



## ***USCMA: Beginning of the New Includes Building on the Old*** ***John Nuelle, MS***

*[Father John Nuelle, MS, is a Missionary of Our Lady of La Salette. Ordained in 1964 Fr. Jack, as he is known, served for over two decades as a missionary on the island of Madagascar. Subsequent service on the Congregation's general council brought him into contact worldwide with missions in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. Returning to the States, he consolidated and reorganized their US based mission activities. Fr. Jack assumed the position of Executive Director of the United States Catholic Mission Association (USCMA) in mid-December 2011. In the article below Fr. Jack illustrates how the United States Catholic Mission Association has helped foster the spirit of Mission over the years and asks questions of how to forge new paths.]*

My first contact with the United States Catholic Mission Association (USCMA) came when I attended an annual Conference over 30 years ago while on home leave from Madagascar. I felt uplifted as I experienced the mission enthusiasm of some 150 colleagues “in the vineyard of the Lord.” Sporadic attendance, whenever I was back in the States on leave, along with continual participation at Conference after annual Conference over the last 20 years, has solidified that experience. More than anything else those affirming experiences led me to accepting the offer of Executive Director of the USCMA in December 2011. Before me lay the challenge of celebrating the positive values of the past while honoring the call to confront new realities which continually present themselves in Mission.

The *Lineamenta* document on *New Evangelization* calls us “to forge new paths ... and generate new energies” and “to show boldness”<sup>1</sup> as we courageously respond to the changing conditions in culture, society, means of social communication, economics, scientific research and politics. Being open and attentive to the challenges of modern-day situations, questions came to mind as I began this ministry. How could USCMA collaborate more effectively with its membership in promoting the Mission of the Church in this 21<sup>st</sup> century? The first task is to discover together where the needs are. What areas which touch our mission competencies come to the forefront? What inflames our imagination? Where are “the

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20110202\\_lineamenta-xiii-assembly\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20110202_lineamenta-xiii-assembly_en.html) # 5 and # 6

windows into world mission” that clamor to be thrown open? Are we aware of some existing mission orientation just waiting for a nudge forward? Who has mission projects in the making and are in need of encouragement? Are there activities or valuable resources of mission-sending agencies that USCMA could help promote? How can modern social media help us all work more closely?

Remembering a psychological axiom I had learned years ago: *Nihil volitum nisi praecognitum* [Nothing is desired unless it is pre-known], I was prompted by these and other questions to delve into the history of USCMA. What I discovered was an intriguing and multifaceted one. USCMA just finished celebrating 30 years of service to the Mission of the Church. Yet under the umbrella of predecessor organizations, with their mandates to foster and support the US Church’s common efforts towards global solidarity in mission, USCMA’s story extends well beyond that 30 year boundary. Only by being true to its historical mandate could USCMA faithfully move forward responding to changing world conditions.

### **N.C.W.C. Conference at Maryknoll**

USCMA’s beginnings can be traced to a three-day “consultative conference” which began on September 6, 1949 at Maryknoll in New York. It was organized by the Social Action and Education Departments of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (N.C.W.C.). This conference brought together representatives of 32 mission sending agencies in the United States, along with other specialists interested in mission. Francis Cardinal Spellman noted in his opening remarks that the N.C.W.C. found itself constantly confronted with questions from governmental and non-governmental sources, and in particular from various divisions of the U.N., that clearly overlapped the interests of the Church. Impressed by the frequency with which these questions converged around the vast areas of the earth regarded by the Catholic Church as “mission lands”, these organizations sought “to make contact with the American missionary elements.”<sup>2</sup>

The conference looked into numerous worldwide activities that intersected with governmental and non-governmental agencies in areas where American missionaries were active and were making a difference: education, foreign relief, health programs, the fields of medicine and agriculture, social welfare, labor movements, the impact of communism. Because the conference unveiled so many exceptional opportunities, as well as real dangers, for those working in mission fields, it was suggested that setting up **a central point of contact** which would bring together US Mission sending Societies would be very helpful in finding solutions to the problems. What was needed seemed to be a secretariat that would facilitate joint action by American Mission sending Societies.

