

Saints Alive!

The Quarterly Newsletter of Emmaus Journey

Spring
2008

Missionary Spirit

By Rich Cleveland

It might surprise us to discover that when we reach out with a welcoming spirit to the people in our world, even as Pope Benedict did, we would find a majority of the people reaching back.

Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the United States was not only a moving event for Catholics and a popular media event that played well on television, but it was also an historic missionary journey. Most people watching the Holy Father's activities on television recognized the first two aspects of his visit, but many may have missed this last reality.

Pope Paul VI uses a beautiful word picture to describe this missionary spirit of evangelization, that of a God who "in divine paternity bends over toward humanity."¹ We hear this image expressed by Jesus' own words, "You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord; he who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me" (John 7:28,29). We also see aspects of this image in the parables Jesus taught, such as the shepherd seeking the lost sheep and the father welcoming his prodigal home. It was this concept for which Jesus was crucified; that he claimed to *be sent from the Father* to bring the good news of redemption to Israel and the nations.

This image of the Father bending over with his arms outstretched toward humanity is a poignant reminder of what Christ's incarnation and passion are all about, what the Church is all about, and what the Pope's trip was ultimately all about. He came in the name of Christ reaching out to Americans—and Americans for a brief moment in time reached back.

Pope Benedict XVI said, "I have come to proclaim anew, as Peter proclaimed on the day of Pentecost, that Jesus Christ is Lord and Messiah, risen from the dead, seated in glory at the right hand of the Father, and established as judge of the living and the dead. I have come to repeat the Apostle's urgent call to conversion and the forgive-

ness of sins, and to implore from the Lord a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church in this country . . . my visit to the United States is meant to be a witness to 'Christ our Hope.'"²

When the Holy Father's spritely 82-year-old body ascended the gangway to enplane for his return trip to Rome, did the Church's missionary spirit taxi with him down the runway? Were the outstretched arms of our heavenly Father withdrawn as the Pope's flight took off, or did Pope Benedict by his example demonstrate how we, the Catholic Church in the United States, should keep the missionary spirit alive? What would it entail on a personal, parish, or diocesan level to bend toward the world with outstretched hands in the Father's name—to see ourselves as truly sent to the people within our environment, our neighborhood, our cities, as the primary expression of the Father's outstretched arms?

It might surprise us to discover that when we reach out with a welcoming spirit to the people in our world, even as Pope Benedict did, we would find a majority of the people reaching back.

A seemingly ideal way to complete this challenge would be for me to prescribe a dozen key ways in which we could or should fulfill this call to reach out with a similar missionary spirit, but anything I would offer in this vein would be far too limiting.

Indeed, it is "The Holy Spirit who . . . acts in every evangelizer who allows himself to be possessed and led by Him. The Holy Spirit places on his lips the words that he could not find by himself, and at the same time the Holy Spirit predisposes the soul of the hearer to be open and receptive to the Good News and to the kingdom being proclaimed. . . . [I]t is He who impels each individual to proclaim the Gospel, and it is He who in

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Emmaus Journey Mission Statement

Emmaus Journey is a Catholic evangelization and discipleship ministry that is conducted primarily in and through Catholic parishes. Emmaus Journey has embraced Goal 1 of *Go and Make Disciples: A Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, produced by The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others."

Emmaus Journey's goals are:

- To help enable non-practicing Catholics, occasional Catholics, and nominal Catholics experience conversion to Christ, transformation in Christ, and mobilization for Christ as Catholic disciples.
- To encourage Catholics to embrace Jesus' call to advance the Gospel and his Kingdom by becoming laborers who live and disciple others from among the nonreligious.
- To help mature and gifted Catholics discover a particular call to participate more fully in the task of evangelization.
- To indirectly serve Catholic parishes' evangelization efforts through small-group materials, evangelization and discipleship resources, seminars, ministry events, and messages that move them forward in their efforts to make Christ known, and to nurture mature Catholic disciples who can help others experience conversion, transformation, and mobilization for Christ.



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Multiple copies of *Saints Alive!* are available upon request.

From the Heart

By Rich Cleveland

Mark Twain pointed out that truth is stranger than fiction, and it really is. There is a true but strange story that comes straight from the Old Testament, which in spite of the horrific circumstances it entails has an important lesson for us.

Shortly after King Solomon died there was a jockeying for leadership among the Israelites, and two brothers fighting for political control ended up dividing the people into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Israel occupied the territory called Samaria, and Judah had as its center the city of Jerusalem. When Israel and Judah were not quarrelling among themselves, they were usually being attacked by one of the local kings.

On one of these occasions, Judah was under attack by the king of Aram and the siege went on for a very long time. Judah, having used up all of its food reserves, was experiencing severe famine. Four starving lepers were also sitting at the gate, suffering from the siege and subsequent famine. As they talked one said, "Why are we just sitting here until we die? If we enter the city, we shall die there. If we sit here we shall also die here. Let's go to the camp of the Arameans, if they spare us we shall live, and if they kill us we shall but die." So early in the morning they went off to the camp of the Arameans.

