



ENCOUNTER

Catholic laity on mission – everywhere

August 2018

Welcome to Encounter!

The people of God must unify to support healing for the abused, justice for all, and to forge a stronger community. We must stand in solidarity with one another. This is accomplished through ENCOUNTER. Pope Francis is calling us to prayer and penance to "grow in the gift of compassion, in justice, prevention and reparation." Ben found that as he sought, and continues to seek, his mission.

This is a call to serve one another, this is the heart of **mission**. We must be proactive; to be peacemakers, single hearted, and hungry for righteousness. We need to motivate and inspire each other to keep on, keeping on. We need accompaniment.

You know women and men who have abused, who are outraged, or who have experienced some type of mission. Share this newsletter with them. Invite them to connect through USCMA.

What's God Calling Me To Do?

It's been half a lifetime since Ben OuYang – a self-professed "ABC," or American-born Chinese – stumbled upon a Chinese Catholic church in suburban Maryland. It happened roughly 30 years ago, when he was a graduate student at the University of Maryland.

The Rochester native attended Catholic school throughout his youth but didn't fare so well in weekend Chinese school. His parents had been advised not to teach their children Chinese so they wouldn't grow up speaking English with an accent.

"Which they totally regretted," said Ben, 51, who speaks a limited amount of his parents' native tongue. The Chinese school dropout now calls his lack of diligence "a blessing in disguise," because he grew up to be an educator, including positions as a school counselor, assistant principal, principal, and director. His difficulty in Chinese school allowed him to connect with students who get bored in class, struggle academically, or misbehave with their teachers.

"This was God's way of showing me, hey, this is how you can relate to kids," he said. And relate to them he did, both in school and at church.

Because his mother had converted to Catholicism in China while his father became a Protestant, Ben moved back and forth easily between the two, ending up attending a Chinese Protestant church while in college at the University of Rochester.

He became a youth minister there because, he said, "there was a need." So he attended Catholic Mass but then led the youth group at the Protestant church. His decision to become involved with the Newman Center at the University of Maryland, where he earned a master's in counseling and a doctorate in education administration, looks fateful now, in hindsight.

After Mass one Sunday, the pastor mentioned to Ben that there was a Chinese Catholic church nearby, in Rockville. He attended Our Lady of China Pastoral Mission the following Sunday but didn't understand the Mass, which was entirely in Chinese.

It became immediately apparent to Ben that there was a need for an English-language Mass for people like him, and for those even younger, who weren't engaging with the language of their parents and weren't getting much out of their time at church as a result. And

thus was born a mission for him: to serve the youth of this newfound community that would soon become his own.

He began by teaching CCD, which grew into the youth group. The ministry began holding semi-annual retreats and evolved into the East Coast Chinese Catholic Youth Conference, with participants from as far away as Atlanta and Boston.

“My mission was to really build the English ministry, and that’s what’s grown over the years,” he said. There is now a weekly English-language Mass before Chinese school, and it has been instrumental in keeping younger generations of Chinese American kids involved.

“I’m a big, big fan of the English Mass. You see the kids being readers, altar servers, singers, doing everything. They identify with that English Mass,” said Ben.

“So I don’t get it when an Asian church doesn’t have an English mass, because the kids will sit in the back and quite honestly just pick their noses,” he said with a laugh. “It’s hard. They have to have an advanced ability to speak Chinese, and if they don’t have that, the kids are going to float and not have a sense that they belong.”

Over about a dozen years doing youth ministry, Ben’s own life changed. He married – when he met his Taiwanese wife, she was a militant anti-Catholic, he said, but she has since converted and is more devout than he is! – and had two children, now 11 and 19. Kaitlin is following her father’s footsteps at the University of Maryland Newman Center and has taken part in two World Youth Day events. Timothy is in CCD and will join the youth group next year.



Ben realized he was aging out of the youth ministry, and his wife Jia-Shieu, who coordinates the CCD program, pointed out another growing need in the church community. And just like that, with the guidance, he says, of the Holy Spirit, he was off to his next mission.

“It was evident there was a need for married couples groups. Married couples were under attack,” he said, and needed their faith built. Ben and Jia-Shieu work in this ministry together. “Once they do that and they have kids, they’re not going anywhere.”

Patrick Cheng took over the youth group when Ben moved on and ran it for several years after he graduated from college. Now 43, he’s known Ben since his own days participating in the group as a teenager.

An “ABC” like Ben, Patrick met his wife, an immigrant from China, in the youth group. “When Ben spoke, it resonated with me and with many in the group,” he said. “He made it engaging and fun. I tried to emulate those components when I was leading.”

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Ben still engages with the youth group leaders, and spent a week with them this summer at Bethlehem Farm in West Virginia, doing service work. He hopes to bring a work group to Houston at some point, to partner with a Chinese Catholic church there.

Now, he wonders what will come after the current phase in his life. He’s been an educator for almost three decades and plans to retire in a few years.

“I’m really discerning the question: what do I do next?” he asks with an openness that teenagers no doubt still find very appealing. “What’s God calling me to do?”

Article by Julie Bourbon, ENCOUNTER Editor

ENCOUNTER is an electronic newsletter of the United States Catholic Mission Association.

USCMA relies exclusively on memberships and donations to fund its service to the Church and the world – building bridges of solidarity through mutual relationships.



Scandal

We knew this would happen. Jesus told us there would be scandal.

Still, it hit us like a ton of bricks. The immensity of the Pennsylvania grand jury report released August 14 about the sexual abuse of children and others by priests is overwhelming. Even “overwhelming” seems too small of a word. It does not capture the horror, shock, sadness, and outrage that wells up within us.

