

The State of Mission Today

By Deacon Mickey Friesen

We have heard a lot in the past several months about the "state" of things in our world. The State of the Union, the state of the war, and almost daily we hear about the state of the economy, health care and jobs.

This month, culminating in World Mission Sunday on October 18th, invites us all to consider the state of our missionary identity as Catholics called to bring the Gospel to all nations. The month of October has come to be known as "mission month" for the worldwide Catholic Church.



When I think of the state of mission around the world today, I am reminded of Jesus' Parable of the Sower. Some prepare the ground and plant the seeds. Others nurture the growth of the plant. Still others are called upon to bring in the harvest. Preparing, planting, nurturing and harvesting the fruit of God's Word is what it means to be missionary today.

In some parts of the world where Christ is unknown, mission means preparing the



ground for the gospel by living and witnessing to Christian values of love, care

for the poor and protecting human dignity. Maryknoll Fr. Bob McCahill comes to mind, who has lived as a Christian among Moslems in Bangladesh for over 30 years.

In various parts of Africa, Asia and the Pacific Island regions we can give thanks for the planting and growth of the Church. Many are coming into the Church and bringing a vitality and enthusiasm for the faith that inspires many vocations. At the same time, many of these young Churches are often plagued by poverty, civil strife, religious persecution and all kinds of human misery – as well as natural disasters and global climate change. Sometimes Church institutions are the only entities serving basic human needs and providing education, health care and advocacy for human rights. The Church stands in the midst of civil conflict and in the aftermath of war and

genocide to care for victims, facilitate peace and reconciliation. Like the sower in the parable, the Church must face the rocky soil of hard hearts, the thorns that choke faith and the elements that threaten human growth and development.

As we recognize the challenges and achievements of our World Mission efforts, we should not forget those who suffer for the

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faith around the world. I think of the holy innocents of our day: refugees, the marginalized, the sick and dying who offer their suffering with Jesus on the Cross. It has been said that the blood of the martyrs becomes the seed of the Church. We recall those missionaries and faithful who have died in India, Latin America, Sri Lanka and other places in witness to their faith in Jesus.

Jesus said, "The harvest is plenty. Laborers are few. Come with me into the field." Cooperating together in Christ's mission to the field afar makes it possible for the harvest of the Kingdom to happen in our day. During this mission month, and on World Mission Sunday, let us re-commit ourselves to be disciples of Jesus and do our part to bring his message of love and mercy to the ends of the earth.



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Spring 2009

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"Each day going forward I will think of Marista and how she was willing to share what she had with us."

Cindy Uldrich
Dominican Republic Mission Participant

"State of the Mission Today"
by Deacon Mickey Friesen

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Cindy Uldrich

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Fall 2009 Stories of sharing and discovery from people in global communion



Experiencing an immersion trip:
The pull of hope and push of discomfort

By Cheryl Peterson

My education and experience in social work taught me that people typically change because of the pull of hope, or the push of discomfort. Sometimes this pull or push is felt physically. Sometimes it's through our thoughts or emotions.

I believe this pull and push is part of how God speaks to us.

In my own life, changes have often been due to that push of discomfort. An uncomfortable feeling in my chest and coughing each morning pushed me to quit smoking years ago. My career change from business to social work arose because of a gnawing disconnect between my personal values and how I spent my days.

However, all change doesn't come about because of a push of discomfort. The Center for Mission offers an immersion experience each year that changes



lives through the pull of hope.

In June, a group of teachers and parish religious educators from the Archdioceses of St. Paul/Minneapolis and Milwaukee traveled to the Dominican Republic. The ten-day experience included an opportunity to learn of the history and struggle of this economically impoverished nation as well as the role our country has in contributing to their poverty.

What sets this trip apart from others offered by parishes throughout the archdiocese is its goal. The program is not designed to build "things" but rather to build "bridges" of understanding and solidarity, so that educators and individuals return to their classrooms and parishes with a deeply felt connection within their hearts – not only to the people of the Dominican Republic, but to people all over the world. The trip had an affect on everyone. Here are some of their comments:

"The world is so big and people so distant, until you travel to those places. Suddenly, connecting with people and finding people who share the same feelings, experiences, and everyday occurrences makes the world seem much smaller, unified, and the people so much more real."

I think some of my principles and convictions in the decency and equality of humanity have been strengthened, and while some of the things we saw were heartbreaking, I was able to find hope for change and betterment for the people of the Dominican Republic and the world beyond."

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