



United States Catholic Mission Association

Mission Update

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Solidarity and the Future of Mission

By Barbara Wheeler,
Development Coordinator

I recently participated in my first short-term immersion trip through the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Mission Office, which facilitates twinning partnerships among 43 parishes within the Archdiocese. On February 3, 2015, youth and adult parishioners from St. Margaret of York came to celebrate the feast day of Our Lady of Suyapa, patroness of Honduras, with their parish twinning partners of Saint Dominic Savio in Tegucigalpa. Since this experience, I have been reflecting on three themes of short-term mission: relationship, sharing faith and solidarity. Through this blog, I invite you to reflect on these themes through some of the questions I found myself asking during this experience.

Relationship

When we went to Honduras, we did not go with any idea that we were going to “help” anyone. We were going as a result of mutual relationships built for the past five years among two parish communities. I was not sure what this would look like, but it did not take me long to see. Upon arrival, I witnessed two men from the respective parishes of Cincinnati and Tegucigalpa warmly greet one another, calling each other “brother.” I saw immediately that these were authentic friendships.

Later in the week, I experienced this welcome and offer of friendship for myself, when a parishioner sat down beside me and, knowing that I did not speak Spanish, said to me, “I will help you learn Spanish. You help me practice English.” Perhaps due to the times we live in, where we spend so much time in front of a screen and communicating through text messages, I was surprised at how much two people could learn from patiently sitting down next to each other with a certain amount of patience and humility, being willing to make mistakes and learn from them.

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“A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings.”

- *Laudato Si'* #91

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Beyond these relationships, I observed much about global relationships from the back seat of the bus which transported us to our various destinations during the week. We passed places that export goods outside Honduras: sweatshops which produce t-shirts and cheap clothes and fields where coffee is grown.



Barbara, left, with some of the pilgrims from Cincinnati. Board member Mike Gable is in the middle.

We saw things that the United States had exported to Honduras: we passed the Wendy's, McDonald's and Wal-Mart, an airfield still used today by the US Air Force, originally used during the Cold War by approximately 40,000 American troops who were stationed there. I wondered about the influences we were having on each other: were they good or bad?

We had a chance to begin to ask these questions of each other one evening, when a religious sister came to the parish to give a talk. She spoke of her ministry, which was running a center to help immigrants who had been deported from the US. She told us of the experience of those who tried to immigrate, and both those of us who were from the US and those from Honduras asked: What can we do? Parishioners of St. Dominic's in Tegucigalpa asked, "What can we do so that they do not need to leave to find work?" Parishioners from Cincinnati asked, "What can we do to ensure that immigrants are treated with dignity?" I am not sure if we came to clear answers; but I knew that I was witnessing something rather remarkable and rare: a room of people from different countries and different backgrounds, asking how to come together to protect the most vulnerable.

Sometimes when we speak of policies towards other countries, two sides emerge: on one side, people argue for more isolation. On the other side, people often argue for us to be more involved, to help, often in paternalistic ways. However, my experience in Honduras would suggest that neither isolation nor paternalistic "helping" are real options. The connections are already made; cultural exchanges are happening daily whether we are aware of them or not. From the coffee we drink to the t-shirts we wear, we are impacting the lives of other people in the world, and they are affecting us. Christians need to be part of the conversation, asking questions of social analysis: what kinds of relationships will we be forming? How will we shape these relationships into ones that are authentic, into relationships that ensure care for the most vulnerable in society? My short experience suggested that parish twinning could help us begin to form authentic relationships and, through these relationships, begin to find substantive answers and solutions to these questions.

Sharing Faith as a Way of Mission

Pope Francis has garnered much attention for his approach to the faith. There is a sense that he is doing things in the Church that have not been done before. For me, there have been times when I have felt excited, but also times when I am saturated by the media hype, as well as simply confused. I would suggest that he is less of an enigma to me after this trip, upon realizing that the Pope is, after all, from the global south. I would suggest that the world has much to learn from the Latin American way of expressing and practicing the faith. We came to Tegucigalpa to celebrate their patronal feast of Our Lady of Suyapa. The devotion seemed to spring up entirely organically, by which I mean that it did not come from a "top-down" approach. People did not follow this devotion because someone in authority thought that they ought to, but simply because they wanted to, because the culture made it easy to do so.

The story of Our Lady of Suyapa is this: In 1747, a man outside the village of Suyapa, now located within the city limits of Tegucigalpa, found a statue of Mary and gave it to his mother. His mother loved the gift from her son and made an altar to house the statue. She brought flowers and candles and invited people to pray at the altar. Soon, miracles began to be reported, and people came from all over to pray in this woman's home. As the devotion spread, a church was built in honor of Our Lady of Suyapa. Later, a Cathedral was built and dedicated to her.



