



ENCOUNTER

Catholic laity on mission – everywhere

November 2018

Welcome to Encounter!

'Tis' the season of giving. It's the season of ENCOUNTER. We gather together in the spirit of fellowship and family. The best gift we can give others is ourselves: our time and our love. As we celebrate Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, we must remember he embodies love itself, which he pours out for all —the poor, the rich, the sick, the sinners and the saints.

You know men and women whose joy and generosity shines through them, always brightening up every moment. Share this newsletter with them. Invite them to connect with other missionaries through USCMA.



A Smile is the Best Payment

Dental missions change lives in Latin America

There may be no more fundamental way to express joy than with a smile. But children in the developing world born with cleft lip and palate and no access to life-altering surgery are limited in their ability to fully partake of a smile's simple beauty. The deformity may circumscribe their possibilities and destine them to a lifetime of poverty and shame.

That's why the commitment of dentists like Milagros Preciado Huaman and the work of Global Smile Foundation are so important. Because of her efforts on dental mission trips in Latin America, babies born with cleft palate get

the surgery they need before they can ever even remember being afflicted.

The native of Trujillo, Peru, went on her first medical mission trip, to Guatemala, in 2015, and in 2017 visited Ecuador. Each time, she spent about a week working with a visiting team of dentists, acting as a translator for the families of patients and helping with logistics.

"I'm a general dentist, but I wanted to do more than dentistry and help others," Milagros said, recalling that she first met Global Smile's founder, Usama Hamdan, in 2012 while she was still in dental school, after a class lecture.

Since 2017, Milagros, 28, has taken on another role with Global Smile, doing patient screening and molding the custom plates that go into a baby's mouth, part of a procedure called NAM (nasopalveolar molding) therapy, which helps to align the gums and reshape the nasal cartilage. That corrective process must begin in the first six weeks of life in order for it to be effective and prepare the infant for surgery.

She remembers clearly the first baby whose case she worked on, a little boy who lived six hours away but whose mother never missed his weekly appointment for the NAM therapy. She has since seen videos of the toddler as he grows, and it never fails to affect her.

"It's very touching, and every time I see it, I almost cry, because you can see our work. The mom cries because she was waiting for that moment, and it changed very fast," Milagros said, noting that while the child won't remember the experience, his mother always will. "He received therapy and the surgery, and after that, his lip closed and it changed his face. I was very happy, crying of happiness. It was very good."

Milagros also takes part in dental campaigns in Peru, doing outreach to people outside the cities who have little access to regular dental care. She coordinates some of the campaigns, which consist of hygiene lectures, preventive dental care, distribution of dental kits, and sometimes extractions.

The dentists are not compensated for the work they do. Or at least, not with money.

"We just receive the smiles, and that's enough for us," Milagros said. Instead, she said, payment comes in the form of "their happiness, when they see someone is taking care of them."

It's for this reason that she looks forward both to more



mission trips abroad with Global Smile and the local dental visits she and her colleagues make within Peru.



"I would love to keep doing missions in other places, and I love to do what I do here with the local campaigns," she said. "Because I think that's the best thing I can do."

She attributes her passion for this work to her Catholic upbringing, which included volunteering with children and collecting clothing for the poor through her church.

"I think that religion is very important. Other volunteers at Global Smile belong to other religions, but we all respect that. We are there because we want to help people. We have just one goal, to help, to serve others," she said. "We pray in our way, everyone. I always pray for the surgeons, for the patients, so everything goes according to the best for them."

Her work and commitment have impressed the group's founder.

"It is very clear that Milagros has the leadership skills, drive, personality, dedication, and focus to further drive our outreach cleft programs to new heights in Peru," said Usama. "She has an exemplary personality for how someone decides to better the lives of so many others through hard work and dedication for their communities."

"Yes, I think that this is my calling," Milagros said. I always say this, it's like I was meant to meet Dr. Usama so I can help through my career. And I'm very happy for that."

Article by Julie Bourbon, ENCOUNTER Editor

To learn more about the Global Smile Foundation, check out their webpage (www.gsmile.org)

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Christ the unKing

Our end-of-the-year feast, Christ the King, is an opportunity to reflect and peel back the layers of what goes into “kingship,” for better or worse: those things that are appropriate and praiseworthy as well as the truly un-Christlike and how they might relate to the current crisis in the Church.

Historically, at least a bit of the disease that has infected our global institution came from the civic relationships our Church has had, over many centuries, with secular, dominant European powers, in particular royalty and their kingdoms.

When you see images of our popes carried regally aloft seated on a papal throne, with voluminous robes, wearing the Papal Tiara, you get the picture. The tiara is not just one crown, it is three stacked together. Happily, this tradition has been abandoned by an accessible pastor who lives in modest rooms and eschews the trappings of papal glory, but the legacy of an exclusive select group of “princes”—the Church’s cardinals—is deeply rooted.

