

# Saints Alive!

The Quarterly Newsletter of Emmaus Journey

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*Evangelization is primarily a work of the Spirit, and the Spirit is moved—really moved—by our prayers.*

## The Real Work Is Prayer

By Rich Cleveland

**P**erhaps you have chuckled at this very old joke: “Your Eminence,” the lowly priest exclaimed to the Cardinal, “a woman claims to have seen a vision of the Savior in the church, behind the main altar. What should we do?” The Cardinal replied, “Look busy, look busy!”

We laugh, not at the Cardinal, but because we see ourselves so very clearly in his response. Those of us who are not simply trying to “look” busy are often responding to the task of evangelization by becoming busier and busier. In contrast to our busyness, the Lord’s response to this teeming harvest should bring us up short and cause us to reevaluate the nature of our efforts. Jesus didn’t say, “Run around working harder and faster,” but rather stated, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; **pray therefore** the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37,38).

Perhaps the World War II experiences of Fr. Gereon Goldmann are insightful in this regard. While still a young seminarian, he was drafted into the German Nazi army and the elite SS corps. Throughout his tenure in the SS, he was protected from the influence of his atheistic comrades, from having to take the SS oath with its anti-Christian values, and from having to engage in killing his fellow man. In the midst of the war, while still a soldier, by the miraculous intervention of Pope Pius XII he was ordained a priest, and toward the end of the war he was imprisoned, first as a soldier and then mistakenly as a war criminal simply because he had served in the SS. Throughout his imprisonments, God gave him a great harvest of souls; many came to Christ and returned to his Church. Some who in bitter hostility opposed him and his every effort for Christ eventually experienced conversion from their former lives and the hardened, encrusted influence of SS atheism.

On his way to being shot as a war criminal, along with fellow prisoners while in a French POW camp, the officer who was in charge of his execution closed the cell door and asked Fr. Gereon to hear his confession because “you will be going to heaven right away.” The confession was considerable in length, and in the background they could hear the shots as prisoner after prisoner was executed in the courtyard. They were interrupted by noise outside of the cell door, and upon investigation they discovered that a stay of execution had arrived only minutes before. Had the officer not asked to have his lengthy confession heard by this soon-to-be-executed priest, the stay of execution would have arrived too late.

Now here is the interesting part. Upon returning to Germany he was told to visit a particular convent in Fulda, where he discovered that a Sister Veronica had consecrated herself to pray daily for a young seminarian, Gereon Goldmann, whose name was commended to her by a visiting priest. She consecrated herself to pray for him daily and then became seriously ill. For the next 20 years she daily offered up her prayer, pain, and suffering as a special sacrifice for the soul of this boy whom she had never met. Did not this young lad survive the pressure and influence of Nazism, escape the ravages of war to become a priest in a very unique way, and produce such astounding evangelistic fruit in the midst of the vilest prison conditions, not simply because of his own efforts but primarily by virtue of the prayers of this godly woman? Did not the Lord of the harvest hear her prayers and consequently send Gereon Goldmann into the harvest?!

You see, Jesus implies that our prayers really do move the Lord of the harvest to act. Do we believe that truth or do we simply believe that our communication skills and techniques are the primary instrument in the

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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

### Needed: Lucias, Sarahs, and Veronicas

If you were to ask, "Rich, what is Emmaus Journey's biggest need for the coming year?", several things would immediately come to mind. An obvious answer would be increased income to meet the increased opportunities that the future holds. Another would be additional staff who are trained and available to assist individuals and parish leaders in Catholic evangelization and re-evangelization. But after mulling over the many possibilities, the biggest need would come down to having a cadre of Catholic men and women who would pray faithfully and fervently for the empowerment and effectiveness of this ministry.

We learned this valuable lesson early in our lives when we were helping to form the faith of young adults in Tennessee. Two elderly women, Lucia Downey and Sarah Merry, who lived in the local senior's housing, took on our ministry as their personal prayer project. Frequently they would call, even from their sick bed, asking us for information on our ministry and the names of specific individuals for whom they could pray. For eight years, while in Tennessee, our ministry flourished. Today, some 27 years later, many of the former young adults continue to live lives of faith and service and attribute their love for Christ to those early years of spiritual formation.

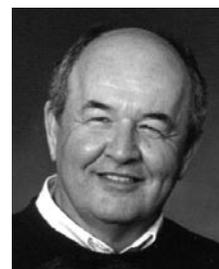
St. Paul speaks of the Thessalonians, to whom he ministered in faith formation, as being his "hope or joy or crown of boasting" at the Lord's coming and as his "glory and joy" (1 Thessalonians 2:19,20). Surely, the fruit that flourished from our ministry to young adults in Tennessee must have been attributed in large part to the prayers of Lucia Downey and Sarah Merry, in much the same way that the life and ministry of Fr. Gereon could be attributed to Sr. Veronica. For those who through prayer move the "Lord of the harvest" are the ones who are primarily responsible for its results. The fruit is first and foremost their crown and joy before the Lord. The rest of us are simply beneficiaries of their prayers.