During the conference Fr. John Considine, MM, in the name of the 32 Mission sending Societies, presented to the N.C.W.C. a proposal requesting the establishment of a **Secretariat of the Catholic Missionary Sending Societies (C.M.S.S. Secretariat)**. “The Secretariat was conceived as a necessary

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<sup>2</sup> Maryknoll Mission Archives. U.S.C.M.A. Collection. Box 55 Folder 1: *Conference report on The Work of the Missions in Education and Social Action: September 6-8,1949* p.1

instrument in the post-World War II era to coordinate the rapidly-expanding missionary work before our government and before the various international agencies operating in the developing countries.”<sup>3</sup> In general, its purpose would be:

1. To assist the Catholic mission sending societies of the United States in the prosecution of their work:
  - a. by providing them with an easy contact among themselves and with a prepared representative to treat with governmental and non-governmental agencies, religious, educational, cultural, social, political, commercial, that have a bearing on their work;
  - b. by providing an inquiry center for US societal headquarters and for American missionaries in the field;
2. To assist these societies to be of service to the Catholic Church in the United States and to the Church in general by providing a convenient liaison between the sending societies and Church authorities and agencies.

The proposal recommended that every province of every community of priests, brothers and sisters in the United States that had a minimum of four members in any field of the Church outside the continental United States be invited to membership – indeed automatically be regarded as a member unless for some reason it requested to be excluded. Payment of a yearly Secretariat Maintenance Subsidy would give membership voting rights.<sup>4</sup>

### **Mission Secretariat**

Through the N.C.W.C. this proposal was presented to the Episcopal Committee for Missions (Episcopal Committee on the Propagation of the Faith), and it was added to the agenda of the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual meeting of the US Bishops. Various modifications to the original proposal, particularly regarding its structure, were made by the Episcopal Committee. It resulted, on November 18, 1949, in the establishment of the **Secretariat of the Catholic Societies of the United States Engaged in Foreign Mission Activities** (known in brief as the **Mission Secretariat**)<sup>5</sup>. However, since it was the thinking of the U.S. bishops that the N.C.W.C. dealt solely with national affairs, it was deemed inappropriate to place it under that organization. They therefore decided to make the Mission Secretariat a department of the National Office of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, but subject in all its activities to the Episcopal Committee for Mission. The support of this Mission Secretariat would come from voluntary contributions by the Mission sending Societies who would benefit from it and from a donation from the National Office for the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

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<sup>3</sup> Maryknoll Mission Archives. U.S.C.M.A. Collection. Box 55 Folder 1: *Letter from Frederick A McGuire, CM*, dated January 4, 1967

<sup>4</sup> Maryknoll Mission Archives. U.S.C.M.A. Collection. Box 55 Folder 1: *Conference report on The Work of the Missions in Education and Social Action: September 6-8,1949* Appendix p.9-10

<sup>5</sup> See *Minutes of the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the Bishops of the United States* (pp. 29-31)

The first Director of the Mission Secretariat was Bishop Thomas J. McDonnell, who was also National Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in New York. However, due to the nature and scope of Mission Secretariat's work, all ordinary business would be done by a secretary in charge of an office in Washington, housed in, but not part of, the headquarters of the N.C.W.C. This office would serve to the maximum both Mission sending Societies and Mission aid Societies, and provide useful service also to various departments of the N.C.W.C. Fr. Frederick McGuire, CM was called from Hong Kong to be the Executive Secretary. The Mission Secretariat opened its offices in April 1950.

The structure of a secretariat proposed at Maryknoll – namely an executive board, elected by the Mission sending Societies themselves – was not approved by the Bishops but it was instead decided to make the new Mission Secretariat a department of the National Office of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. However its purpose did roughly remain as proposed at the Maryknoll Conference:

- Providing Mission-sending Societies and individual missionaries with a convenient means of contact among themselves;
- Providing an inquiry center at the service of various societal headquarters and for American missionaries in the field;
- Assisting US Mission aid Societies, insofar as they desired it, in their business with governmental and non-governmental agencies;
- With its financing coming primarily from Mission sending and Mission aid Societies.

Providing information and data among Mission sending Societies and with the Hierarchy was considered to be vital. For this purpose the Mission Secretariat began in 1950 to publish every two years the *U.S. Catholic Missionary Personnel Overseas* directory – and this publication, under the name of [U.S. Catholic Mission Handbook](#), continues to be published today and is also available electronically.<sup>6</sup>

During the next 17 years the Mission Secretariat organized training and renewal programs for Catholic missionaries, facilitated contact among US Mission sending Societies by providing a convenient means of contact with Catholic missionaries, organized annual meetings and conferences and worked to keep the mission mentality alive in the US Church.

