

NETWORKING PANEL FULL REPORT

(compiled from notes & recording)

Board Member Dr. Doshie Piper shared her experience at a previous USCMA event. “**We spent time with Xavier University and I had an opportunity to experience mission and then work with others who were engaging in mission similarly to the way that I was engaging in mission, and go beyond the university level of engaging in mission and growing the mission of God’s church.**”

Diocese of St. Cloud Mission Director Elizabeth Brown reflected on the diversity of her diocese with communities from Sudan, Vietnam, Venezuela, the Congo, Kenya, Somalia, Nigeria, Indonesia, Philippines, Native American, Italian, Korean, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, and more. The piece that is huge is about concreteness. For us, it’s huge, being credible, accountable, transparent, honest – at a high level. When various communities see this commitment, it leads to reciprocity, and the language of love, a universal language that everyone can understand. Being an authentic witness of what we preach, live, and believe. Being Catholic means that we have to connect with everybody, not just those who are Catholic. Many neighbors, such as the Somali community are Muslims. We ask the question, what can we do WITH you, not for you. Working from/creating an attitude of gratitude with encourages openness to change and opportunities.

Jeff Newell, VP of Parish Twinning Program of Americas, described his longtime practice of shaking hands, remembering faces, hearing stories, and recording a person’s contact info along with details. A lawyer who saw his work as that as a problem solver, he has focused on creating connections “to pull the spokes together into the wheel,” finding a person who can offer insights and help when he could not. A priest at St. Mary’s Cathedral took him on a trip to Haiti to determine the possibility of forming a mission committee. His wife thought it would be a single trip, but when she traveled with him the next time she was soon making plans for another trip. They have remained committed for 25 years, travelling regularly until the interruption caused by COVID and the severe unrest. One key aspect of his work has been creating CINCH, Central Indiana Churches for Haiti, which formed to network and learn from each other at an annual day-long conference. “Everything you’re doing is networking.”

The current provincial for the Spiritans, Fr. Don McEachin, CSSp, observed that networking is part of a missionary’s DNA. He offered two top-down examples of networking and one bottom-up. The top down examples were SEDOS, the study of global mission based in Rome that produces journals, books and a documentation service. African Faith and Justice Network, 30 member congregation doing networking and advocacy. Both these are organizational. A bottoms up and

grass-roots example is the [Mirembe](#) project in Kampala, funded by small donations from the Rich in Mercy Institute and organized by a Lay Spiritan, Anne Marie Hansen (in attendance) in collaboration with the sisters of Our Lady of the Good Shepherd. This micro-finance loan program emerged from the request of a local parish to help women in the slum facing hunger, disease, violence and despair. The women buy and sell in the informal economy, sometimes growing small gardens. They have weekly meetings and a small bank, **working through the US and Canadian Lay Spiritan communities who raise funds and hope to expand the program which gives a hand-up, not a hand-out. Many success stories... an**

Doshie: It's important for us here to lift up the challenges and how we overcome them, as we encounter the global pandemic and its challenges. As Sister Nancy mentioned in her address, all of us who love mission face challenges. **As the organization begins to think about these challenges, we need to be in the work of overcoming challenges, and assisting each other in overcoming challenges through connections.**

Elizabeth: The pandemic didn't change or challenge us in the mission office. I think we closed three days. Mission doesn't end. We have 30+ missionaries who were still out in the world. It was important to us to continue those relationships. We had to reach out our missionaries and connect with them about what they were doing and at it was huge share those stories back with the people in the diocese, and for them to know that what they are doing still of value. Mission education and animation continued via zoom.

Financially, that was a challenge. Our collections were down, but not a whole lot... people were still invested and connected to those commitments.

Our newer priests have no formation in mission, and that's a challenge, and we have to try to make personal connections and relationships as they're assigned to parishes. I don't let people not be involved; I say, well too bad you are. We're all called to be in mission.

Doshie: you have to teach us to push back

Elizabeth: I even do it to bishops

Jeff: Background on PTPA – 250 in Haiti, 75 in Latin America; if you want to twin, we have waiting lists of 100 parishes in Haiti and 100 in Latin America.

The biggest challenge for us has been the pandemic and the unrest, it's hard to travel. The best the way to get people fired up for mission is to to have them go and see how half the world or more lives and do it in a way. One of the first things that surprised me... I was sitting in the airport in Miami, and I was playing with numbers and I realized that I was still in the United States, but closer

to Haiti than I was to LaFayette, Indiana. 750 miles to Port au Prince, but 1500 from home; twice as close to Haiti. People don't always notice that.

[We've been able to do] Zoom calls with folks on the ground with an interpreter. On the ground, in Haiti, we've never had a bad priest. They're all perfect stewards of money, great innovators. At home with a priest change, and they don't have the same passion for mission. The young ones, it's hard to get them on board. Sometimes they get out of your way, other times they get in your way. There's a core group at our church, and we network. I see networking as the ability to not have to reinvent the wheel all the time. Being here together, hearing you, things that touch my heart, seeing your face, hearing your laugh.

Fr. Don: The challenge and opportunity of multi-culturalism and inter-cultural living. This room is a perfect example, a meeting of the U.N. This is something new for us for the church in America but a global reality. The challenge of multiculturalism is to learning how to not just get along and tolerate, but to honor, celebrate, mark and rejoice in the vitality and potential of intercultural living. It's a challenge for receiving communities – formation of the missionaries and the receiving communities; we don't always do the last piece well.

The other challenge is the silo mentality. No critters get into a grain silo. As much as we're learning to network, it's still there instead of recognizing the multiplier effect. **If three of us work together, we could do 10 times what we could do individually.**

Doshie: If you had 3 words to describe mission experience

Jeff: A sentence, one of the best quotes I've seen: "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

Fr. Don: Also a sentence: We are many gifts, but together we are forming the Body of Christ on earth today

Elizabeth: Three words: Gratitude, Giftedness and Love

See next page for resources.

Resource links:

[Staff | St. Cloud Mission Office \(stcloudmissionoffice.com\)](http://stcloudmissionoffice.com)

[Haiti Ministry - St. Mary Cathedral and St. Ann Church Pastorate - Lafayette, Indiana \(saintmarycathedral.org\)](http://saintmarycathedral.org)

[Our Team : About PTPA : Parish Twinning Program of the Americas \(ptpausa.org\)](http://ptpausa.org)

[Jeff Newell's Newly Released "Open Your Eyes: Life Lessons Learned in Haiti" is a Touching Book of Anecdotes from Mission Trips to the Caribbean \(prweb.com\)](http://prweb.com)

[Leadership - The Congregation of the Holy Spirit Province of the United States - Pittsburgh, PA \(spiritans.org\)](http://spiritans.org)

[Lay Spiritan Ministry Builds Momentum - The Congregation of the Holy Spirit Province of the United States - Pittsburgh, PA \(spiritans.org\)](http://spiritans.org)