



ENCOUNTER

Catholic laity on mission – everywhere

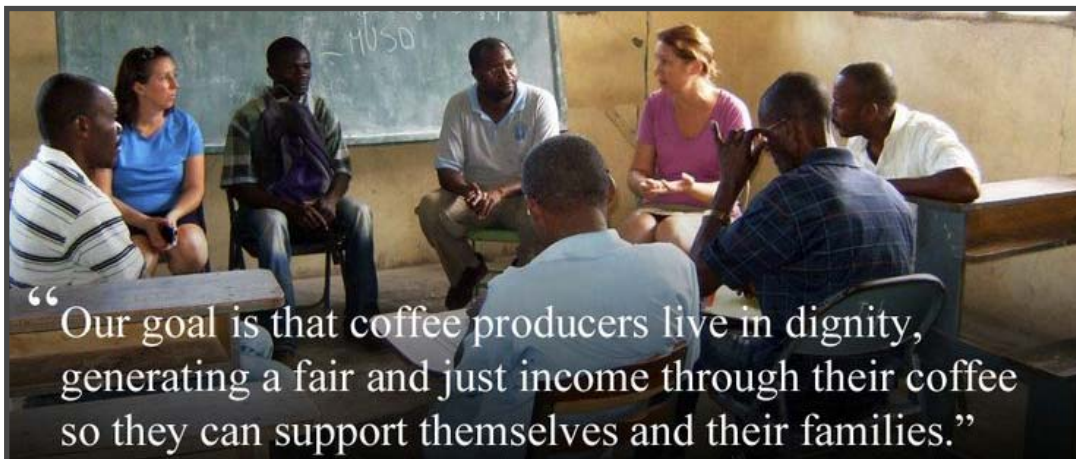
July 2018

Welcome to Encounter!

Remember when Jesus spoke about the woman kneading yeast into flour to make bread? Now that is an ENCOUNTER. And that is **mission**. Bread happens when yeast and flour and water come together. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

We all have gifts. We all have needs. Sometimes we are yeast. Sometimes we are flour. Bread, broken, shared, is only possible through ENCOUNTER.

You know women and men who have experienced some type of mission. Share this newsletter with them and invite them to connect through USCMA.



A Modern Contemplative: Kim Lamberty of CRS

Some people will tell you they always knew they were called to mission work. Others found their mission purpose through life experience. Kim Lamberty, director of university and mission engagement at Catholic Relief Services, who has spent years dedicated to mission work in Haiti, would say she falls into the latter category.

“I originally wanted to do international work in general, and I wasn’t actually Catholic,” said Lamberty, who pursued philosophy and Soviet affairs as an undergraduate at Marquette University—even studying in Lenin-grad—then went on to receive a master’s in international affairs at Columbia University. “My thinking was

I was going to have a career at state department and I worked there for a couple of years.”

Then, pausing a beat for maximum impact, she added wryly, “and that experience was part of what helped me to understand that that was *not* my calling.”

It was while working at the State Department that Lamberty began to question what she was doing with her life.

“It’s a long story. I was in a job that I wasn’t well suited to. It wasn’t working for me on a spiritual level,” she said. “So that led me to question who I am, and what kind of life do I want to lead?”

She began reading some of the great spiritual writers—Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton—which led her to the Catholic Church. Their wisdom began to shape her into the person she was meant to become.

“They’re two of the greatest spiritual Catholic figures of the 20th century, so it should surprise no one that they influenced me,” Lamberty deadpanned. “Both were contemplative and both dedicated their lives to justice and peace. That captures my own faith commitment, as well, and who I am as a Catholic—a contemplative, dedicating my life to justice and peace.”

This new direction led her to move into a Catholic Worker house in D.C. and to a position as director of social concerns at St. John the Baptist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland. She spent seven years at that parish, which had a twinning relationship with a parish in Haiti that included partnering on primary and high schools, nutrition programs, medical delegations, and fundraising.

“That’s where Haiti started,” she said. And, with no prior experience in international development, she began to understand that mission is more than sending supplies to cities and countries devastated by poverty and natural disasters, although certainly supplies may be needed. Mission, she said, is about relationship.

“My perspective on mission is that it’s relationship based. It’s not some project we’re all going to take on. It’s based in our faith identity, in that contemplative identity, which is also based in relationship with God” Lamberty said. “The heart of mission is a mirror of our relationship with God. It’s not defined by a project, but projects tend to flow out of that relationship. Even when you leave, when the project is done, you’re still in relationship.”

St. John the Baptist led to positions with Christian Peacemaker Teams and the Episcopal Service Corps, as well as theology studies at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, where she focused on cross-cultural ministry. In 2006, Lamberty founded a coffee development initiative called Just Haiti, a private NGO that sells coffee in the fair trade solidarity market. Four years later, she found herself at Catholic Relief Services,

working as a senior advisor to their projects in Haiti.

What she’s learned at CRS, which has considerable expertise in disaster relief, is that it is only through the long-term strategy of strengthening local community capacity so that communities are self-reliant and not dependent on mission projects that true mission is accomplished.

“One of the things we know is you have to figure out how to reduce the risk that vulnerable communities are under with respect to disaster. How do you do that?” Lamberty asked. “You make them more sustainable, you help them have more assets, more local structure. Working toward sustainability and self-reliance is how CRS approaches disaster relief. That’s the only thing that really works.”