## USCMC

Mission work was commonly considered a work of supererogation – something “over and beyond the call of duty!” Mission theology emanating from the Second Vatican Council radically changed that. In the *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (Ad Gentes)* we read: “The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father.”<sup>7</sup> In the *Dogmatic*

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<sup>6</sup> USCMA web site: <http://www.uscatholicmission.org>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_ad-gentes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html) (Chapter I n.2)

*Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)* we read: “The obligation of spreading the faith is imposed on every disciple of Christ, according to his state.”<sup>8</sup> In the introduction to the third chapter of Pope Paul’s Apostolic Letter *Ecclesiae Sanctae* we read: “Since the Decree *Ad Gentes Divinitus* (On the Missionary Activity of the Church) of the Holy Second Vatican Council must be in force for the universal Church and be faithfully observed by everyone so that the whole Church may become truly missionary and the entire People of God become aware of its missionary obligation, local Ordinaries should see to it that the Decree comes to the knowledge of all the faithful. Discourses on the Decree should be given to the clergy and sermons preached to the people in which everyone’s responsibility in conscience with regard to missionary activity is pointed out and inculcated.”<sup>9</sup> This new understanding of “mission” made it inevitable that the Mission Secretariat would require a new face.

Momentum toward a re-organization of the Mission Secretariat was precipitated by a decision made on November 12, 1966 at a meeting of the National Society for the Propagation of the Faith in New York, wherein it was decided that the Mission Secretariat would be moved from Washington to their offices in New York.<sup>10</sup> However, it had been the Bishops who had created the Mission Secretariat and made it subject to the Episcopal Committee for Missions in all its activities. Washington was where it would be most effective in its activities. A move to New York would mean the destruction of the Mission Secretariat’s usefulness. The National Office in New York had not contributed to the workings of the Secretariat over its 17-year existence. No one from either the Secretariat or from the Conferences of Major Superiors of Men and Women<sup>11</sup> who had been the Secretariat’s active members and who entirely financed it by their voluntary contributions was present at that November meeting. Fr. Frederick McGuire, Executive Secretary of the Mission Secretariat, contacted Cardinal Spellman, head of the Episcopal Committee for Missions. After clarifying the situation, His Eminence suggested that the Conferences of Religious take full control of the Mission Secretariat.<sup>12</sup>

Preliminary work, which would alter both the name and the orientation of the Mission Secretariat, began in 1967. By January 1968, a special commission, composed of Mission committees from the Conferences of Major Superiors of Men and Women working with the Mission secretariat, was in place. Their mandate was to plan necessary updates and changes. This committee ultimately proposed a new structure which could better serve current mission efforts in the US Church. In September 1968 the Bishop’s Conference (NCCB) passed a resolution to dissolve the Mission Secretariat by establishing and

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html) (Chapter II # 17)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_motu-proprio\\_19660806\\_ecclesiae-sanctae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19660806_ecclesiae-sanctae_en.html) (Introduction to Chapter III)

<sup>10</sup> Maryknoll Mission Archives. U.S.C.M.A. Collection. Box 1 Folder 1: *Letter from Frederick McGuire, CM* dated February 2, 1967

<sup>11</sup> The CMSM and the CMSW were established only in the mid-1950s. In his letter to Archbishop Dearden, dated January 4, 1967, Fr. Frederick McGuire notes: “If the Conferences of Major Superiors of Men and Women had existed in 1949, the Mission Secretariat would have been constituted as an integral part of those Conferences.” See Maryknoll Mission Archives. U.S.C.M.A. Collection. Box 55 Folder 1

<sup>12</sup> Maryknoll Mission Archives. U.S.C.M.A. Collection. Box1 Folder 1: *Letter* February 2, 1967

agreeing to support a new structure – to be known as the **United States Catholic Mission Council (USCMC)**.<sup>13</sup> The orientation of this new agency was to provide in the US a forum for the evaluation, coordination and fostering of the worldwide missionary effort of the Catholic Church. The USCMC, established in 1968, was officially incorporated on June 12, 1970.

The new structure of the USCMC was heavy. The Council had expanded from the initial two commissions to five (5) committees, each with seven (7) members, representing respectively: (1) the Episcopal Commission for Missions, (2) CMSM, (3) CMSW<sup>14</sup>, (4) Pontifical Missionary Aid Organizations, together with Episcopal-approved assistance agencies and (5) Lay Missionary Organizations. USCMC was governed by an Executive Board with a minimum of 11 members, and daily business was assured by an Executive Director, a Secretary and a Treasurer. Fr. Joseph Connors, SVD was hired as the Executive Director. During the USCMC's 10 years of existence many initiatives and productive activities surfaced – not the least of which was to focus on all aspects of mission – not only on foreign or international but on domestic or home missions, and on individuals as having a missionary vocation by virtue of their Baptism.