Through a miracle of God they found the camp deserted and left standing with all of the equipment and foodstuff needed to maintain an army. So the four lepers had a field day eating and drinking to their hearts' content. They also collected silver and clothing, which they hid nearby. Later, after having fully satisfied their hunger, one of the lepers came to his senses and said, "We are not doing right. This is a day of Good News, but we are keeping silent. If we wait until morning light, punishment will overtake us. Come let us go tell."

These lepers, albeit belatedly, manifested a missionary spirit when they took the good news to the besieged people. The lepers' gracious decision not only broke the famine but enabled the people to have food in abundance. Now let me ask you a question. What would you have thought of the lepers if they had remained silent and allowed those besieged to continue to suffer without sharing what they discovered?

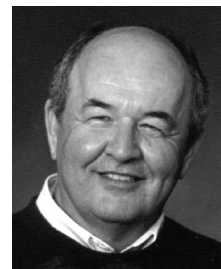
You see, this story can be used as a metaphor for sharing the Good News of Christ. People—a lot of people—are living in pretty miserable conditions physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Many of us, like the four lepers, have discovered Good News; God has blessed us with both the means and the message to set people free.

What would you have thought of the lepers if they had remained silent and allowed those besieged to continue to suffer without sharing what they discovered?

This is consistent with Jesus' desires: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18,19).

Like the lepers we must not remain silent and inactive, to do so would not be "doing right." In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, "The fields are still ripe for harvesting; God continues to give the growth. We can and must believe, with the late Pope John Paul II, that God is preparing a new springtime for Christianity. What is needed above all, at this time in the history of the Church in America, is a renewal of that apostolic zeal which inspires her shepherds actively to seek out the lost, to bind up those who have been wounded, and to bring strength to those who are languishing."¹

In Matthew 25 Jesus paints a picture of the end-times judgment. Take a close look at the "sheep" whom Jesus affirms and the "goats" in the opposite camp. The message is clear: Those who turn their eyes upon "the least of these" will be the ones who see Jesus himself.



¹ Pope Benedict XVI in Response to Bishop's Questions

Saints: The Extraordinary Lives of Ordinary People

St. Francis of Assisi—A Mirror of Christ

G. K. Chesterton describes St. Francis as “a lover of God [and] a lover of men.”¹ In Saint Francis we see a perfect blend of those characteristics that truly embody the missionary spirit: a heart for Christ and a heart for people. Such a heart compels one to reach out in love.

Born into a wealthy family, having received the best education, and with a mind set on becoming a knight, Francis was called by God through a dream to embrace a life of poverty and service to Christ. “On a certain morning in 1208, probably 24 February, Francis was hearing Mass in the chapel of St.

Mary of the Angels, near which he had then built himself a hut; the Gospel of the day told how the disciples of Christ were to possess neither gold nor silver, nor scrip for their journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff, and that they were to exhort sinners to repentance and announce the Kingdom of God.

Francis took these words as if spoken directly to himself, and so soon as Mass was over threw away the poor fragments left him of the world’s goods . . . Francis went forth at once exhorting the people of the countryside to penance, brotherly love, and peace.”²

From this point forward, his call to follow Christ was accompanied by great humility, compassion for the poor, and works of mercy. In St. Francis people discovered Christ. Chesterton describes it this way, “Francis is the mirror of Christ rather as the moon is the mirror of the sun. The moon is much smaller than the sun, but it is also much nearer to us; and being less vivid it is more visible.”³ This description explains the missionary activity of the Holy Spirit: “Christ in us the hope of glory.” Because we are nearer to those who have not yet believed in Christ, they are able to first discover the hope of Christ in the degree to which we reflect him.

“Why me?” St. Francis asks himself. “It is because God could not have chosen anyone less qualified or more of a sinner. . . . He selected me—for God always chooses the weak and the absurd, and those who count for nothing.”⁴

St. Francis demonstrates that God desires to especially use those of us who feel the most inadequate.

Bill Christman—Seeing Christ in the Needy

Bill met Katrina on his missionary trip to Haiti. Here’s how he describes that life-changing experience in his own words: “She was about nine years old and weighed no more than 20 pounds, her growth stolen by malnutrition. She appeared no more than a year and a half old. The clothes she wore were worn by another. Her bed is not hers, she owns nothing. She has absolutely no control over her body; it is constantly ridged, her muscles repeatedly contracting causing her to be in a continuous twitching motion. Her eyes randomly roll around in their sockets.

“Katrina was able only with great effort to communicate two things—thumb extended meant food; thumb tucked meant water. As I began my task to feed this child, I was handed a bowl of rice and beans and a spoon and thought, ‘Boy, am I going to have to have patience with this girl!’ So there we were, this tiny creature of God and me—an oaf trying to feed her. I soon discovered it was she who would need patience.

“When time came to give her water, if I thought feeding was not my forte I quickly discovered that compared to giving her water I was a pro at feeding. I put down the food, picked up the cup and drew water into the syringe. I set the cup down, grasped her head, and brought the syringe to her eagerly opened mouth and squirted. The water bounced off her tongue and right back in my face. All I could do was laugh, and as I did the most amazing thing occurred—she smiled.

