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I am a Catholic Missionary

When I first saw the title of this essay, I saw the same five words, but I kept reading them as a question. “Am I a Catholic Missionary?” In my mind I pictured a Catholic Missionary being a nun, priest or teacher serving the poor, the hungry, the homeless or the lonely. Someone like Mr. Shimek, my religion teacher, who takes a van load of high school students to “Sharing and Caring Hands” every Tuesday to serve a warm meal to hundreds of homeless people. Or Mrs. Neuman, my English teacher, who drives a group of students to Lyndale Elementary School in Minneapolis every Thursday to tutor “at-risk” students. And Mr. Blake, the Campus Minister at Totino-Grace who manages the LaSallian Youth Program, encouraging others to live their Catholic faith by putting their faith into action. But am I a Catholic Missionary? I’m not sure.

My experiences and education at Totino-Grace have had a huge impact on helping me live my faith on a daily basis. Because of the teachers mentioned above, and many others, I have had the opportunity to pursue many volunteer opportunities. These opportunities have opened my eyes to real people with real problems. Whether it be tutoring ESL students, serving a meal to homeless people, visiting residents affected with Alzheimer’s, or packaging meals for third world countries, I see and feel God in everyone I meet. Am I a Catholic Missionary? Maybe I am. Sometimes I can only offer a hand to hold, a shoulder to lean on, or a smile to brighten someone’s day. But isn’t that all that God asks of us?

This summer I will have a unique opportunity to live and learn among God’s people in San Lucas, Guatemala. I am excited to meet the people of Guatemala, and perhaps help them in some small way. My sister went on this same mission trip last year, and told me about the many needs the people have. In addition to clothing, medical and educational needs, she told me that something as simple as a hammer could improve the lives of many workers. There are men who work all day, breaking large rocks into small pieces, by hitting the rocks repeatedly with a hammer. Among the group of men, there was a 10 year old boy who had quit school to work and make money for his family. He could not afford to buy a hammer, so he had to pound one rock against the other to try and break it into pieces. The work was difficult, and he made little money, in part because he didn’t have a hammer.

If I am chosen as a winner of this essay, I want to use the money I receive to buy hammers for the men of Guatemala and school supplies for the children. Simple acts of kindness, but acts that will make a difference. And to me, that is what a Catholic Missionary is; someone who wants to make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate. Then am I a Catholic Missionary? Yes, I believe I am a Catholic Missionary.