This cumbersome structure was nevertheless plagued by continuing problems, as is evident from the almost annual revision of by-laws. The “coup de grâce” came as a result of “the withdrawal from the USCMC of the Bishop’s Mission Committee, approved at the November 1980 General Meeting of the NCCB.”<sup>15</sup> Meetings over the course of nearly a year eventually led to the reorganizing of the Mission Council, a change in name<sup>16</sup> and above all a change in the composition of membership.

## USCMA

On September 1, 1981 the USCMC formally became the **United States Catholic Mission Association (USCMA)**. From a juridical standpoint, the new *Association* was a continuation of the old *Council*.<sup>17</sup> However, it marked the beginning of a new stage of existence and operation. Strangely enough, this new USCMA structure – namely an executive board, elected by the membership – greatly reflected that which had been recommended in the original proposal at Maryknoll in 1949! Perhaps the greatest change, which undoubtedly prompted the name change from *Council* to *Association*, was in the composition of membership. The News Release that announced this change also explained that from the USCMC membership of five (5) committees, composed of 35 people, the new USCMA membership

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<sup>13</sup> NCCB *General Meeting Minutes* April 1969, p.8

<sup>14</sup> Later to become the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)

<sup>15</sup> 1981 *News Release* of the USCMC, p. 1; See also Memo to the *Mission Commission of CMSM* by Brother Peter Campbell, CFX, dated January 12, 1981

<sup>16</sup> *Recorder of Deeds, D.C.*, Washington D.C. June 18, 1981

<sup>17</sup> 1981 *News Release* of the USCMC, p. 2; See also Memo to the *Mission Commission of CMSM* by Brother Peter Campbell, CFX, dated January 12, 1981

would be composed of “a collegial coalition of two mission committees: the Mission Committees of the LCWR and CMSM.”<sup>18</sup> This same News Release looked forward to proposed broader membership participation: “Though the present membership of the Mission Association is composed of the LCWR and CMSM Mission Committees, it will soon be expanded to include individuals and groups that are interested in and involved with the global mission of the Church.”<sup>19</sup> Thus membership was opened to individuals, groups and organizations committed to the purpose of USCMA. Its purpose, displayed in the brochure of the organization, was presented as fourfold:

- To promote cross-cultural evangelization and encourage dialogue with other world religions;
- To foster openness to the ongoing revelation present among peoples and promote justice and peace in the world;
- To research trends in worldwide mission theology and methodology and foster mutuality in mission;
- To encourage reflection on a lived experience of the missionary, and to bring that into the full life of the Church.

Summing up the objectives of the newly formed USCMA the Executive Secretary, Fr. Anthony Bellagamba, used these terms: “Our purpose is to bring the good news to all strata of society – personal, cultural, social, economic, and political. The good news has to be brought into these aspects so that renewal comes from within – from the inner force of the Gospel – and not imposed...”<sup>20</sup>

USCMA’s priority was and is service to Mission and missionaries. It strives to be a voice and incentive for missionary activity in the US Catholic Church and a catalyst for fresh insights, broad involvement, creative approaches, and alternative structures, methods and techniques to promote mission. Working closely today with some 800 members drawn from the National Conferences of LCWR and CMSM, from various USCCB offices, from Pontifical and Diocesan Mission Societies Offices, from networks such as Catholic Volunteer Network (CVN), and from US-based religious communities and lay mission-sending organizations as well as from parish groups, twinning agencies and individual missionaries, USCMA focuses on both short-term and long-term mission. With its united commitment to be at the cutting edge of the Church’s mission, USCMA is the only US Catholic Mission entity which brings a united presence to US mission efforts and strives to promote and support people pledged to the cross-cultural and global mission of Jesus Christ in service to the Church and world today. USCMA is a forum in which people from a variety of experiences in mission can come together, celebrate faith, inspire, educate and challenge one another to continue growing in efforts to further the mission of Jesus.

The call of the Catholic Church is to mission; or to use the words of the Vatican II *Decree Ad Gentes* our “Church is missionary by her very nature.”<sup>21</sup> We understand this “nature” to mean that, in the

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<sup>18</sup> 1981 *News Release* from the USCMC, p.2

<sup>19</sup> *USCMA By-Laws*, Article IV.