The long line of young pilgrims on their walk to the Cathedral of Our Lady of Suyapa

This year, celebrations included youth from all over the country come together to walk ten miles from the spot where the statue was found to the Cathedral. This was not the idea of someone in charge; this sprung from the hearts of 5,000 youth, whom we walked with – or rather, walked, ran, danced and sang with – for seven of those miles. Over a million people descend upon the Cathedral each year for this feast day, camping out in tents stretching along the road, at great personal sacrifice of comfort and time to celebrate this feast day. Dignitaries from the President of Honduras and the Cardinal alongside the poorest people from remote villages were present together to honor Our Lady.

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I had never experienced anything like this. I thought of Pope Francis and the desire that he has expressed numerous times for a “messy” Church. In *Evangelii Gaudium* he says, “I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.” To those gathered for World Youth Day in Rio, he said, “What do I expect as a consequence of the Youth Day? I expect a mess. There will be one. There will be a mess here in Rio? There will be! But I want a mess in the dioceses! I want people to go out! I want the Church to go out to the street! I want us to defend ourselves against everything that is worldliness, that is installation, that is comfortableness, that is clericalism, that is being shut-in on ourselves. The parishes, the schools, the institutions, exist to go out!” As I looked upon that “mess” of one million people gathered joyfully to celebrate their patroness: tents stretched out, people everywhere, not a seat to be found, a lively, joyful community – I wondered if this was something of the image that Pope Francis had in mind when he spoke of desiring a “messy” Church.



Barbara, left, with Laura of Casa Zulema

Later, in the Cathedral, we met Cardinal Rodriguez, a close confidante of the Holy Father. A journalist from *Maryknoll Magazine* asked him, “In your opinion, what would Pope Francis think of parish twinning?” Cardinal Rodriguez did not hesitate to say that Pope Francis has said – Go out! The Church must not be confined and closed off; parish twinning, then, can be a way to respond to this call from Pope Francis for the Church to be a mission Church.

Here in the United States, the media often portrays the Church as being hopelessly outdated and out of touch, dying and decaying. But there in the Cathedral, at the close of the Mass, we heard a million voices proclaim, “Viva La Virgen de Suyapa!” “Viva Cristo Rey!”

The faith was very much alive. How can we be open to sharing our faith with others and receiving the different gifts that others have to share with us? How can we be open to going outside of our comfort zone to be the Church that Pope Francis has envisioned?

Solidarity

One day, we went to visit Casa Zulema, an AIDS hospice in the mountains. It is run by a 61-year-old Honduran nurse named Laura. She welcomed us immediately and thanked us for coming, and it seemed to dawn on us slowly that we were in the presence of a saint. Laura had given up her life in order to serve those who were dying of AIDS, those who were poor and had no families to care for them. She began by saying humbly and quietly, “I feel you are looking at the richest woman in the world. You are rich when you need nothing. That is why I can say, I am rich.” Later she confided to our group that she had always been searching for God, and that here, among the sick and the poor who were otherwise alone in the world, she had found him. But it was not easy. Speaking of her ministry, she told us a story of difficulties and sorrows but also of joys and small miracles. She said that sometimes she dealt with strong smells of sick patients. “On such days, I say, ‘Jesus, today you stink.’ And the smell becomes bearable.”

Laura, living among the sick and poor in the mountains, had given up any desire for worldly recognition or money or even security in her old age. She lives daily on Divine Providence. An interior freedom and a deep faith were evident, expressed by her joyful smile.

At one point on our visit, we suggested that she reminded us of Mother Teresa. She shook her head earnestly, saying she was not as good as Mother Teresa, although she was inspired by the missionary sister’s example and her quote, “I am but a pencil in the hand of God.” Laura, too, hoped to be an instrument for God’s will.

A few days ago I stood in line at the grocery store and I saw a magazine headline entitled, “How to Get What You Want.” Of course the article was about how to look younger, how to make more money, how to persuade people to do as you wanted them to do; these were the things that the magazine cover suggested that we wanted.

I could not help but think of Laura, who had found what she was looking for through serving the poor. We do not usually see headlines on how to be meek or how to be poor in spirit or how to serve others. But there it was in front of us: meekness, poverty, service – and, though it likely would not be featured on the cover of a grocery store magazine – we all witnessed that there was blessedness and joy, just as the Lord had promised.

