ENCOUNTER
Catholic laity on mission – everywhere
March 2019

Welcome to Encounter!

Be transformed by God. Follow Jesus into the desert and up the mountain. Lent is the time to stop and to be. With God. With others. With yourself as a missionary disciple. It is a time to truly reflect on how we are living out our baptismal call to mission, everyday.

Jesus took the time to see clearly – who he was and his purpose. Are you taking the time to see where God is calling you? Now is the time to challenge ourselves and lead our lives by asking #WWJD. You know people who exemplify this discipleship. Share this newsletter with them. Connect with other missionaries through USCMA. Also, check out our Lent 2019 daily reflections—available on USCMA website.

Mission as Faith

Children often speak of the powerful example their parents set in shaping their view of service and opportunity. For Dick Horstman and his wife Judy, the roles were reversed, with the children teaching their parents how life-changing mission can be.

The Horstmans, who've lived in Houston for more than two decades, were always active in their faith—teaching CCD, volunteering in their parish—but it wasn't until their three children began doing mission work that the couple realized lay people could serve the church and their sisters and brothers as missionaries.

Dick confesses that, growing up, "I thought, lay people don't do mission," he said. "Priests and sisters do mission!"

That early misconception makes it even sweeter that he is now the chair of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston Mission Council, an entity that exists only in Texas and which has three focus areas: education, spirit-

-tuality, and promotion of mission.

Fifteen years ago, Dick, at the time still an attorney for Marathon Oil, was attending a Catholic Relief Services conference in Houston. That might seem like a strange place for him to have been, but there he was.

"Oil companies are very interested in the developing world and in international business," he said. "I personally was very interested in mission and the work CRS does."

He happened to sit near then-Auxiliary Bishop Michael Rizzotto during a talk. The pair struck up a conversation, and before Dick knew it, he'd been appointed to the Mission Council.

To say that a lot has happened in the intervening 15 years would be an understatement. For starters, Dick retired from the oil company after 35 years, although he keeps his legal skills sharp with pro bono immigration cases—mostly unaccompanied minors and trafficking victims —through Catholic Charities, as well as by teaching a course on government–business relations in the developing world at the University of St. Thomas

Dick and Judy also began to accompany their adult children on medical mission trips—to Central and South America, Eastern Europe, and Africa with groups such as Feed the Children, Helping Hands, and the Medical Missionaries of Divine Mercy at St. Laurence Church in Sugar Land, just outside of Houston.

Even as Dick realized that lay people can go on mission, his understanding of what mission can be was also expanding. It doesn't have to be far away, in foreign lands, but can be in your own backyard, in poverty-stricken communities like Eagle Pass, Texas, on the U.S.–Mexico border, or in low-income Houston neighborhoods post-Hurricane Harvey.

After the historic flooding in Houston and surroundings, the archdiocese responded by offering home repair mission opportunities in two focus areas, one a Hispanic immigrant community and the other a Cambodian immigrant community. Volunteer groups are invited to stay at the 24-bed Cameron House, owned by the archdiocese, which they can use as a home base during their stay in the area.

"After Harvey, we are promoting mission in the area to help the poor who were affected by the storm and have had a very difficult time rebuilding their homes," Dick said. "We want to encourage more parishes in the archdiocese to get involved in mission and are using this as a vehicle. We also encourage mission groups from outside the archdiocese to consider Houston as a mission destination, of course."

Dick and his wife are also involved in missions to the border, including an annual high school spring break mission to repair homes. "I think for the youth it's so important," he said. "It helps give them some positive direction. It can be life changing to experience the poor, to work with the poor."

In promoting the Hurricane Harvey recovery efforts, Dick at first doesn't even mention that he and his wife lost their own home in the flooding. It's his friend, Fr. Gerry Kelly, a Maryknoll Missionary priest he's known for more than 10 years, who relates that Dick and Judy were rescued by the Coast Guard!

"He has this profound mission spirit and dedicates himself completely to it," said Fr. Kelly, who has traveled to Eagle Pass and Costa Rica with Dick on mission trips. "He's been a moving spirit to keep mission going forward. He's just been excellent in that sense."

Not one to boast about his own experiences, Dick tends to keep the focus on the work, which seems to grow ever dearer to his heart the longer he does it.

"I think it's central to our faith," he said. "Jesus very clearly identifies with those in need, and with the poor. I think it is our faith. Mission is our faith."

For more information on the Mission Office of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, visit https://www.archgh.org/offices-ministries/clergy-formation-chaplaincy-services/mission-office/.

Article by Julie Bourbon,
ENCOUNTER Editor

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Radical Conversion: From Me to Mission

Forget candy, give up consumerism. Giving up alcohol this Lent? Dial back individualism instead. Donating to CRS Rice Bowl? Surrender nationalism.

