



ENCOUNTER

Catholic laity on mission – everywhere

August 2020

Welcome to Encounter!

Mission invites us to embrace diverse cultures by reaching out and going with others who are not like us. Maggie Sheehan, 23, is a missionary for Glenmary serving the rural poor with Glenmary priests and brothers. This is her third mission; she was drawn to Tennessee in college, left for Ecuador, and from Ecuador back to the rural poor. Who knows where the Holy Spirit will lead you, when your heart is open to being sent? Even now, during the Covid-19 pandemic, a wounded economy, racial tensions, and political unrest, what is God calling you to do? You may never leave your hometown, but you may find yourself stepping into uncharted waters, breaking down barriers, to connect deeper with the marginalized people in your own neighborhood. There is a new era of mission God is calling Catholics to in the United States of America. What does it mean to be a citizen currently; what Pope Francis calls integral citizenship? Using the tools of mission, we can more than navigate the changing waters of our time; we can chart a course to global solidarity and the common good.

From Tennessee to Ecuador and Back Again, A Year on Mission

From Joppa Mountain in eastern Tennessee, on the grounds of Glenmary Home Missioners, with birds chirping in the background, Maggie Sheehan speaks about her mission experience with a maturity that belies her age.

Now all of 23, she's had a whirlwind past year that took her to Ecuador and back to Tennessee, where she is waiting out the pandemic like so many others and listening for that quiet voice that she believes has led her this far and will lead her to the next place.

Maggie was raised in Cincinnati and participated in a high school immersion trip to Glenmary in 2014, when it was located in Kentucky. After graduating from the University of Dayton a semester early, she looked for a meaningful service opportunity and remembered her earlier time with Glenmary.

“During my week here, I fell in love with the community, I fell in love with the mission,” she says. “I held that week with me throughout my college experience.”



Glenmary serves the rural poor at 10 mission sites in Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee. Forty-five Glenmary priests and brothers serve those sites, along with volunteers like Maggie.

She spent the spring of 2019 on Joppa Mountain, excited to be living in a rural community that was quite unlike the environment in which she'd grown up. While Maggie says it was “very exciting to grow in my knowledge” during that time, it was also jarring to be exposed to a kind of poverty she had never seen



“In one sense, I was surprised by rural poverty. There are some lived experiences that are so different from my own growing up, and to see rural poverty in its most extreme form challenged me to rethink the ways I had been taught about poverty and lack of access to food,” Maggie says. “To live here and to learn from this community was something I’m so grateful for. It has pushed me to

examine my own thinking about how I might work for justice in the future.”

That stay in 2019 lasted just for the spring, until Maggie left for a planned year of mission work in Guayaquil, Ecuador, with Rostro de Cristo. As it happens, one of the other Glenmary mountain managers had been to Ecuador with Rostro, and there is a large Spanish-speaking population in eastern Tennessee, in Grainger County.

“I just fell in love with the culture and hospitality that was given to me so abundantly in eastern Tennessee,” she recalls, “so I went to Ecuador.”

While Maggie worked four days each week in a shelter for women and children fleeing extreme physical violence or sexual assault, the rest of the time, she says, was spent living in and building community.

“It was a powerful experience. I fell in love completely. It felt like I was walking with God every single day, walking down those roads,”

“It was a powerful experience. I fell in love completely. It felt like I was walking with God every single day, walking down those roads,” she recalls. “Here in Tennessee, I feel that as well, just seeing God and the face of Christ in each person I encounter.”

The pandemic forced Rostro to recall it 12 missionaries back from Ecuador in March, so Maggie wasn’t able to complete her year, which is how she ended up back in Tennessee, serving as a mountain manager for

Glenmary. She’s been helping them prepare to reopen their retreat facilities to groups who will do service work in the local community.

She hopes to return to Ecuador in 2021, to finish out her time there and possibly discern a second year. Meantime, beginning this fall, she’ll volunteer for a year at the Romero Center in Camden, New Jersey, through a new domestic Rostro program.

Michele Shimizu-Kelley interviewed Maggie when she applied to Rostro and was impressed with her from the first moment.

“Her social and spiritual maturity really struck me. Just the way that she talks about her faith and the decisions she’s made in her life,” says Michele. “How to live and be with others and love others who are marginalized in our society is so authentically present in her. She’s been an incredible gift for us in bringing her whole self to mission.”

Maggie isn’t sure of what she’ll do after Camden, and possibly another year in Ecuador. Perhaps graduate school studies in social work or theology. Or more mission work.

“I thought I would go into this period of service and know what I wanted to do.... To preach or convert, and that was not at all what my experience was.”

“I thought I would go into this period of service and know what I wanted to do,” she says. She never planned to become a missionary, which conjures images of going “to preach or convert, and that was not at all what my experience was. My experience was being invited and welcomed into people’s homes and finding God

Article by Julie Bourbon, ENCOUNTER Editor



Catholic Citizens

A New Era of Mission in the United States of America

By Donald R McCrabb, USCMA Executive Director

Argentina celebrated its 200th anniversary as a country in May 2010. Then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J.—now Pope Francis—wrote a pastoral letter for the bicentennial titled “We as Citizens, We as a People.” Although written for Argentina, the letter has implications for the United States—and for missionaries in the U.S.—as we stand on the eve of the 2020 presidential election.