Our culture rewards certain values that are not always the values of the Gospel. We are not promised everything we want, we are not promised success or stability or recognition for what we do. I am still reflecting on this experience and asking myself how to be in solidarity with those who are sick, those whom Laura serves. How can I take this experience to my daily life and remember these people who are so often forgotten? How can I ensure that my actions show that I am not simply going through life trying to get what I want, but seeking God as Laura did?

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Moving Forward

In the Gospel, it says that Mary “kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.” This contemplative experience is the challenge of short-term mission. In our consumerist society, we tend to turn trips into “experiences.” We take photos, brag about them on Facebook, wait for the next exciting thing to happen to us, and repeat, hardly having the time to stop and to think, let alone to pray about them and allow them to change us. Authentic short-term mission and longer term parish twinning relationships involve going back and pondering these things in our hearts, sharing these experiences with others. Moving forward, I continue to ask myself questions, and I am beginning to suspect that it is the duty of one who participates in short-term mission to invite others to ask these questions as well: how do I look for ways to live in solidarity with the poor, to witness to the dignity of life? How do I bring the joy that I witnessed during that week to my daily work, to my home? How do I show by my life that I worship the same God that Laura worships? Short-term mission invites us to ponder these questions, to ponder in our hearts what truly matters.



A quiet town square outside of Tegucigalpa



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USCMA's Mission Update

is a quarterly newsletter from the US Catholic Mission Association that provides information and reflections for its members. The Mission Update includes articles, reflections, and a Periodic Paper on mission trends and spirituality, global concerns, mission education and/or formation, and updates on groups involved with mission education and global solidarity.

Periodic Papers are a quarterly series of papers, usually written by USCMA members, and appear in the Mission Update on the praxis, theology, and content of mission activity.

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uscma@uscatholicmission.org

Keeping the Flame for Mission Alive

By Sr. Eleanor Ortega, CSJ
USCMA Board Member

As one of the newest members on the USCMA Board of Directors, I had my first USCMA Board meeting this past April. At the meeting, I heard some concerns about the dwindling number of participants at the USCMA Conference, a decrease in membership and struggles with finances. However, I was impressed on how USCMA is exploring ways to increase the membership and submitting more grants to increase our resources. The Mission Congress agenda seems to address the need to attract younger people to USCMA. Moreover, USCMA realizes that we need to be concerned with witnessing to (and preaching) the Gospel not only in other countries but also within our own country. We need to rekindle our missionary efforts so that all may have the Gospel preached to them and we need to explore new ways to involve more people, especially the young in this endeavor.



While this year USCMA will not have its own conference, we will instead be joining in the Mission Congress, which is convened by USCMA, and will be coming up in October in Houston. Over many years, a good friend of mine, who worked for the Columban Fathers in mission education, would attend the USCMA Conferences each year and she would tell me about the Conferences. I was always envious of her and the opportunities that she had in participating in the different activities during the USCMA Conferences. And now, I will have my chance to attend my first Mission Congress. I am so looking forward to it. The Congress will afford me the opportunity to get to know others involved in the missionary work of the Church. I know that we share common desires but not necessarily common experiences.

Recently, I spoke to Sister Mary McGlone, CSJ (a former USCMA President) and she told me that she is attending the Mission Congress and is looking forward to strategizing on how we can strengthen our networking with others for the sake of the Mission. I hope to hear ways on how we can work together to preach the gospel in our own country and in developing countries where there is rampant poverty and unjust governmental structures. The greater number of USCMA members involved will yield a greater number of voices and ways in addressing the current USCMA needs.

Prior to November 2013, I had been involved in education as principal and teacher. When I was asked by my religious congregation, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet to be the Assistant Mission Coordinator, I was hesitant because of my lack of experience as a missionary. Although I had no experience, I did have a desire to help missionaries throughout my life. I remember adopting “pagan babies” during my elementary school years. I would save up my coins and make my contributions to the “pagan babies” can. There was one can for the girls and one for the boys and of course, I always wanted the girls to be ahead. This same enthusiasm of my early years needs to be replicated, not in the same ways but in new ways. My hope is that we can hear more about engendering a greater enthusiasm for working together and to involve more for the sake of the Mission.

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Past Joy...Present Enthusiasm...Future Hope

by Fr. John R. Nuelle, MS
Executive Director

2015 will stand out in my mind for a variety of reasons. Among them is that I am a vowed religious and this is the year dedicated in a special way by Pope Francis to a celebration of Consecrated Life; it is also the year when the fourth Mission Congress will be presented by the Catholic Mission Forum. These converge on the same theme: living as a consecrated missionary disciple.

