



Society for the Propagation of the Faith / St. Paul and Minneapolis

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith
328 West Kellogg Boulevard St. Paul, MN 55102-1997
651.222.6556 www.centerformission.org

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Inspired

Stories of encountering Christ in global mission

Summer 2021

"I have encountered missionaries who left the comforts and familiarity of home to go to the ends of the earth and the edges of society to share Christ's love with the poor and marginalized."

Current Status: Opportunities for Encounters

Saying Goodbye to Venezuela

Call to Mission

Emerging from the COVID Pandemic



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as interesting content is continually added.*

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Summer 2021

Stories of encountering Christ in global mission



Mission of Good News

*By Deacon Mickey Friesen
Director, Center for Mission*



This year marks my 20th year of serving as the Director of the Center for Mission. Over the years, I have had a front row seat into the missionary life of the Catholic Church both overseas and here at home. I have met some of the finest people, committed Christians with a passion for the Gospel and a compulsion to share God's love around the world. I have seen the sacrifices and suffering that continue for so many who bring forth God's reign. I have encountered missionaries who left the comforts and familiarity of home to go to the ends of the earth and the edges of society to share Christ's love with the poor and marginalized.

When I first began, I met with a local Catholic reporter who wanted me to sum up our work. The best answer I could give then, and it is still true today, is that we were all about the Good News!

We get to tell the stories of Christians giving their lives to witness the Gospel. We get to promote and coordinate support for missionaries living in a way that makes Jesus known and loved in places that have

not heard the Good News of Christ. We partner with mission churches being planted in often remote and impoverished lands - young and developing churches just like the ones described in the Acts of the Apostles. We animate the calling of every Catholic in the Archdiocese to embrace their own missionary identity received at Baptism and Confirmation. Our office exists to build bridges of faith, hope and love for parishioners in our Archdiocese to encounter Christ in mission in unity, peace and justice.



Mickey meeting with Archbishop Nassar of the Archdiocese of Damascus

local, overseas, missionaries both returned and serving.

I am glad to be part of this ongoing missionary legacy. Thank you for your continued support enabling the Center for Mission to continue supporting and sharing the Good News.



Current Status: Opportunities for Encounters



Mickey meeting with elderly in Kerala, India

As we all move out of the restrictions that COVID pandemic has caused, we pray that our readers are safe and healthy. And as the rest of the world, and our brothers and sisters, begin to

open their "doors," we will welcome and be welcomed to engage in mission again.

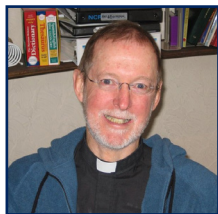
The Center for Mission is eager to re-initiate activity and bridge the Archdiocese to engagement with Christ in Mission.

We are beginning to plan and hold meetings again and experiencing excited and eager faces, outside of Zoom. Programs and mission education at parishes and schools to offer opportunities for mission encounters will be renewed as appropriate. This includes providing our partnership experiences and Immersion Trips.

Our mission trip encounters will be offered as we respect our global relationships need to re-open safely. The next Immersion Trip is now scheduled for the mountains of Jamaica and the Diocese of Mandeville, January 2023. If you are interested, contact Eric Simon at 651.291.4446. It is never too early to consider joining.

Saying Goodbye to Venezuela

By Father Dennis Dempsey



Father Dennis Dempsey was ordained in 5/80 and has previously served at Church of the Annunciation in Hazelwood and

Church of Saint Dominic in Northfield. He served in Venezuela and has visited several times. His heart for mission was formed there. He has now returned.

"Fr. Dennis," Archbishop Flynn began, "I don't know if I'm making the right decision, but I am sending Fr. Pat Ryan back to Venezuela and bringing you home and I know you are not going to like that. But there is someone who will like that... your mother!"

He was right. I had just completed my 5th year at the mission and didn't want to leave, but two years after my return my mom came down with pneumonia and passed away in a matter of days. Had I stayed in Venezuela, I would have missed that time with her. Moreover, Fr. Pat built a far nicer church than I would have. Archbishop Flynn had made the right decision.

Nonetheless, I still had Venezuela and the people in my heart and was eager to return. In 2019, twenty years later, it was time! It was what God was calling me to do. Archbishop Hebda gave me the green light and I joined Fr. Greg Schaffer at Jesucristo Resucitado, his parish in San Felix. He had been my associate in the 90's. This time I was happy to leave administrative duties in his hands so

I could dedicate my time to pastoral ministry.

Friendships were quickly renewed. The streets and paths of the barrios were familiar territory. It was like going home... except "home" had changed considerably. Venezuela was in shambles. The great economy of the 90's was now suffering the highest, unbelievable, rate of inflation on the planet, leaving people with very little ability to purchase goods, if stores could stock them.

