



ENCOUNTER

Catholic laity on mission – everywhere

September 2018

Welcome to Encounter!

Mission asks all missionaries – lay, religious and ordained – to embody virtues every day. The Church is currently undergoing a heart wrenching and soul searching re-assessment of who we are and what we are about in light of the worldwide scandal of sexual abuse by clergy and religious. At this moment, all of us must embody the virtue of fortitude to keep alive mission through ENCOUNTER.

There is power in the ministry of presence and accompaniment of one another, regardless of borders, backgrounds, socioeconomic , standings, and political beliefs. There is a need for ENCOUNTER with one another. There is a need for **mission**.

You know women and men who exemplify persistence and dedication. Share this newsletter with them. Invite them to connect with other missionaries through USCMA.

Living the Mission of Matthew 25: Theresa Patterson in Haiti

After more than 40 years of devotion to a place, it can surely be said to be stamped upon your heart. That's certainly the case with Theresa Patterson and Haiti. And yet, by her telling, her involvement with— devotion to—twinning U.S. parishes with their counterparts in the hemisphere's poorest country was almost accidental.

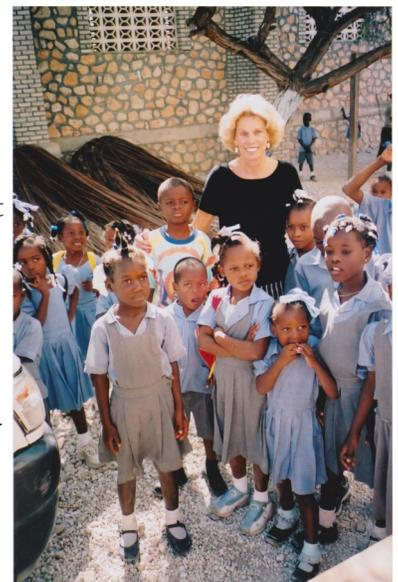
She'd seen a presentation at her Nashville parish, St. Henry's, about Haiti and asked Harry Hosey, "during Dialogue and Donuts," Patterson said, what she could do to help. Quite a lot, as it turns out. "Next thing I knew, I was on a plane going to Haiti."

That was 1978, the year she became a co-founder of what would eventually become the Parish Twinning Program of the Americas (PTPA). Three days after returning from the trip, she wrote a letter to the bishop of Tennessee's only (at the time) diocese suggesting that parishes in Knoxville and Memphis join hers in Nashville to adopt a parish in Haiti.

"I said, wouldn't it be wonderful if they could all twin with a parish? That shows you how shortsighted my

vision was," Patterson recalled of an effort that has grown to include more than 300 American parishes, 224 in Haiti, and 48 in Mexico and Latin America. "I had previously only just done volunteer work in church, but it was a time in my life when I was really looking to become more involved in something. What, I didn't know. I felt that God just handed this to me on a plate."

The PTPA was headquartered in Patterson's home for the first dozen or so years as they began a slow, parish-by-parish effort to match U.S. congregations that had an interest in establishing long-term relationships with sister congregations, and not just sending charity their way.



From those humble beginnings, the PTPA held its national conference and 40th anniversary celebration in Nashville in August with the theme of “One Are We ... The Blessings of Twinning.”

The relationships that PTPA facilitates begin with finding out about the sister parish and its needs—as well as its assets—including financial, educational, and medical. Thank God for the internet, Patterson says, which makes it so much easier today to correspond via email with Haitian pastors and be more timely in their responses.

As the American parishes learn about the identified needs and how they can help meet them, the ultimate goal is always to encourage sustainability, so that the Haitian congregations become more self-reliant.

That’s why, Patterson says, micro-credit programs, loans for small businesses, co-ops, nursery and tree projects, literacy programs, small banks, schools, and medical clinics are usually among the key projects to be funded.



Many of the Haitian pastors have visited the U.S. to make presentation to their parish partners—who pay for their travel and lodging—and not a few American volunteers, as well as 63 medical delegations (and counting), have made the trip to Haiti and other countries. Patterson counts 122 trips to Haiti so far. She primarily accompanies groups that are making their first trip.

She comes by her commitment to this mission work honestly. Patterson’s mother worked for Catholic Charities for 25 years, and she was educated at Catho-

lic schools. The Bishops’ 1997 call for global solidarity has also been formative for her.

“It so beautifully states our obligation as Catholics to reach out beyond our own boundaries to the universal church in solidarity and justice,” she said. “That to me was so key, as well as my faith, in getting involved with Haiti.”

Diane Huggins has served on PTPA’s board since 2004 and been to Haiti 23 times. She laughs when she thinks how that compares to Patterson’s trip tally.

“She’s definitely a very inspirational person,” said Huggins. “It’s kind of a shoestring operation. When I think about what she’s done, it’s just amazing.”

Shoestring is right. PTPA’s only staff members are Patterson and her son Jeff, plus a volunteer in Sarasota who coordinates twinning for Peru, Ecuador, Mexico, and Central America in exchange for a small stipend.

One of the most concrete symbols of PTPA’s commitment to Haiti is the small hospitality residence—the Matthew 25 house in Port-au-Prince—from which the volunteers begin their journey. The name had special meaning for Patterson after returning from her first trip, back in 1978.

