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## REVIEW ON TAPE

September 6, 2002

## Local banjo pickin' priest releases new bluegrass CD

by Jennifer Brinker, Review Staff Writer

If you're looking for bluegrass music featuring some good old toe-tapping fun mixed in with a little spirituality, look no further than Father Edward Richard.

The LaSalette Missionary priest, who is academic dean at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in Shrewsbury and a Review editorial board member, recently released his second solo CD, "Jimmy Brown, the Newsboy."

Father Richard's CD features a blend of instrumental and vocal selections, including traditional pieces such as "The Bells of St. Mary's" and "Father, We Thank Thee," on which he presented his own arrangement.

Also included is "The Bread of Life; John 6," a song Father Richard wrote about the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

"My idea ... is to introduce into the repertoire songs that are not just Catholic, but that emphasize some Scriptures that are not part of the wide range of bluegrass Gospel lyrics coming out of the American Protestant background," said Father Richard, who grew up listening to bluegrass, country and cajun music.



FATHER EDWARD RICHARD, MS, takes a break with his banjo this week at his office at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in Shrewsbury. Father Richard recently released his second solo CD of bluegrass music, 'Jimmy Brown, the Newsboy.'

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"I wanted to make reference to some of the Old Testament context and background on the subject in order to emphasize the fullness of what Jesus is teaching in (the Gospel of) John. I hope to write more songs like that."

The title track, "Jimmy Brown, the Newsboy," he said, is a song from the Depression era.

"It was one of the first songs I remember off this really old (Lester) Flatt and (Earl) Scruggs album that my mother had when I was a little kid," Father Richard said. "It's an old kind of song that makes one think about life."

The song also inspired the CD cover art, which features a photo of the train station in Father Richard's hometown of LaQuincy, La. The photo, taken by his sister, Dusty Dickerson, shows Father Richard's nephew, Myles, walking down the train tracks.

The priest's clawhammer picking style is featured throughout the CD, which incorporates a blend of rhythm and lead on the banjo.

"As far as I know, clawhammer, or 'frailing' as it is called, originates along with the five-string banjo," he said. "The style is played without picks, unlike the three-fingered style I also play."

Father Richard was inspired to play clawhammer thanks to bluegrass legend Ralph Stanley.

"I had a breakthrough in learning it shortly after I got interested when I was in Hugo, Okla., for a festival. There was a banjo picker there that helped me with the movement. From there I just kept learning to play songs that Ralph had recorded."

Father Richard said he spent more time in the production stage of this, his second recording, than he did for his first CD, "Do Whatever He Tells You."

"There were just some things that I really wanted to have control over in getting this done," he said, noting that another solo CD is in the works. "A lot of it I was very pleased with ... and it's got a wide appeal."

Frank Ray and Rich Orchard, two of the priest's friends and fellow players from the Missouri-based Ozark Bluegrass Boys, make a repeat appearance on "Jimmy Brown, the Newsboy." Ray plays mandolin and Orchard plays rhythm guitar and sings lead vocal on several pieces. His brother, Jimmy Orchard, founder of the Ozark Bluegrass Boys, plays fiddle.

Also included on the CD are Father Richard's longtime friends from Louisiana, lead vocalist Clifford Blackmon and his wife, Sue, on the rhythm guitar, along with fiddler Ron Yule. Bassist Guy Stevenson, who played on Father Richard's

first solo production, makes a second appearance.

Father Richard said he's always playing on the weekends, happy to fill in for anyone who needs a banjo player. A schedule of upcoming performances can be found at [www.msmissionmusic.org/schedule.htm](http://www.msmissionmusic.org/schedule.htm).

*Proceeds from "Jimmy Brown, the Newsboy" support the LaSalette Foreign Missions. Several Web sites offer the CD for sale. For more information, visit on the Internet: [www.msmissionmusic.org](http://www.msmissionmusic.org).*

*Local Catholic stores, including Catholic Supply, O'Byrne Religious Goods, Religious Supplies of St. Charles and Pauline Books and Media, also will carry the CD.*



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