The Creation of our Feast

The Feast of Christ the King is a very recent feast, created in 1925. It was born out of centuries of power struggles, from around the year 800 until mid-19th century, over papal control of varying swaths of territory called the Papal States. Popes very literally had royal, civic power and engaged in warfare with competing kingdoms to maintain it. However, by 1920 the Italian State had virtually annexed everything under papal control. A final sorting out of pa-

pal temporal control came with a concordant between Pope Pius XI and King Victor Emmanuel in 1929, creating the small but independent Vatican City State we know today.

Subsequently, when Pius XI created the Feast, it was an assurance that the Church retained power, and in fact in an ultimate form. Our King is Jesus Christ himself, with dominion over the entire universe.

Winds of Change

Pope Francis and the best and brightest have dug down through these layers of privilege to name the issue: clericalism. Recently, Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich put it this way: “I think we take our eye off the ball if we don’t deal with the business of privilege, power and protection of a clerical culture. If these are not eradicated from the life of the church, everything else is a sideshow.” Or as Journalist Kenneth Woodward ends a lengthy analysis on this issue: “A final suggestion: stop treating cardinals and bishops as royalty rather than, as Francis has preached, as servants of the church”.

To help clear away all of these royal misappropriations of Christ the King, let’s check out the Gospels of the three-year lectionary for this feast, then you decide. Year A: Matthew 25: the well-known judgement scene, where the folks who did or did not feed, clothe, visit, and serve Christ the poor will be separated in the final kingdom. Year B: Luke 23: Jesus dying on the cross, being recognized by the repentant thief as one giving his innocent life,

the ultimate act of service, with the assurances thereafter of entering the Kingdom. Year C: John 18: Jesus before Pilate totally devoid of any temporal power, symbolically stripped naked, acknowledges that indeed he is a King. Some kind of king indeed!

Please note, in each Gospel rendition of king and kingdom, we witness clear, direct **encounters!** Those entering the kingdom (Mt), are those who touched the lives of the hungry, thirsty, sick and incarcerated. Next, (Lk) the deep encounter of two dying men, the final relationship. This was the encounter that bonded their lives—they entered the kingdom together. Finally, (Jn) Jesus’ encounter with Pilate is a moment of radical revelation of what our true king looks like.

Jesus turns the notion of “kingship” on its head, as in his “the least shall be greatest in his kingdom” mantra. As a reflection on this feast, perhaps each of us can prayerfully call to mind a favorite story of a Jesus encounter that most powerfully represents the presence of his reign of love, compassion and mercy.

Mission as Encounter

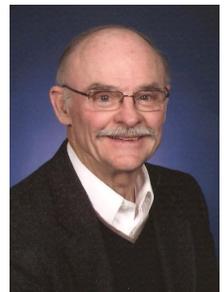
These provide the images of what Jesus’ reign, his “mission” looks like, what a church in mission needs to look like, what the shepherds must model. Servant leadership, how to “rule.” Modeled over and over by Pope Francis in word and deed. All the while as he pushes us

to take the encounters to the margins. We do have a great well to draw from: Catholic Social Teaching. It’s the Church’s “owner’s manual.” Featuring: Immigrants and refugees; anti-war/peacemaking; anti-abortion advocacy/alternatives; advocating on behalf of the homeless; addressing poverty, human trafficking, local, national and global extreme inequity, racism care of the earth, environmental degradation. There is virtually no limit to persons and structures to be encountered, to experience and to be touched by the reign of God.

And still so much to be done within the Church itself. Our Catholic laity seem to understand best that our hierarchical, all-male leadership cannot turn this around and recover much-needed credibility by themselves. The laity are asking, in a clear voice, for inclusive engagement, meaningful encounters on all levels of Church governance. And it cannot be delayed; it is urgent. It must include opportunities, new structures whereby they can be heard and listened to, to be active participants, to have a sense of ownership, in creating a renewed, healthy community of faith.

It may take a while, but we must hope that we are at a tipping point toward deep institutional reform. May Christ the unKing be our only King and constant guide.

Article by Father Bill Vos,
Diocese of St Cloud



USCMA Happenings

- **Let Justice Flow: A Call to Restore and Reconcile** | February 3-5, 2019 in Washington, DC. Early Bird Registration for the 2019 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering has been extended to [November 30th, 2018](#). For more information, check out the [conference webpage](#).
- Advent Young Adult Retreat: **“What Is God’s Plan for My Life?”** | Sponsored by Franciscan Friars of the Atonement [December 7-9](#) in Garrison, NY. Check out the [retreat weekend webpage](#) for more information.
- **Books for Review** | USCMA receives complimentary books about missiology, theology, and spirituality for review. For a current listing, [email](#) Nichole Petty, USCMA Office Manager.

The United States Catholic Mission Association is a national alliance of individuals and organizations committed to the mission Jesus entrusted to his followers. Through its members – and the services of the association – USCMA animates the next generation of missionaries, prepares them for and accompanies them through mission, and calls them to leadership. ENCOUNTER is an electronic newsletter of USCMA, made possible in part, by a grant from [Catholic Communication Campaign](#). You connect to “all the nations” by supporting USCMA. Donate at [uscatholicmission.org](#). Copyright 2018.



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