

The Advocate

Saint Brigid Social Ministries Newsletter
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Local Missionaries Receive Formation in Rome

By John Nadworny

In September, two St. Brigid Parishioners, John Nadworny and Mary Dawn Reavey, left for Rome to begin a 3-month formation period in preparation for their 2-year missions to Africa with VOICA (The Canossian Daughters of Charity International Voluntary Service). John will soon be living in Malawi, teaching math, science, and business. He is currently learning the Chechewa language. Mary Dawn will be in Tanzania, volunteering as a nurse practitioner. She is learning Swahili. The following is an account of John's first few months of formation.

Our three-month formation has included carefully planned classes and retreats, while leaving room for God's providence in such unexpected blessings as receiving a missionary mandate from Cardinal Camillo Ruini of the Diocese of Rome and road trips to the north of Italy and to Sicily to talk with students and young adults about our missions. The program started by taking a step back from the hectic changes, emotional goodbyes, and the excitement of meeting so many new people to wonder "How did I get here?" "Why am I doing this?" and "Did God call me here?"

Meeting the other volunteers was a much anticipated event. Eight volunteers came from the United States, one from Poland, and one from Slovakia. From this group, four will go to Malawi, two to Tanzania, and four to Albania. Our ages range from 22 and right out of college to thirty-somethings leaving behind established careers. The group's varied experiences include two years of missionary service in Ecuador, five international medical missions, and many construction trips throughout the world. Our backgrounds include a master's degree in theology, a nurse practitioner, an engineer, a magazine editor, an accountant, and ten wonderful stories of personal conversion. Some recall the religious oppression in the former communist countries, while others grew up knowing only democracy. Some have recently come to the faith, while others have had a lifetime of Catholic education. But we are all still on the path to increase our faith and grow closer to God. Living together in a community challenges how we relate to others and exposes many of our own weaknesses, but at the same time confirms our areas of strength and even taps into new ones.

Language study, an important aspect of formation, is both exciting and frustrating. It is a tangible and practical taste of the mission culture--from experiencing the language for the first time, to learning our first few words, to finally realizing our study time has paid off and we can understand or even convey an idea in the new language. It is daunting when you hear a native speaker. While you're trying to recall the meaning of a word, many others are flying by your ears and you can't keep up. *[Continued on p.2]*

Giving Back Christmas Joy

By Catherine Barley

Christmas this year will be very special for twenty children in our area. Through the Community Christian Service Agency (CCSA) Adopt-a-Family program, St. Brigid has offered to adopt five area families. With help from our parish, individuals in the community and other area churches, CCSA is able to provide over 200 families with a Christmas filled with food, gifts, and good will.

Through CCSA, St. Brigid's will be given the names and wish lists of these children. Starting on November 30, volunteers will take pledges from parishioners to provide a Merry Christmas to these families who would otherwise have none. In place of our usual Give Back Sunday, we will be asking for specific gifts for these children. Each child will be provided with two gifts from her/his wish list. Volunteers will take pledges and collect gifts after masses on December 1st, 8th, and 15th. Wouldn't you like to "adopt" one of these kids for Christmas? Your opportunity is just around the corner! Give back out of your plenty to bring joy on Christmas day!

Prayer Service Brings Hope

By Les Sherman

St. Brigid's Parish, Father Peter Escalante, Pastor, and Sister Hilda McDonagh, Homebound Ministry, sponsor a monthly Prayer Service at the Cloisters nursing home in La Jolla. Every fourth Sunday of the month at 2:00 PM., we gather there to provide the residents with a thirty-minute service that incorporates the Lectionary readings of the day with familiar hymns, blessings, and prayers. It is our intention to involve many parish ministries in the prayer service, and hopefully in future activities as well. For instance, the children in the CCD programs can make cards for the residents, the youth group can do presentations, and the RCIA candidates could also be involved. Of course, we would love to have choir members come sing with us. In my experience, what long-term care facility residents value most is simply sincere attention. Someone to listen to them, talk to them and make the effort to acknowledge their existence beyond their medical and daily needs is a blessing in itself and is extremely rewarding. *To find out how you can get involved, please call Les Sherman at 858-274-7080.*

St. Brigid Missionaries (*con'td from p.1*)

We have come to know the Canossian Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor as they have welcomed us into their community. Their founder, Saint Magdalene of Canossa, lived an inspiring, yet practical life from 1774-1835. She was drawn to a life of contemplation and action that fueled her to establish a new order. She had a passion for forming people by empowering us to discover, expose, and develop our talents and gifts. Careful attention is paid to the gifts within us that haven't yet been utilized. It is exciting to discover new gifts and how they can be shared with others.

