



June 2022

ENCOUNTER
Catholics on Mission – Everywhere

“See, I am doing something new!” A Special Announcement and Invitation

By Sister Nancy Schramm, osf

The world changes constantly. Life changes constantly. Our reality accompanies these changes. In these past few decades, we have seen so many changes at a speed that past generations could never have imagined. In the past two years, we have experienced devastating effects of the pandemic with real and ongoing threats from new variants. Throughout the world, the lack of peace, the growth of hate has shaken us in our very depth of being.

The US Catholic Mission Association, as a church institution, has been influenced by these changes, too. For some years, the board members of the USCMA, conscious of these changes, have been discussing how USCMA operates, who are the members, what is its mission, and what is its contribution to God’s realm, recognizing that one very important question is, “What is the future and the viability of the USCMA?”

In 2021, the board’s members personally contacted all the association’s members to see how they were dealing with the pandemic and invited them to respond to a few questions concerning the present and the future of our association. Although not all the members responded, many did and confirmed the board’s decision that what was needed was an in-depth analysis of our very nature and mission.

We contracted a consultant to assist the board in this process. He met individually with board members, interviewed several association members, and facilitated our board’s discussions. The board met in person in March and finalized its work on April 21, 2022. Our

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**Come to the
2022 Pentecost Gathering!
All are welcome!
Tuesday May 31, 2022
2:00 pm Eastern Time
Please register via Zoom.**



conclusion was a unanimous one: USCMA has a needed mission in today's times. As a result, the board issued a revised mission statement:

"USCMA is a community of faith leaders engaged in networking, formation, and advocacy for God's mission."

The board also empowered an Implementation Team to begin restructuring the association, to include membership, programs and services, finances, and the board of directors.

As we approach Pentecost, the board invites all association members to come to a special "2022 Pentecost Gathering" of the membership on May 31, 2022, at 2 pm ET. There, we will pray, receive the new mission statement, and engage one another on what we affirm in the statement and what can be improved. Members are asked to [REGISTER](#) for the 2022 Pentecost Gathering.

**"See, I am doing something new!
Now it springs forth,
do you not perceive it?" Is.43:19**

Yes, God is doing something new. It is springing forth and we do perceive it! We, the board members, are committed to this new moment, this new time, and we are counting not only on your support, but on your active participation in the process. We will be calling on members to lend their leadership and energy in this restructuring effort. If you would like to volunteer, feel free to reach out to me or Don McCrabb, our Executive Director (dmccrabb@uscatholicmission.org).

Let us pray for the Wisdom and Courage of the Spirit to guide our seeking and our deciding. Let there be peace on earth and let the USCMA be part of the needed transformation.



Sister Nancy Schramm, OSF
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US Catholic Mission
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USCMA Happenings

May 31, 2022

2 pm ET

(1 pm CT, 12pm MT, and 11 am PT)

**The 2022 Pentecost Gathering
A Synodal Conversation
about the Future**

[REGISTRATION](#) is requested. The USCMA Board of Directors has concluded its 18-month strategic assessment of our mission, programs, and services. At this gathering – in anticipation of Pentecost – the members of the association are invited to come together in synod – with prayer and small group conversation – to learn the result of the board's work, receive the new mission statement, pray with it, and explore the possibilities for the future.

June 5, 2022 — Pentecost

USCMA encourages all who are called to mission to pray with Pope Francis's World Mission Sunday Message – *You Shall Be My Witnesses*. USCMA has a free one-page study guide. You can request a copy from Don McCrabb (dmccrabb@uscatholicmission.org).

June 23, 2022

2 pm ET

(1 pm CT, 12pm MT, and 11 am PT)

**Interculturality –
A Synodal Conversation
for Mission Leaders**

Fr. Tony Gittins, CSSp gave two webinars on interculturality. In the spirit of the Synod, USCMA will host a conversation for mission leaders on how to journey together in our efforts to understand, and appropriate, interculturality in our missionary communities.

[REGISTRATION](#) is requested. Tony's two webinars can be found on the [USCMA webpage](#). You can also find them in a special playlist located on [USCMA's YouTube Channel](#).

Embracing a New Mission, to One Another



Top: Installation Mass, January 2, 2022, from left to right, Sisters Genie Natividad, Teresa Hougnon, Len Montiel, and Claris Zwareva.