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Sr. Veronica, Lucia Downey, and Sarah Merry performed much the same function in spiritual warfare as did Aaron and Hur in Israel's battle against Amalek. You will undoubtedly recall the incident in Exodus 17:8-16. Moses stationed himself on a hill overlooking the battlefield, and when he raised his hands the Israelites prevailed in the battle but when he lowered them Amalek prevailed. We can only imagine how heavy his arms became as the battle lingered on throughout the day. Aaron and Hur, two of his associates, helped Moses by putting a large stone under him to sit upon, and then getting on either side of Moses they held his hands steady until the sun set and the enemy was overwhelmed. In a similar way, these faithful and fervent pray-ers symbolically hold up the arms of those engaged in evangelization, and in reality are instrumental in assuring victory in the battle for the souls of people.

The Catechism speaks of this *Battle of Prayer* (2,725-2,745): "Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response on our part. It always presupposes effort. The great figures of prayer . . . teach us this: Prayer is a battle. Against whom? Against ourselves and against the wiles of the tempter who does all he can to turn man away from prayer, away from union with God. . . . The 'spiritual battle' of the Christian's new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer."

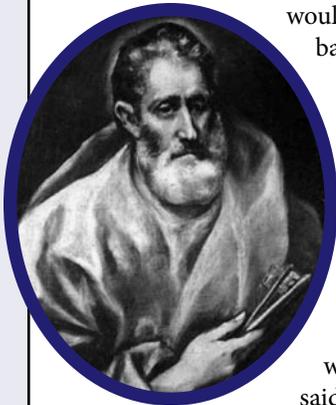
Emmaus Journey's greatest need—the Church's greatest need—is for men and women who will engage in the spiritual battle of prayer: prayer for the souls of people, for laborers to harvest those souls, for vocations, and for the faith formation of Catholics.



# Saints: The Extraordinary Lives of Ordinary People

## Saint Peter: Example of the Spirit's Power

St. Peter preached the Church's first sermon shortly after Pentecost in Jerusalem. There was a tremendous response of repentance and belief by people who heard his message of Good News. That day more than 3,000 people believed and were baptized. Peter would become the leader of Jesus' band of men, was used mightily by God to establish his Church, and ultimately was martyred for his faith. What changed this bumbling, impetuous follower of Jesus into such an effective evangelizer and leader whom we know today as St. Peter?



First, he was impacted by the life and prayer of his Savior who knew of his weaknesses. Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:31,32). Jesus knew of this *battle of prayer* of which the Catechism speaks, and throughout his life, even to the end, he prayed for his people.

Second, Peter was one of the original recipients of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus so that he could enable us to both function as his people and accomplish the task of taking the Gospel to the world. We see in Acts 1:8 a cause and effect relationship—the effect is that people, like Peter, will receive power (*dunamis*, the same Greek word from which *dynamic* and *dynamite* is derived) and will be witnesses. The cause was the Holy Spirit's coming upon people, as he did upon Peter and the other disciples. Consequently, Simon was transformed into St. Peter, a dynamic, eloquent, and effective evangelizer upon whom Christ could build his Church.

Peter's life was characterized both by dynamic evidence of the Holy Spirit's working through him and preeminent success in evangelization. Whether he was preaching the first sermon, boldly witnessing after receiving a beating and a warning not to preach again about Jesus, or defying tradition to visit the home of the Gentile Cornelius in order to take the Gospel to him and his family, St. Peter demonstrated a unique yieldedness to the Holy Spirit and cooperation with his purposes that resulted in significant evangelistic fruitfulness.

St. Peter should be a great source of hope and inspiration for all who desire to participate in the advancement of the Gospel. With the Lord's prayers for us and the Holy Spirit's filling, anything is possible.

## Peter and Theresa Ziolkowski

Peter Ziolkowski and his wife, Theresa, have been involved in evangelization for many years. In so doing they have come to appreciate the role prayer and the Holy Spirit have in bringing about conversion. For them, prayer and the involvement of the Holy Spirit is not a technique that you use in evangelization but an ongoing relationship. For instance, Peter starts the day inviting the Holy Spirit into his life and schedule.

"I often begin my prayer time by asking the Holy Spirit to 'Come,' " he says. "Invariably, even if I'm groggy from too little sleep and not enough coffee, God answers this prayer by granting me a keener awareness of his presence. I also ask the Holy Spirit to help me pray as I ought, to lead me in who and what to intercede for (Roman 8.26). There is just too much to do, too many people to help know the Lord, and too little time." This relationship introduces a freedom to respond to God's leading regarding those people Peter encounters.