A primary emphasis of the Canossian missions is to make Jesus known and loved. The main reason that people don't love Jesus is because they don't know Him. Through our actions, our presence, and most of all, the workings of the Holy Spirit others can come to know God in their own lives and open their hearts to Him. The sisters emphasize the important role of the laity to missions. They point out that as laity, we can develop relationships and provide examples of living a Christian life because we can live with the community. The Canossians have been our teachers, tour guides, teammates in frisbee football, prayer partners, and hosts for lunch once a week.

We received a missionary mandate from Cardinal Camillo Ruini of the Diocese of Rome at St. John's Cathedral. There was standing room only while we were called by name and sent out with about 30 other missionaries. We were the only lay missionaries. The Cardinal gave us missionary crosses and a copy of the Gospels to take with us. We received an introduction to the Pope's encyclical on Mission of the Redeemer. This provides wonderful definition, structure, and insight into the mission experience. It applies directly to the social ministries work going on right in our own parish. Check it out!

The excitement to enter our mission continues to build. We will be in our missions in less than a month! There is so much to experience and to share. The continued support of prayers that were committed before we left and are reported regularly is a key enabler to our going out with hope and confidence.

Through formation and community life, I've realized that there is much more to mission than I realized. Yet, I've also come to appreciate the fundamental aspects of mission which can be lived out right where we are, without traveling to the other side of the world or making a drastic change in our lives. We've been helping in a "soup kitchen" once a week that serves over 600 refugees every day. There are many similarities to the Wednesday Homeless Dinners and the St. Vincent DePaul meals in San Diego. We also help in a convalescent home at lunchtime on Sundays. The good feelings I receive and the appreciation for the gifts that I have are the same as the ones I've gotten from St. Brigid's Social Ministries projects. My life has been formed by St. Brigid's Social Ministries, and I'm sure that many others have experienced this as well. St. Brigid's Social Ministries, keep doing what you're doing, God will be very pleased. The harvest is rich, but the workers are few.

Love Warms Tijuana Orphanage

By Paul Cofrancesco

I first read about Casa Hogar De Los Niños, in the St. Brigid's bulletin. For years I wanted to get more involved, but I thought I wasn't the "type" of person that gets involved. With God's help that was about to change. Early in August 2002, I set out to find the meeting place at the mission basilica. I was new to California, and by the time I got there it was too late; everyone had left. I



Paul gives a ride to a new friend.

was determined to try again. Now it was the beginning of November, and this time I knew the way. I was scared to go because I had only been to downtown Tijuana twice and now I was going to an orphanage. Oh, and did I mention that my Spanish vocabulary consisted of about three words?

Driving down the dirt roads through poor areas was a real eye-opener for me. When we walked in the door, the kids rushed to greet everyone but me. After about an

hour, I got bored and went across the street to buy a couple bags of chips to hand out to the kids. It worked. Kids came up to get a chip and we looked into each others eyes and smiled. From that moment, I knew I would back. The next thing I noticed was the kids didn't seem very hungry or interested--each child only took one chip. The kids that took two chips gave one to a smaller child that didn't get any. I had never seen such voluntary sharing. A few minutes later, I opened the second bag chips and the same kids came back for more.

For the next year I visited at least once a month. I missed only one month in more than a year's time. The more I go, the better it gets, and my confidence and ability to reach out to serve the poor also grow. Now I drive my own car and introduce new people to the kids. Each time I visit, I wear a cross around my neck on the outside where everyone can see it. Inside, I praise and glorify God for putting all the kids and adults in my life.

To learn more, call Paul Cofrancesco at 858-349-7942.