Bottom: Sr. Genie Natividad in Tanzania, doing trauma healing work with children who suffered abuse.

For more information about the Maryknoll Sisters, visit <https://www.maryknollsisters.org/>.

A new leadership team of the Maryknoll Sisters took office in January after the congregation's September General Assembly. They spoke recently from Ossining, New York, of their hopes and plans for the future, and of how serving in this capacity is an opportunity to understand mission and ministry in a new way.

The four women, each with vast international mission experience, will spend the next six years working in consultation with more than 300 members, 92 of whom minister outside the U.S., to chart an ongoing course for their order. That will entail much listening to discern what mission and presence look like in the future, as they continue to live into their areas of focus: climate change, all forms of discrimination, and migration.

The Maryknoll Sisters were founded in 1912 explicitly for overseas mission and today minister in 18 places around the world, from Brazil to Zimbabwe. The members of the leadership team spoke passionately of what mission means to them, and how they're transitioning to a type of mission that is focused more on service to their own sisters and to the order itself than what they've historically done.

Sr. Teresa Hougnon, president, spent more than 20 years in East Timor and Kenya, working in reconciliation, community building, and social healing.

"I haven't had a desk in over 20 years. I worked in a living room in Kenya, and on the road, in the car, and in community groups," she said, as the other three laughed and nodded. "For over 120 years, we've become really good at doing mission, out there. But how do we do it among ourselves?"

Sr. Genie Natividad, a native of the Philippines who now serves as vice president, has ministered in Africa; in Maryknoll, coordinating care for their elderly sisters; and in Tucson, ministering to migrants, concurred.

"It's a shift from being out on mission to being here with our sisters. But it's a calling also, a mission," said Sr. Genie.

"I've been looking at mission itself, reflecting on that," said Sr. Maria Leonor (Len) Montiel, a Philippines native who spent more than 20 years in Cambodia and is the general secretary. "It all evolves into living relationships, co-creating relationships in this world, not just among Maryknoll Sisters. It's how we're relating and facilitating life-giving relationships with all of creation."

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*Left: Sr. Teresa facilitating a Trauma Healing workshop in Nairobi in 2008 with informal settlement community members. .
 Middle: Sr. Len builds a Habitat for Humanity house with a young Cambodian orphaned by AIDS who still lives in that home.
 Right: Sr. Claris providing witness for the Maryknoll Sisters and people they are in mission with at an international meeting*

All photos provided by the Sisters of Maryknoll.

Sr. Elizabeth (Claris) Zwareva, a native of Zimbabwe, was missioned to Bolivia for 26 years and was also Maryknoll's NGO representative to the United Nations for 5 years. She is the fourth member of the leadership team.

"For me, mission is witnessing, not to my own work but to what God has given me, and in humility I receive it," she said. "And I evolve. Each step is evolution. I'm learning how to best deliver this message that God is giving me."

Sr. Len reflected on how her idea of mission has changed since she entered as a younger woman, when Maryknoll's preferential option for the poor was what led her to the order. As she has matured, though, her definition has matured, as well.

"I'm still evolving in my understanding. Now I'm here missioned with and for and to my sisters," she said. "And whether I am with the suffering poor or people living with HIV or the urban poor, or here at the center with other white-haired ladies, those are really visual differences. I am in mission with my sisters and to them."

Sr. Genie has come to a similar way of thinking.

"When I realized I was being called to mission, I thought mission was out there, the border," she said. "But mission is whoever is right in front of me. It's the way I build that relationship, how I make others feel and how I treat others. I think it's evolving and it's widening, because of the embracing of community and relationship in everything that exists."

In the end, in mission, relationship is everything, they all say. And that is true for Maryknoll Sisters whether they are abroad or at home, ministering with the poor or in the ministry of prayer at the motherhouse.

Said Sr. Teresa, "My biggest hope is to accompany the sisters where they're at, so that they realize at any stage of life, they are in mission, and they have value and they have dignity."

Article by Julie Bourbon, ENCOUNTER Editor



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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 the [Catholic Communication Campaign](http://CatholicCommunicationCampaign.org). You build bridges of global solidarity by supporting USCMA. Donate at uscatholicmission.org. Copyright 2022.