A longtime colleague, Mike Haasl, global solidarity coordinator at the Center for Mission in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, commended Lamberty’s commitment to sustainable development. “Kim has a tremendous passion for mission,” he said, “and for justice and dignity for local people from economically vulnerable countries.”



Lamberty now works with colleges and universities to educate students, faculty, and staff on the social justice tradition of the Catholic Church—including mission—and the ways they can take action to live that out through the work of CRS. She continues with the Just Haiti project, as well, although she is careful to say that mission work, for her, is broader than one country.

“Mission is the vocation. Haiti chose me, is how I would put it,” she said. “I have important relationships there, and Haiti chose me as one of the ways to live out the vocation. But it’s not the only way.”

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.

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Walking

Do we walk with Jesus or does Jesus walk with us?

Fr. Tom Axe, a priest of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and one of my mentors, introduced me many years ago to the idea that “Ordinary Time” was a time when we “walk with Jesus.” Indeed, one of the great gifts of the liturgical calendar is that it sacramentalizes the whole year so that, as a community and as individuals, we can walk with the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Mission changes all of this. We walk and Jesus accompanies us.

In Matthew 28, Jesus sends us – his disciples – to all nations to proclaim the Gospel, to baptize, and to teach everyone we encounter his promise that he would “be with” us to the end of time. Jesus has sent us, just as the Father sent him (John 20:21), so that we are now the ones walking.

This is important for three reasons: because mission is a destination, we are a community on mission, and we must discern our spirituality as missionaries.

Jesus sent us to all nations. He is sending us to a place and to a people. Pope Francis has helped us appreciate that place is defined more by the situation in which we find ourselves than by mere geography. Sr. Dorothy Stang, SND de Namur, who was martyred in 2005, was not sent to Brazil or even the Amazon per se, but rather to the indigenous people of the Amazon in Brazil. Her mission had a destination, a place defined by the people and their needs. As missionaries, this is what we are about. People with needs – the homeless within our parish boundaries, immigrants settling within our cities across our country, or the struggling Church around the world.

Jesus sends us out with one another. We cannot do mission alone. That means knowing how to be with and for others in mission. We must be able to dialogue with each other, to have the hard and painful conversations, to manage conflict, and to discern a collaborative course of action. How can we be with Jesus, and with our neighbors, if we cannot be with others in mission?

Jesus accompanies us. Jesus is compassionate, not complacent. If we can walk, he will not carry us. While Jesus acknowledges our limitations, our weakness, even our sin, he does not want us to be dependent on him – he wants to wean us from milk and put us on solid food. Jesus is always our teacher, our guide, our North Star, and he promises to be with us, to befriend us. Where we are headed, our destination, our purpose, and our mission is for us to discern in and through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is our path to holiness and only we can walk it. If we stumble and fall, Jesus will be there to catch us or pick us up. He will always save us – even from ourselves – but he will not coddle us, or enable us, or give us a free ride.

Now what? Walk. Put your hand to the plow and do not look back. If you are unsure what your mission is, connect with others to discern it for yourself. The Lord will reveal to you your mission – it will be a people with needs and it will be your needs, and your gifts, that will make you a perfect match. One young man, after spending a summer with Native Americans on a reservation in the western United States, felt that he learned much more from them about honesty, peacemaking, and living in harmony with the earth than they did from him about mathematics. A free exchange of gifts from which everyone benefits to the glory of God. This is mission.

Yes, Jesus saves us. He picks us up when we are down, and he carries us when we are weak or abandoned. He finds us when we are lost among our distractions, desires, and anxieties. Mostly, though, he joins us in our journey of holiness, the mission that he has entrusted to us, and accompanies us through the good times and the bad. Below is a mission prayer, from the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Pray it this summer – with others – as Jesus walks with you and you walk the mission he has given you.



Article by Don McCrabb, USCMA Executive Director

Mission Prayer

Lord, our God, help us to walk with you
On the pathway to the beatitudes and
To live out your mission in today's world.

Bind us to all women and men of our time
So that together we may bring the
Good News to the ends of the earth.

Open our hearts and our Christian communities
To the needy, the afflicted, the oppressed.

May we radiate the Living Christ
And transform our lives in the hope of the Resurrection.

This prayer we make to you
Who is the living God, now and forever.

AMEN

Archdiocese of Vancouver (modified)

USCMA Happenings

- **USCMA Online Membership Meeting** | Materials will be posted August 15, 2018.
- **A Culture of Encounter** | USCMA's 2018 Conference, Boston, MA – October 25-27, 2018. For more information, check out our conference [webpage](#) (www.uscatholicmission.org/a-culture-of-encounter). Early Bird Registration ends August 15th.
- **Nicaragua** | August is Nicaragua month. Each month USCMA will feature a mission – either within a parish boundary, across the country, or around the world. Email all stories and connections on Nicaragua to [Don McCrabb](mailto:dmccrabb@uscatholicmission.org) (dmccrabb@uscatholicmission.org) by August 10, 2018.
- **Books for Review** | USCMA receives complimentary books about missiology, theology, and spirituality for review. For a current listing, just [email](#) Nichole Petty (associate@uscatholicmission.org), our 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. Click [HERE](https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/USCatholicMissionAssociatio/donate.html) (<https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/USCatholicMissionAssociatio/donate.html>) to donate. Copyright 2018.

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