<sup>20</sup> NCR November 8, 1981: *Mission Group Restructured*

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_ad-gentes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html) (Chapter I n.2)



Church, there is neither proclamation nor action that is not mission-oriented! Mission is inherent in the Baptismal reality of every Christian.

Mission-oriented in its remote and present history, USCMA continues to foster and support existing and new forms of cross-generational, cross-cultural and inter-religious partnerships while concentrating its efforts, in light of the ethnic and cultural diversity that characterizes our times, on the integration of the five elements of mission:

- proclamation
- spirituality and prayer
- social transformation
- dialogue and
- witness.

USCMA's priority is service. In biblical terms service is *diakonia*. In the nascent pilgrim Church, missionary by her very nature, *diakonia* was there to serve, to assist and to bolster the life and ministry of both the Apostles and the ever-increasing body of Christ's followers. USCMA fulfills that role as an active voice for mission in meeting today's challenges. Here are some of the ways USCMA serves the Church, both in the US and abroad, in promoting mission today.

- USCMA convenes leaders in mission to create and maintain relationships of support and resource sharing among mission organizations and individuals. In so doing:
  - USCMA sponsors an annual Conference related to mission issues. The 2011 conference in Miami focused on how to "Push out into the deep"<sup>22</sup> in our life of missionary discipleship. As the *Aparecida Document* reminds us: "Discipleship and mission are like two sides of a single coin..."<sup>23</sup>
  - USCMA values the importance of interreligious dialogue as a component of missionary outreach and through its members educates Catholics regarding the gifts of diversity in our US and world societies. Taking its lead from the *Lineamenta* document on *New Evangelization*, the theme for USCMA's 2012 Conference in Los Angeles will be: *Forging New Paths: Interreligious Dialogue*.
  - USCMA acknowledges the importance of social media. Cultures and societies that were isolated in remote parts of the world are now literally "at our fingertips" via the Internet. This has changed the world and the way people hear and understand messages – including Jesus' Gospel message. Our 2013 Conference will delve into this fascinating area and its relation to mission reality, activity, impact and outreach.
  - USCMA convenes the Catholic Mission Forum (CMF). The purpose of CMF is to engage in dialogue and promote collaboration among the various agencies for mission in the US Church. CMF facilitates reflection on the elements of mission as articulated in Church

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<sup>22</sup> See Luke: 5:4

<sup>23</sup> The *Aparacida Document* was produced by the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean in 2007 meeting at Aparacida, Brazil to reflect on the missionary vocation of the Church.

[http://old.usccb.org/latinamerica/english/aparecida\\_Ingles.pdf](http://old.usccb.org/latinamerica/english/aparecida_Ingles.pdf) (#146).



documents and the contemporary experience of missionaries around the world, including those missioning within the United States. Members of CMF include:

- USCMA
- CMSM and LCWR
- Catholic Church Extension Society
- Bureau of Black and Indian Missions
- Pontifical Mission Societies in the US
- Catholic Volunteer Network (CVN)
- the USCCB Offices of
  - Cultural Diversity
  - Evangelization and Catechesis
  - Home missions
  - Latin America
- USCMA, as the convening organization in the CMF, organizes and coordinates the United States Mission Congress which, beginning with the year 2000, has been organized every five years. This September CMF begins working on US Mission Congress 2015.
- USCMA gathers and disseminates information about the purpose, nature and activity of the US mission efforts.
- USCMA sponsored the *Mission History Project* which culminated in the publication of *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History*<sup>24</sup>, the only comprehensive history of Catholic mission activity in the Church in the United States.
- USCMA conducts, every two years, a survey of US Catholic missionaries serving in cross-cultural ministries both outside and within US borders. This survey began with the original Mission Secretariat and continues to this day. Published in US Catholic *Mission Handbook*, this survey shows mission trends, the number of missionaries serving abroad and within the US, with categorical breakdowns for religious, diocesan and lay missionaries; their home diocese, their age, where they are presently serving and in what capacity, years of service, present status: retired or active.
- USCMA's recent survey also hopes to discover US institutions – diocesan, parish, educational, organizational – that are twinning with mission entities throughout the world.
- USCMA publishes *Mission Update*, a quarterly newsletter which provides information on mission trends, global concerns, educational resources and updates on groups involved with mission education and global solidarity. An electronic source, *Mission E-Update*, is published monthly exploring the “who, what, when and where” of mission today.