“The next morning I went to mass, then walked into the parish library and immediately gravitated to mission magazines. The first one I opened is burned into my soul because it was the words of Matthew 25,” Patterson recalled. “My very first words written about Haiti and my work there quoted Matthew 25. I remember thinking this is what my faith is really about. I was fully invested in it from the moment I made that first trip and realized this is what I need to be doing.”

Article by Julie Bourbon, ENCOUNTER Editor

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Fortitude in Life & Mission

It started as a simple question on the heels of the sexual abuse scandal that has rocked the U.S. Catholic Church: what virtue will help missionaries weather this storm personally and continue to serve mission?

We were wrong. It is not a simple question.

It is not a simple question because the context of the question keeps shifting. Sexual abuse of anyone is wrong. The sexual abuse of a child by an ordained adult male is, and should be, a crime. What if the ordained male was himself the victim of sexual abuse? It is still wrong, and reprehensible, but why didn't someone responsible for his formation "catch" the problem and deal with it? How many times can a person "sin" against their vows of Chastity? What if the behavior in question was not done as an adult but rather as a high school student at a drinking party?

At first blush, the virtue of justice is clearly relevant. Justice, as understood by the Catholic tradition, is giving each their due. People need food and water to sustain life. Consequently, it is unjust to prohibit access to food and water. Justice, however, is different from law. Law is an attempt to foster justice within a society but, in and of itself, it cannot promise justice. Law – the codification of criminal behavior – cannot adequately account for context. The law might say that everyone deserves so much food and water; what happens if a person requires more or some require less?

What of the other virtues of prudence, fortitude, and temperance? Prudence is right judgement. Fortitude is the ability to stay the course regardless of the "slings and arrows." Temperance is the ability to regulate one's appetites. The theological virtues, of course, are faith, hope, and love. Faith is the abiding trust in the goodness of God. Hope, a conviction that the promise of God will come to be and that our actions participate in that promise. Love, the passion, energy, and sacrifice for God and others that faith envisions, and hope requires.

Perhaps we need to consider fortitude in more depth. It is more than just "bucking" up or "plowing ahead." There is a tenacity involved with fortitude – a single-mindedness, but one in service to a higher good, such



as truth or the dignity of the human person. It also involves courage because the road will not be smooth, or straight, or well-lit. It will be rocky, with hairpin curves, deep valleys, relentless peaks, and poor visibility. It involves humility – knowing who I am, what I stand for, and what I can, and cannot, see. Which means I am committed to openness and dialogue; I may learn things about myself, my Church, and my culture that I do not wish to know or accept.

The sexual abuse of children, and others, by priests. The inadequate response, and in some cases cover-up, by bishops. The conviction and imprisonment of Bill Cosby. The allegations of sexual abuse of women by Brett Kavanaugh, President Trump's nominee to the Supreme Court. The allegations against Donald Trump himself before he became President of the United States. The ongoing revelations of sexual abuse coming to light through the #MeToo movement.

We will need fortitude just to stay with one another through these difficult days. We will need fortitude to ask all the hard questions. Does one crime mitigate another? Does underage drinking temper the guilt of sexual assault? Does our system of justice recognize that the same experience of abuse can paralyze one person and mildly wound another? Do victims and survivors have a moral responsibility to report their abuse – to

facilitate their own wellbeing, to protect others, and to help the sinner to see his sin? Is there a statute of limitations on these crimes and why?

Perhaps it is time to make an unwavering commitment to all victims of sexual abuse. A tollfree number for everyone. A clear and transparent process of intake for medical, legal, psychological, and spiritual support that ensures the well-being and freedom of the victim.

Where the church is concerned, seminarians would need to participate, as part of their formation, in this effort to reach out to the sexually abused, those who live in the shadows, the peripheries of our society. Missionaries, too, need to understand the sexual mores of the culture where they serve and call them to recognize the dignity of all women and men. Let us be the field hospital for the sexually abused even as we recognize, confess, and atone for our own crimes of sexual abuse. The doctor with cancer can still cure other cancer patients.

Because we are on mission, though, we do not despair but rather look for models of the virtues and behaviors of which I have written here. One outstanding example is the [African Faith and Justice Network](#). Thanks to their work, religious women have come together and learned how to advocate for themselves and their people. First, they addressed violence against women and children. Having achieved some level of success, they are now confronting human trafficking, a serious problem in many African countries. They are marvelous examples of the virtue of fortitude. May the Spirit of the Living God open our hearts and minds to the witness of others – from around the world – so we have the strength and the fortitude to navigate these troubled times.

Article by Don McCrabb,
USCMA Executive Director



USCMA Happenings

- **Central Indiana Churches for Haiti Gathering** | October 14, 2018 at Saint Mary Cathedral, Lafayette, IN. Registration is on \$20. For more information, contact Jeffery Newell (jnewell@ball-law.com).
- **ENCOUNTER and Reconciliation** – Building a Global Mission Connection | A USCMA Webinar on Animating Missionaries in the United States of America. October 18, 2018 at 2 pm Eastern. For more information, contact Don McCrabb (dmccrabb@uscatholicmission.org).
- **Parish Partnership Workshop** | Diocese of Arlington, VA. October 20, 2018 at Our Lady of Good Counsel, Vienne, VA. For more information, contact Roberto Bacalski (communications@arlingtonmissions.org).
- **A Culture of Encounter** | USCMA's 2018 Conference, Boston, MA – October 25-27, 2018. For more information, check out the conference [webpage](#). Early Registration ends October 19th.
- **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 uscatholicmission.org. Copyright 2018.

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