Peter relates, "Several years ago, for example, I was praying daily for opportunities to share the gospel. Later that day I stood atop a ladder, trimming a row of arbor vitae in our side yard. As it happened, the property manager greeted me and we began talking. I explained to him my grief over my father's terminal illness, and before I knew it he was sharing how he felt God abandoned him by letting cancer fell his mother at a young age! Well, I've continued praying for him but without a chance to continue the conversation until he showed up at my door last Christmas. Though he seemed to appear out of nowhere, we were able to pretty much take up the conversation exactly where we left off. He is still angry with God but wants to start talking about how to regain his faith!"

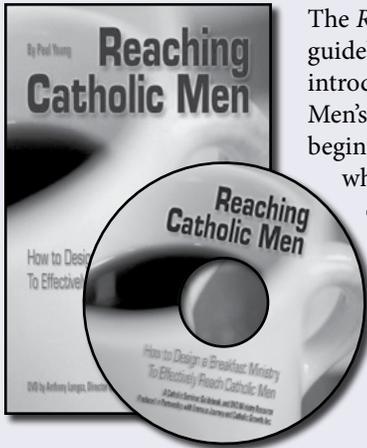
Peter and Theresa have come to realize that "the Holy Spirit wishes to initiate action on our part, to attract people to Jesus and to help us say the right things. I felt like the Holy Spirit prompted me to share openly my grief with my neighbor, and then, when he knocked on my door recently, to ask him about whether he was still angry with God—both kind of goofy things to do except that they opened the floodgates of this man's heart!"

Peter and Theresa and their five children are members of Christ the King Catholic Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Peter holds a Master's of Theology from Sacred Heart Major Seminary.



# Tools You Can Use

## Introducing the Emmaus Journey Men's Ministry



The *Reaching Catholic Men* guidebook and DVD seminar introduces the Emmaus Journey Men's Ministry, which officially begins this month. Paul Young, who has had 35 years' experience in church ministry and has earned a Master's Degree in Theology and a Doctorate in Psychological Studies, will direct this new ministry to men.

The lack of involvement of men with Christ and in the life of the Church has reached startling proportions. In the minds of many the question arises, "How can we impact men for Christ in the Catholic Church and beyond?" We ask this question because often the majority of men are on the margin of Christianity, on the outside looking in when it comes to a faith in Christ Jesus that makes a difference in their everyday lives. These men frequently choose to live uninformed, uninvolved, and uncommitted lives regarding Christ and his Church, sometimes by default because they do not comprehend a viable alternative.

The Emmaus Journey Men's Ministry endeavors to address this problem and provide help and resources for

Catholic leaders and parishes. Our first men's ministry resource, *Reaching Catholic Men*, is an effective approach parishes can use to re-focus on men, calling them to conversion and encouraging involvement in spiritual formation and ministry. The guidebook and seminar are available from Emmaus Journey for \$29.95, and for an additional \$10.00 we will include three additional DVDs of stimulating messages to and for men that can be used in a breakfast ministry or men's small groups. Five guidebooks are included with every order so that each member of the leadership team can have a copy. For larger teams, additional guidebooks are available at \$3.00 each.

- *Reaching Catholic Men* guidebook (5 copies) and DVD seminar \$29.95
- *Reaching Catholic Men* guidebook (5 copies) and DVD seminar with a 3 DVD set of men's messages \$39.95
- Additional guidebooks, with one of the above orders \$3.00 each

Visit [www.emmausjourney.org](http://www.emmausjourney.org) to access the Emmaus Journey Men's Ministry page and to order your copies of the *Reaching Catholic Men* guidebook and DVD.

## The Real Work Is Prayer continued from front page

conversion of people? The point is not to communicate less, or to communicate more ineptly, but rather to realize that evangelization is primarily a work of the Spirit, and the Spirit is moved—really moved—by our prayers.

Pope Paul VI explains that "evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit." It is the Holy Spirit who inspires and empowers the words of evangelization, it is he who comes down on those who hear the words and explains the deep meaning of the teachings of Jesus, and it is he who "predisposes the soul of the hearer to be open and receptive to the Good News." If these things are true, and they are, it is essential that we learn to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the work of evangelization through prayer, moving him to do, so well, that which he alone can do.<sup>2</sup>

Today we are facing a dearth of people for vocations and an increasing need for both evangelization and re-evangelization of people. It is a task that would overwhelm us were we not confident that God is fully capable of turning this situation

around. We can again turn to the advice of Pope Paul: "We exhort all evangelizers, whoever they may be, to pray without ceasing to the Holy Spirit with faith and fervor and to let themselves prudently be guided by him as the decisive inspirer of their plans, their initiatives and their evangelizing activity."<sup>3</sup>

What new goals and objectives do you have for 2007? Could you not for one year make a commitment similar to that which Sister Veronica made for 20 years? Could you not consecrate yourself to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send forth laborers into the harvest, and pray for the fruitful reaping of evangelization and re-evangelization?

This is something we all can do. This is something we all should do.

1 The story of Fr. Goldmann comes from *The Shadow of His Wings* by Ignatius Press. We highly recommend this book.

2 The quotes and description of the work of the Holy Spirit comes from *On Evangelization in the Modern World* by Pope Paul VI, 75

3 Ibid