USCMA pools resources with numerous networks, Conferences – like CMSM, LCWR and others mentioned above – with church boards and committees, maintaining mission focus and presence within these groups.

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<sup>24</sup> Authored by Angelyn Dreis, OSF, this can be found at Amazon.com

- The *Aparecida Study Guide*<sup>25</sup> is a project of USCMA in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Chicago's Office for Mission Education and Animation and the Missionary Society of St. Columban. The purpose of the *Study Guide* is to help individual missionaries, groups, parishes, and dioceses in their mission promotion and education. Published in both English and Spanish in 2010, it is now in its second printing.
- USCMA joins forces with many men's and women's religious congregations who have lay-mission programs, including Jesuits, Franciscans, Maryknoll, De LaSalle Christian Brothers, etc. and with other key organizations who each year send lay missionaries to serve internationally and domestically.
- USCMA teamed up with Catholic Volunteer Network (CVN) and St. Vincent Pallotti Center (SVPC) to collect materials and, in 2002, published *Gathering the Fragments*, a book which brings together components for the formation of international lay missionaries. USCMA is currently updating this project.
- USCMA maintains a high profile among other Christian mission organizations like the American Society of Missiology and the Overseas Ministries Study Center.
- USCMA partners, through its *Transformative Dialogue Project*, with local mission communities in the US to identify individuals and groups that have had missionary experiences and to bring together in dialogue various religious organizations, diocesan and religious schools and parish offices in a particular locale.
- USCMA supports justice groups, like African Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) and others, in their work of advocacy and policy development relating to global solidarity.

Some of the above-mentioned activities necessarily dovetail with other organizations. USCMA is ready to collaborate and work in partnership in order to foster the mission of the Church – locally, nationally and internationally. It is clear that the Church needs to respond in a coordinated manner to the signs of the times. This requires pulling together, in the same direction – bishops, priests, deacons, religious and laity – because together we are the Church, missionary in her very nature. From that first meeting at Maryknoll six decades ago, USCMA and its predecessors have effectively proposed and contributed, internationally and domestically, to this concerted mission effort. For the last three decades USCMA has brought together some of the best minds and practitioners during their annual Conferences to strengthen bonds and open minds and hearts among a wide range of missionaries. For the last 15 years USCMA had convened the US Mission Congresses every five years. Our commitment does not stop there.

From what has been said about USCMA's history it is evident that we are a collaborative, mission-oriented, service-minded association, willing – in the ongoing conversation and action of “mission thinking and doing” – to go the whole nine yards for the good of the Kingdom, for the good of Mission. Perhaps collaborating in the *Transformative Dialogue Program*, we could have a greater impact in the local US Church.

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<sup>25</sup> Can be ordered from the USCMA office:3025 4<sup>th</sup> St. NE, Washington, DC 20017

I was privileged to live in Rome when Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council and threw open the windows of the Church. It was an enthusiastic time. I felt that same enthusiasm when, a few years later, I began actively ministering to a fledgling mission church on the west coast of Madagascar where the Catholic population was only 4%. I feel that same rush in undertaking this new ministry as executive director of USCMA. I intend, under the guidance of the Spirit, to keep the windows open, to encourage new undertakings, to foster effective pastoral initiatives.

One of the greatest challenges that we face as missionaries and as a mission organization in the US Church today is to make known the new missionary thrust to US Catholics. In his Apostolic Exhortation, *On Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi)*, Pope Paul VI points us in this direction: “[E]vangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.”<sup>26</sup> The US Bishops’ pastoral statement on world mission, *To the Ends of the Earth*, reminds us that a holistic approach is necessary. “... [P]eople are saved not only as individuals but also as members of sociocultural groups. They must experience the redemption not only of their souls but also of their whole bodily existence, not only in a world to come but also beginning here on earth.”<sup>27</sup> “A holistic approach to mission recognizes that humanity’s hungers are so interwoven that the spirit cannot be satisfied without attending to the body.”<sup>28</sup> The *Lineamenta* for *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* challenges us to have “... the courage to forge new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel today.”<sup>29</sup> Living our baptismal missionary vocation to the fullest, can we even imagine where the Spirit will lead us?

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<sup>26</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html) (#18)

<sup>27</sup> <http://old.usccb.org/wm/earth.shtml> (#31)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. (#46)

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20110202\\_lineamenta-xiii-assembly\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20110202_lineamenta-xiii-assembly_en.html) (#5)