The people, however had remarkably remained the same. Folks had the same joyful spirit and generous hearts. "Excellent!" and "Everything's good, thank God," were still the most common how-are-you responses. Workers still worked hard, only now for thirty cents a day. And due to inflation, that thirty cents purchased very little. Students still studied with hopes of a better future somewhere. People still joined neighbors in the evenings talking, laughing, playing dominoes and listening to music while their kids rode bikes and played soccer in the streets. With so little of life's blessings, people readily shared the little they had with one another thinking, what goes around comes around. It's their social security, that and their deep trust in God's love and care.



Fr. Denny with music group Roca Viva



Fr. Denny with his English class



Emiro and Mercedes with Fr. Denny

I was blessed to witness all this and the faith in so many individuals. I think of Marbella, playing and singing at Mass since she was a child, saying joyfully as she neared the end of her battle with cancer, "Can you hear the music? The angels' choir is so beautiful." And I remember Emiro helping at every Mass, visiting homes, leading rosary prayer for the deceased, and I think of the ministry teams bringing God and stirring church enthusiasm in their respective barrios and the elderly walking to Mass in the hot sun and the choirs with their vibrant music... and so much more.

Folks in whatever parishes we priests serve become our families. But the time comes when, like students going off to college, we need to move on. Saying goodbye once again to my Venezuelan family, I carry in my heart their friendships, memories and lessons learned which, God willing, will enrich my new ministry as pastor at Risen Savior in Burnsville. This is now where God is calling me.

Venezuela, thank you for having me and teaching me...I will miss you all!

Call to Mission

By Jason and Inge Becker



Jason and Inge are a full-time missionary family of seven serving in Coopevega, Costa Rica

since 2020, through the Family Missions Company. They have been financially aided through the Center for Mission Mustard Seed Grant set up to help Missionaries serve in global missions.

Coopevega, Costa Rica is a timber and farming town about ten miles from the Nicaraguan border with a population of approx. one thousand people, many of whom are Nicaraguan refugees. The

main industries include sugarcane, pineapples and lumber. There are several small lumber mills scattered throughout the area and it is common to see farmers wearing their mud boots in town to get supplies. The average wage is around 1,300 colones/hr (which is around \$2.15/hr). Our family lives in a small, rural pueblo forty-five minutes down a very rough, dirt road.

Our own road to mission in Costa Rica has been a long one. Jason and I began our call to mission engaging in Youth Ministry together and then a few years later in foreign ministry in Belize as a family with two small children. After three years we returned home to Minnesota only to feel the call to serve again after 10 years. We were then a family of seven and, after watching other families with children serving in mission through the Family Missions Company website, we joined the Company in 2018 and served first in the Amazon region of Peru before arriving in Coopevega, Costa Rica.

We desired to live simply, connected to the poor in our midst. We hoped to teach our children to be less focused on themselves and more on others. We wanted to be witnesses of God's trustworthiness by placing our lives entirely in his care.

Currently in Coopevega, we primarily



visitors asking for food, medicine and other necessities. We also regularly visit homes to check on needs and share basic prayers reminding them of God's mercy

and love for them.

One day a week we invite children to come to our house for kid's ministry where we begin with the Divine Mercy Chaplet after which we play games and arts/crafts. Recently we began an English class for those who are interested. We, of course, encourage receiving Sacraments of the Church including Baptism and marriage. The local bishop reminded us of the importance of witnessing to family life by letting people experience a married couple with five children daily living out their faith.

We have been blessed with a deeper dependency on God, recognizing that He can provide us with all our needs. Our daily life of prayer as a family has been a huge blessing for us. We've also gained a good perspective on wants versus needs. We are privileged to have Jesus "knock on our door daily" as we meet and spend time with other amazing people, missionaries, families and single people. We are gaining greater cultural sensitivity and respect which will certainly benefit us and our children in the future.

We are so thankful for the help we receive enabling us to serve God in mission. For more updates about our experiences, our blog is: <https://www.familymissionscompany.com/the-greatest-gift-we-can-offer/>



serve the Nicaraguan refugees in town. They often have little education and cannot find work. We frequently have

Emerging from COVID

By Eric Simon

The last year has been difficult for all of us. We humbly need your help: to continue our support for missionaries who have sacrificed to go "to the ends of the earth;" to support our partnership communities struggling to flourish; to maintain our mission programs for youth and adults; for our local support of organizations who demonstrate the value of Catholic social teachings in the neighborhoods and much, much more.

The Center for Mission has been able to weather the COVID pandemic by continuing our encounters in other creative ways. For example, the important Papal Encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, was published in October, 2020. In order to offer a deeper understanding of how this document can be processed through Catholic social teachings and impact our lives, five Zoom meetings were offered and included special speakers to present and lead discussions. These were recorded and can be found on YouTube, the first one can be watched at <https://youtu.be/M9O7IIEC6XY>.

Please consider a donation this summer to help the Center for Mission maintain these programs and activities. The Center for Mission does not receive financial support from any institution or diocese so we rely on you, our donors, to enable us to continue serving the Archdiocese by offering mission encounters. You can use the included envelope or also go to www.centerformission.org for more information and other ways to donate.

Thank you!!



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