Let me be clear: Any spiritual exercise that supports you in purifying your soul, opening your heart to God and others, and sharing your gifts with your sisters and brothers, especially the needy, is the stuff of Lent. No judgment here. Just an invitation to dive deeper in so we can go further out.

As we become adults in the faith, we begin to see the gap between who we are and who we are called to be. We are convicted, not only by "what we have done, but what we have failed to do" (*Confiteor*). Those of us who have a few more years of experience wonder about the wrongs we have done, the people we have hurt, the missed opportunities, the time we have wasted, the injustice we have ignored, the fleshpots we cling to.

Think of Lent as a renovation. You can clean a room so it is nice and neat. You can also spruce up a room by painting it, getting new carpet, new furniture, new decorations. Remodeling a room is more demanding—changing the dimensions of the space, the lighting, even the purpose of the room. Finally, there is a whole-house renovation, requiring you to tear into the structural elements that limit the space; you open up the house so it can become a different type of home. Lent is the season to tear into those structural elements of our lives.

That kind of renovation is radical conversion. And it has one purpose—mission. Just as we renovate a house so it does more than merely sit there, looking beautiful, with no inhabitants, we do the hard work of conversion so we can be free to take the Gospel to "the ends of the earth," to a time and place where we can live with, and be for, the people God has sent us to.

This Lent, we invite all of us to dig deeper and look at those structural assumptions we make about God, others, and self and—like gold that is tested in fire—burn away all those cultural assumptions we have about ourselves, about others, and about God. This purification will stretch our hearts and minds to, in the words of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, "embrace the whole universe."

Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the desert for a time of preparation for the demands of mission. The Church, in her wisdom, has given us three foundational Lenten practices—prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—so we can accompany Jesus into the desert and join him in the mission that will take him to Galilee, Jerusalem, the Cross, Easter Sunday, and the wild winds of Pentecost. The same Spirit that moved Jesus into the desert moves us into mission.

So, as we begin our missionary excavation, we will lift up in prayer all that limits and expands our embrace of humanity; we will give up through fasting all that weighs us down and separates us from those on the periphery; and we will show up to be with and for others in numerous and wonderful ways.

As we do so, we will explore the missionary process, the six components of mission, and the various—and complementary—models of mission. We will see why Pope Francis has looked to mission as the key to the renovation of the Church in our world at this moment in human history.

For, as we know from Ash Wednesday, we are dust and unto dust we shall return. Dust—dirt, soil, earth—is a building block of life. It is pure potential before air, sun, and water. Ontologically, we come from the relationship of our parents, and we are ordered toward relationship with others, even the hermits among us. Like dust, we are pure potential, and our relationships—first with God and then with others—are the ecology of our perfection.

So we pray that you wore those ashes proudly, for God transformed you from dust into the wonder that you are today. And God is not finished with us yet. As long as we open our hearts and minds to the expansiveness of the Gospel—a time and place where justice flows like a river, peace dwells in the land, and all glory belongs to God alone—we are growing into the image of God we were born to be.

Our Lenten reflections will be posted on the USCMA website, Facebook, and Twitter, so join us as we prepare for the victory of Easter and the wonder of Pentecost.

May God, who has begun his good work within you, bring it to clarity and conviction this Lent.

USCMA Happenings

Article by Don McCrabb,
USCMA Executive Director

- **8th annual Maine Catholic Women's Conference |** April 6, 2019 at Portland Marriott at Sable Oaks. Women from the Diocese of Portland, Maine are encouraged to gather with other women of faith to celebrate faith, along with Kitty Cleveland, the keynote speaker, at the Portland Marriott at Sable Oaks. The conference is $59 for those who register by March 18 and $65 afterwards. Registration ends on April 1st.
- **Building Bridges in a Polarized World Retreat |** April 26—28, 2019. Los Altos, CA**.** Need a break? Join this retreat to pray and reflect on how to balance contemplation and action to become an effective bridge building missionary disciple. For more information, contact Carolyn Trumble
- **Maryknoll Vocations Retreat |** Join Maryknoll for a discernment retreat during Holy Week for men and women thinking of becoming missionary Priests, Brothers, Sisters, short-term volunteers or lay missioners. Contact vocation@maryknoll.org for more information and to register.
- **MSC Fest: Oktoberfest in April** | You are invited to celebrate Oktoberfest with the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus on April 28, 2019 at the Crowne Plaza in Reading, PA. Join in the fun with a polka mass, prizes and more. RSVP by April 19 on their website.
- **Books for Review |** USCMA receives complimentary books about missiology, theology, and spirituality for review. Our feature book this month is ***Loneliness: Insights for Healing in a Fragmented World*** by Gerald A. Arbuckle**.** For this book or 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 Church. Through its members and services USCMA animates missionaries, prepares them for mission, accompanies them through mission, and form them for leadership. ENCOUNTER is made possible in part, by a grant from Catholic Communication Campaign. You build bridges of global solidarity by supporting USCMA. Donate at uscatholicmission.org. Copyright 2019.

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