All those living in our country have inherited both the successes and mistakes of earlier generations. We, as an intergenerational cohort of “citizens” must, as Bergoglio wrote, “take charge of all its achievements and all its imperfections because this is precisely the starting point from which we must make our contribution to the future.”

The challenge, according to Bergoglio, was individualism, which was described by his friend Alberto Methol Ferre as a “libertine, hedonistic, amoral, consumerist individualism that had not ethical or moral horizon.” The solution, according to Bergoglio, was to become a “citizen within a People.” “Citizen” is a logical category to us, whereas “people” is a mythical and historical category. “Being a people is to share life, values, history, customs, language, faith, and dreams,” he wrote. It is the citizen who seeks the common good, who works for justice, but justice “within a People.”

***“Being a people is to share life,
values, history, customs, language,
faith and dream,”***

Bergoglio identified four principles necessary for an “integral citizenship.”

- 1) Time is primary and supersedes space.
- 2) Unity is primary and supersedes conflict.
- 3) Reality is primary and supersedes the “idea” or ideal.
- 4) The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

These principles are the tools necessary to address the three tensions within human society: the tension between plenitude (abundance) and limitation (scarcity); the tension between the idea and reality; and the tension between globalization and localization.



As citizens facing a national election, we must ask, what time is it? Perhaps it is time to take seriously the essential civic responsibilities of our country— the identification of common concerns, the civil debate on how to best address those concerns, and the civic humility to assess the strengths and limitations of any policy initiative. Perhaps it is time to nurture “integral citizenship” focused on the common good, one that is rooted in the real and not in ideology, either social or individual. Perhaps it is time for Catholics to transcend partisan politics, calling each party to their “better angels.”

***“As citizens facing a national
election, we must ask, what time is***

This type of engagement will require advanced skills in conflict mediation, resolution, and reconciliation. The mythical eras of revolution, civil war, emancipation, military superiority, and civil rights need to give birth to a new age of encounter, dialogue, and collaboration. “We the People” can defy economics and the tragedy of the commons to advance the triumph of the common good by balancing the needs of the one with the needs of the many.

Missionaries can play a unique and vital role in promoting “integral citizenship.” Missionaries can give witness to the power and richness of diversity as well as the challenges and messiness of intercultural living. In worship, art, and ministry, missionaries can accompany women and men in their efforts to articulate the culture of a diverse yet unified “people.” Missionaries so often serve as teachers and healers. What would it be like if we caught introductory courses on civics, economics, and law so everyone in this country would have a basic civic education? Imagine a collaborative effort among pastors, missionaries, universities, high schools, and elementary schools that offered, as a curriculum, integral citizenship to anyone who wanted it.

“Could the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church serve the needs for unity in America?”

Having lived and worked among so many different peoples, missionaries know a lot about dialogue. Could the political discourse in America shift from partisan posturing to authentic dialogue? Given the disparities in wealth and income, what would it be like if the Church focused its efforts on economic, ecological, and racial equality? Finally, could the Church bring its faith, hope, charity, prayer, and energy to reconciliation within the United States of America? Could the one, holy, catholic,

and apostolic church serve the needs for unity in America?

Perhaps it is time for the church in the United States of America to take a much longer view of things, rather than focusing on the particulars of one political race or another, one election or the next. Perhaps the focus needs to be on the formation of an integral citizen capable of engaging others and of seeking dialogue and understanding on the real issues facing the commons, one who can do so with the belief that “we the people” is also a prayer, a dream, a possibility planted by God in the soul of America for the good of all.



Donald R. McCrabb, D. Min., is the Executive Director of the United States Catholic Mission Association.



USCMA Happenings

- **Accompaniment and Solidarity** | Join USCMA on Thursday, September 3, 2020 at noon ET for an open discussion on global solidarity. Visit the [USCMA website](#) for the registration link, upcoming agenda, and more!
- **Mission Lives! | Writing our NEW story of mission.** A virtual workshop on how to craft our story of mission today. September 10, 2020 at 8 pm ET. Registration information is on the USCMA website.
- **USCMA Annual Membership Meeting** | September 17, 2020 at 2 pm ET. Special guest speaker Dr. Cabrini Pak – *Pope Francis and Mission in the Modern Social Milieu*. More information is on the USCMA website.
- **Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity** | A webinar by Sr. Mary McGlone on the developmental stages people go through as they become more aware and sensitive to the needs of people from other cultures. The webinar is September 29, 2020 at 2 pm ET. Registration is required. There is more information on the USCMA Website.
- **Books for Review** | USCMA receives complimentary books about missiology, theology, and spirituality for review. Our feature book for July is *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody: The Making of a Black Theologian* by James H.

The United States Catholic Mission Association is a national alliance of individuals and organizations committed to the mission Jesus entrusted to his Church. Through its members and services USCMA animates missionaries, prepares them for mission, accompanies them through mission, and form them for leadership. ENCOUNTER is made possible in part, by a grant from [Catholic Communication Campaign](#). You build bridges of global solidarity by supporting USCMA. Donate at [uscatholicmission.org](#). Copyright 2020.



United States Catholic Mission Association
415 Michigan Ave., NE 20017
202-832-3112
www.uscatholicmission.org