This in and of itself would have stood as an unforgettable memory. But God had something more. Katrina’s eyes steadied and no longer flopped aimlessly around; they met mine with a perfect understanding. As I lost awareness at what was happening around me, I stared in total awe—there was the face of God! I could not have moved even if my only thought hadn’t been, ‘There is nowhere else I want to be than here, right now.’ As I sat frozen in wonder, I saw something else: Katrina appeared the same as I imagined myself to look. Oh my, my—this angel is seeing the face of God in me. WOW!”

Jesus said, “For I was hungry and you gave me food” (Matthew 25:35). When Bill went to Haiti he thought he might see Christ in the poor and hungry. Bill did, and the poor and hungry also experienced Christ through Bill.

Bill is a member of Holy Apostles Catholic Church in Colorado Springs.



1 *Saint Francis of Assisi* by G. K. Chesterton, page 7

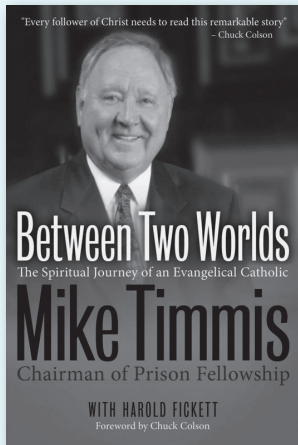
2 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06221a.htm>

3 *Ibid* 109

4 *The Deeds of Blessed Francis and His Companions*, page 458 as found in *Reluctant Saint*, by Donald Spoto

Tools You Can Use

Between Two Worlds



Mike Timmis seemed to have it all.

From growing up in working-class Detroit to becoming an international ambassador for Christ, Mike Timmis, chairman of Prison Fellowship Ministries, knew what it was to have professional success, financial stability, and a loving family. Yet beneath the surface, his world was falling apart as his marriage unraveled and his children grew distant. After a life-changing experience, Mike welcomed Christ into his life with an interesting twist: Mike was a practicing Catholic.

Mike, a prominent leader in both the evangelical and Catholic worlds, shares his unique story in *Between Two Worlds* (NavPress). With an honest and open-minded approach, Mike seeks to answer a crucial question: Can evangelical faith and Catholicism be reconciled?

Mike Timmis's inspiring life as a Catholic and evangelical leader reveals how our unity in Christ transcends the worlds' differences. From him, we learn how Catholics and evangelicals can go into an alienated world together as ministers of reconciliation and witnesses to God's salvation and love.

***Between Two Worlds* is now available through Emmaus Journey. To order your copy, go to www.emmausjourney.org.**

"The life of Mike Timmis is a powerful testimony to what can happen when evangelicals and Catholics work together as brothers and sisters in Christ. His story demonstrates that we are more fully and faithfully Catholic as we rejoice in the fellowship of all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord."

—Father Richard John Neuhaus

Missionary Spirit *continued from front page*

the depths of consciences causes the word of salvation to be accepted and understood."³

I would recommend to you *Go and Make Disciples*,⁴ an excellent source of evangelization ideas. With it you can begin the process of both understanding and implementing evangelization. The Holy Spirit can and will enable you to come up with more wonderful, relevant, and practical ways of bending toward humanity and extending the Father's outstretched arms to people around you, far greater than I could ever suggest.

For instance, the experience of a fellow parishioner named Bill Christman is illustrative of the Holy Spirit's creativity regarding evangelization, reaching out to our world. In 1994 Bill was deployed as a peacekeeper in Haiti, where he was so moved by the plight of the poor that he promised to come back some day to help. After retiring from the military the promise remained alive and he invited his brother Carl, and two nephews, Stephen and Michael, to join him on a missionary journey to Haiti with a group called the Missionaries of the Poor.

"What I got was far from a simple satisfaction of helping the poor or a warm and fuzzy feeling of doing good," Bill acknowledges. "I did not just get a renewed appreciation

for the things I had. Nor did I merely show my nephews what 'real' troubles were like. Instead I saw God in the face of the poor."

Bill summarizes what he learned: "In giving, one always receives—thus we are equally in each other's gratitude, for we were both in need." (Read more of Bill's story on page 3.) And perhaps this is the greatest benefit of exercising a missionary spirit, one is drawn close to God and we are enabled to see God in new and deeper ways.

Pope Benedict XVI's trip to the United States and his joyful example calls to mind Jesus' words, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (John 20:21). His visit to the United States encourages "all Catholics to reaffirm their unity in the apostolic faith, to offer their contemporaries a convincing account of the hope which inspires them (cf. 1 Peter 3:15), and to be renewed in missionary zeal for the extension of God's Kingdom."⁵ This is something we can do, this is something we should do.

1 *On Evangelization in the Modern World*, by Pope Paul VI, 53

2 *Homily during the celebration of Holy Mass at Washington Nationals Stadium*

3 *On Evangelization in the Modern World*, by Pope Paul VI, 75

4 Available from the USCCB

5 *Homily during the celebration of Holy Mass at Washington Nationals Stadium*