harder for you to get a smile out of the people you serve,' she told me."

That first meeting led to 80 others and a lifelong friendship, one that informed Fr. Fabing's life and multifaceted ministry. The author of nine books on spirituality (translated into Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Korean and Japanese), he also recorded 25 albums filled with spiritual music.

His best known songs include “Be Like the Sun” and “Our Song of Love,” which he wrote for Mother Teresa and sang at her funeral and at her beatification.

He has also touched thousands of clergy, religious and lay people through his work at the Jesuit Institute for Family Life, offering a unique blend of spiritual direction and therapy.

While many of the people Fr. Fabing helps come from families in crisis, he recalled his childhood as a happy one filled with music. His father led Joe Fabing’s Collegians, a dance band that played at San Francisco’s downtown hotels. His older sister and his mother also were musicians, and singing accompanied by guitar and piano filled the Fabing home.

He joined the Society of Jesus right out of St. Ignatius College Preparatory in San Francisco. “But I hoped I would flunk the test to become a Jesuit,” he noted. “I never wanted to be a Jesuit, but I felt haunted by Christ, and I finally gave into the haunting. One night at the novitiate in Los Gatos, I looked up at the ceiling above my bed and said, ‘This is it.’ I never looked back.”

Months later, he had a spiritual awakening in 1961 while riding in the back seat of a car driving from the novitiate to visit his parents. “I saw Christ sitting next to me telling me to see the pain in the houses just across the street and to do something about it. I replied, ‘Yes Lord.’”

In the early 1970s, while studying at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, Fr. Fabing found himself swept up in the religious folk music movement, especially the music of the St. Louis Jesuits. After his first album came out, he performed with the young scholastics and priests coming out of St. Louis. His most popular song, “Be Like the Sun,” which he wrote for the Oakland Cathedral, found its way into song books in most parishes around the country.

He went on to lead 30-day retreats in Los Altos and found that, over the years, the men and women coming to him included more and more lay people, many of whom faced tumultuous family lives. Fr. Fabing opened the Jesuit Institute for Family Life in the 1970s to offer a blend of spiritual direction along with a variety of counseling, including marriage, individual, family and group.

The venture proved so successful that it has become the Jesuit Institute for Family Life International Networks ( [jiflinet.com](http://jiflinet.com) ), with Fr. Fabing serving as its founder and director. That network includes 89 marriage counseling and family therapy centers throughout the U.S., Europe, Asia, Central America and South America.

“If I’m speaking with clients, I’ll ask what Christ is saying to them. For me, combining spiritual direction and therapy is a holistic approach. Asking about how they are treating their kids and about their prayer lives go hand in hand. Ultimately, God wants us to be free, and therapy aids in this.”

Fr. Fabing found that unique blend of prayer and healing in the person of Mother Teresa, whom he met after a member of her order did a retreat at El Retiro. “He suggested I give talks on prayer to the sisters in her order, so I left for India soon after to do just that.”

When he returned to the States, he contacted a nearby Sisters of Charity novitiate and offered his services to say Mass there. He has returned every week for the past 35 years to minister to the needs of the nuns, and he will continue to minister to the Sisters of Charity long after the canonization of their order’s founder this September, just as he cares for the men and women coming to him looking for spiritual and emotional healing.

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