There is more. The numbers overwhelm, too. This is not a passing thunderstorm. It is a tsunami of apocalyptic proportions.

There is still more. There is the insidious cover-up by bishops that reveals a cold-hearted, calculated, and coordinated effort to protect and advance a clerical culture that ignores the suffering of the people of God. Today’s reading from Ezekiel 34: 1-11 cuts with surgical precision, “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been pasturing themselves!”

I, we, have been traumatized, too, and feel guilty. Rationally, we know there are degrees of trauma. My suffering pales in comparison to the trauma of the victims, especially young children. Still, something dear to me has been ripped away. I have been betrayed by men who I thought cared about me, cared about us, and who said they loved us. If I do not empathize with the victims on some level myself, does that not make me guilty by association with priests and bishops who are directly involved in this scandal?

There are two immediate temptations. One is righteous indignation. The other is avoidance. Righteous indignation is more about me and less about the suffering of others who are also traumatized. The evil done by these priests and bishops reduces them, humiliates them, as “the mighty have been cast down from their thrones.” Should my indignation, however, inflate me, robbing

me of my own humility? When it does—and it will because we, too, are sinful people—it robs us of our own humility. Righteous indignation also increases the division between perpetrators and victims. How many perpetrators were victims themselves? Our anger about this scandal can, and should, be righteous. It will give us the energy we need to see this through but only if it, too, flows from the infinite love of God for humanity.

Avoidance is the other temptation. The Pennsylvania report is grotesque in its explicit description of this horrendous exploitation of children and other innocents. We don’t want to look at it. We want to hide our faces from it. As a priest friend said, “I want to hide my head in the sand.” I have read two books, and watched far too much Netflix, since this scandal broke. We cannot avoid this painful reality. It is only by looking at it squarely, with both eyes wide open, that we will begin to see the truth—the entire truth—that this evil can reveal to us.

Pope Francis has called us to penance and prayer (see the [Letter](#) of His Holiness Pope Francis to the People of God, August 20, 2018). At first, I was indignant. Penance? I did nothing wrong. Sack cloth and ashes for priests and bishops, yes, and more power, prestige, and money for the laity—but no penance. Prayer? Please! What is needed is swift, comprehensive, and devastating action by the people of God. Forget any proportional response, bring on the nukes.

The Holy Father goes on to say that penance and prayer “will help us to open our eyes and our hearts to other people’s sufferings and to overcome the thirst for power and possessions...” Penance, then, helps us focus less on ourselves and more on others—exactly the stance and disposition of the missionary disciple.

As missionaries, we see the arc of divine love. It begins with the simple dwelling of a missionary disciple, a wit-

-ness who proclaims the love of God for humanity among strangers living on the periphery of society through her or his life and service. It takes root through contemplation, shared prayer, and culturally sensitive liturgy. It grows through the inculturation of Christianity among the people, inter-religious dialogue, and social justice. It finds its finest achievement, not in power, prestige, or institutions, but in reconciliation because God so loved the world that “he gave his only Son, not to condemn the world, but to save it.” Penance, then, is ultimately about others, and about mission—about experiencing God’s love more fully.

As we look at this scandal with the eyes of mission—the divine, trinitarian heart beating with unquenchable love for every person—all 7.6 billion persons, and counting, inhabiting this planet, we see the wisdom of penance and prayer.

Penance to keep us humble but also to bring us together. I may not have sexually abused anyone. I may not have known about the suffering of others, or looked away when I saw suspicious activity, nor participated, in any way, in the bishops’ cover up, but I may still be

complicit. How? By the subtle ways we have bought into the clericalism that Pope Francis identified: inflating the status of the clergy to avoid my own work of salvation; demanding more from our clergy than is possible by supposing no weaknesses like this could exist; and distancing myself from the work of the Church by commodifying the sacraments, its ministries, and its ministers.

Penance and prayer will help us see. It will prepare us to face the hard, painful, and freeing truth of the “earthen vessel” we call the Church that holds the treasure of divine love. This will lead all of us back to mission. When the Church is purified so that it truly is a beloved community held together and animated by the mission entrusted to us by Jesus himself, then there is a chance that the trauma of this moment will no longer dominate our hearts and minds; the truth will set us free, we will be reconciled, we will be salt again, be a light for all to see, and our tears will be turned into dancing.

Article by Don McCrabb,
USCMA Executive Di-



USCMA Happenings

- **USCMA Online Membership Meeting** | All Materials are on the [USCMA Website](#). The Membership Meeting Webinar is September 12, 2018 at 2:00 PM Eastern Time.
- **Africa Faith and Justice Network** is celebrating its 35th Anniversary with a special program September 14th at the US Capital. To learn more, go to the [AFJN Website](#).
- **V Encuentro** is September 20-23, 2018 in Grapevine, Texas | Any missionaries who attend are invited to share their reflections – and its message for mission – through [USCMA](#).
- USCMA will have a **Board of Directors** Conference Call on September 27, 2018. Any member can address concerns to the Board. Please forward those concerns to [Don McCrabb](#).
- **A Culture of Encounter** | USCMA’s 2018 Conference, Boston, MA – October 25-27, 2018. For more information, check out the conference [webpage](#). Early Bird Registration ends August 15th.
- **Books for Review** | USCMA receives complimentary books about missiology, theology, and spirituality for review. For a current listing, [email](#) Nichole Petty, USCMA Office Manager.

The United States Catholic Mission Association is a national alliance of individuals and organizations committed to the mission Jesus entrusted to his followers. Through its members – and the services of the association – USCMA animates the next generation of missionaries, prepares them for and accompanies them through mission, and calls them to leadership. Help us connect to “all the nations” by supporting USCMA. Donate at [uscatholic-mission.org](#). Copyright 2018.

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