We Walk Because They Walk

By Amber Rieder

Ever wonder how you can make a difference? Ever feel blessed for having what you have? Got feet? If you answered "yes" to any one of these questions, then you might want to check out CROP Walk! It's a 4-mile hunger walk done right here in San Diego. It began after World War II, with the primary mission to help Midwestern farm families share their grain with their hungry neighbors in post-war Europe and Asia. The first organized walk emerged on October 17th, 1969 in North Dakota, and now reaches across America with 2,000 communities walking in solidarity with those who do not know the wealth that we know here in the States.

CROP Walks help support the overall ministry of Church World Service and the grassroots, hunger-fighting development efforts of their partner agencies in more than 80 countries. CROP Walks help provide tools of hope that empower people to meet their own needs, from seeds and tools, to wells and water systems, to nutrition-enhancing Moringa trees, to technical training and micro-enterprise loan. The key is people working together to identify their own development priorities, their strengths and their needs.

CROP Walks also help support local food banks and agencies that help the poor. Twenty-five percent of what is made during a walk is distributed locally. Community Christian Service Agency (CCSA), a church membership organization of 27 churches (including St. Brigid), benefits greatly from the walks. CCSA strives to meet the needs of the poor and homeless in our midst, and is dependent on the gifts and talents of the congregants of our member churches.

Sunday, October 27th, 2002, 1:00 PM, a most excellent group from St. Brigid's joined 200 other walkers from all over San Diego. We made our way down Clairemont Mesa Drive on a beautiful sunny afternoon. We had walking shoes, water bottles, big smiles, STOP hunger signs and a very gentle pit bull along. It was an awesome experience and a great workout too! We all did the 4 miles walk without a hitch. Our group made just over \$1,000, which is a pretty big part of the \$17,000 that was made over all! Way to go guys!

This was the 3rd Annual San Diego CROP Walk, with big plans already starting for CROP Walk 2003! *If you are interested or would like more information please contact Amber Rieder at 619-543-1429.*

Feed My Sheep

By Alison Gibbons

It's 5:00 PM and the volunteers are starting to arrive at the PB United Methodist Church. Outside, 100 local homeless are waiting. The crowd consists of young, old, and middle-aged men and women. There are a few teenagers, some mothers with children, and even a few infants. As the volunteers gather, the kitchen comes alive. Lasagnas are taken out of the oven, vegetable sticks are arranged on platters, fruit is chopped, and salad is tossed. Today we have an unexpected treat: someone has left three large boxes of sweet peppers in the fridge. We don't know who our "pepper elf" was, but we're grateful. We also have two other surprises: several loaves of garlic bread, and three sheet cakes.

Coordinating the dinner is always a leap of faith. Since we don't have a monetary fund for the food, the dinner depends on who can to donate each month and what they give. Each dinner is a surprise, and some are more bountiful than others. There have been times when we've been short on lasagna, had to run out for more milk, or gone without seconds on salad. But there have also been days that have been blessed with tomatoes fresh from someone's garden, gourmet salad dressing, or a pot of homemade spaghetti sauce. The hard lesson is relying on God and the generosity of our donors. This is a lesson we humbly learn from the guests who line up each week.

5:30 PM: The volunteers are taking their positions at the counter. I greet each guest with a smile and say, over and over again, "Hello, would you like some veggies?" "Just salad," a guest responds with a toothless grin, "I can't eat carrots." Many of the faces smile at me. Others are too addled with mental and physical challenges to take notice. All are in need, and all teach me about hope, faith, and total reliance on God.

6:00 PM: Everyone has received one helping. We shut down the kitchen to prepare for seconds, then gather with the guests for prayers and announcements. After an inspirational benediction, the guests are told about the services available after dinner. There's a free medical and dental clinic, and a movie that will be shown in the church hall.

6:15 PM: The kitchen opens again and our guests line up for seconds. We're out of lasagna, but we now have spaghetti. Soon, the dinner will be over. The volunteers will go back to their homes while the guests return to the beach, shelters, or broken-down cars. Both volunteers and guests have had a break from their routine for a few hours, and both leave a little fuller.

Our meals rely entirely on donations from St. Brigid parishioners. If you could donate food once a month, or if you would like to come serve our guests in person, please contact Alison Gibbons at 858-581-6968.

For more information on the ministries highlighted in this issue of *The Advocate*, as well as other social ministries at St. Brigid Parish, go to the Social Ministries web page at www.stbrigidparish.org/socialministries/.