2015 offers us an opportunity to recognize and reflect on the fact that, through baptism everyone becomes a missionary disciples of a Loving God, carrying on the mission Jesus received from the Father and confided to us in the Holy Spirit. As a missionary disciple of Jesus, certain are further also called to live the evangelical counsels as consecrated religious.



The three objectives proposed for the Year of Consecrated Life, while important to religious, are not however specific only to them. Indeed they can be guidelines for every baptized to deepen his or her faith and commitment to Christ and the mission confided to all his disciples. It calls us:

- 1- to “make a grateful remembrance of the recent past”
- 2- to “embrace the future with hope”
- 3- which can and should lead us to “living the present with passion.”

No one lives in a vacuum. In many ways we are defined by the generations in which we live. Those who lived during the depression, as well as baby-boomers, gen-xers, and now millennials, have greatly influenced how world cultures develop, political policies are shaped, and religion’s goals and practices are lived out. In the life of the Church, these past 50 years since Vatican II constitute “the recent past” we remember. As a people of Faith we have come to realize that all the different parts of the Body of Christ – the hierarchy, those in consecrated life, and the laity – share in Christ’s priestly, prophetic, and royal office, each in her or his own manner, and thereby are called to help bring to fullness the mission Christ confided to his disciples. Much has happened since Vatican II gave new meaning to the Church’s missionary nature. To state just one evolution that has occurred, the recent past has presented a shift in understanding mission not only as a long-term supererogation undertaken by religious, but also as to a short-term involvement where laity can mostly fully take an active role.

We have been constantly beckoned by Pope Francis to “embrace the future with hope,” and joy, and enthusiasm. From the first moments of his papacy, he has insisted that the Word of God and the ministry of sharing it belong to everyone – hierarchy, religious and laity. He has urged us to be missionary disciples capable of witnessing to the mercy and tenderness of the Lord and thereby warming hearts and rekindling hope. Hope is the fruit of each encounter with Jesus, “who frees us from bondage to go out into the streets to seek our brother [and sister], to touch the flesh of Christ in those who suffer and who need the love of God.” And the thing that gives hope is that people in all phases of life are beginning to listen!

“Living the present with passion” is another way of witnessing to Jesus’ life and love. “Passion for God’s house burns within me.” (John 2:17 – New Living Translation) The “metanoia” Jesus preached and lived was radical. His zeal for God’s kingdom definitely led to his passion and death on the cross; yet also to a resurrected life. Today Pope Francis challenges us to get out of our ordinary ways of thinking and acting, of always seeking to be efficient, effective and produce results. Mission is God’s work, and God chooses to work through us. Being passionate entails allowing the fire of the Holy Spirit burn within us – and even to burn us out!

As the Father’s envoy bringing salvation – the reconciling wholeness of God’s image – to humanity and all of creation, Jesus set an example for what disciple witness entails: intimate prayer in solitude and with others, reaching out to the disenfranchised, touching the “untouchables”, being a presence that both disturbs and consoles, providing nourishment for the hungry, breaking protocol when love requires it, calling by surprise, knowing when to say “yes” and when to say “no way!” Just read the Gospels! Everything written in them is about Jesus and points out the way we need to tread to be missionary disciples. There can be no doubt that the latest papal Encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, brings to us fresh insights into the two central ways Pope Francis carefully follows Jesus’s path – by his attention to and reverence for the vulnerable and all of creation.

The USCMA, as a member of Catholic Mission Forum, believes that during Mission Congress 2015 you will have an opportunity to gain great insights into ways you might deepen and celebrate your mission identity. Together with the USCMA staff and board of directors, I invite you to join us in Houston Texas on October 1-4, 2015 to remember and honor your baptismal call to be members of the Body of Christ, to embrace with hope your place in God’s plan for the future, and to live passionately the missionary discipleship as you follow whole heartedly the Master who asks: Whom shall I send?



Mission Congress 2015 Witnessing Mission: Called to be Missionary Disciples

**October 1 - 4, 2015
Houston, Texas**

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Mini-Congress Participant Registration

Early Bird: \$125.00 by September 14, 2015
After September 14th: \$150.00

[Click here to Register.](#)



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Special room rates with complimentary wi-fi and parking for the nights of September 30 – October 6, 2015. Rooms are available for \$102.00/night (plus tax).

[Click here to reserve your room online](#), or you can call 1-866-577-1154 and use the code "Mission Congress 2015" to reserve your room at the group rate. All reservations must be made on or before September 16, 2015 to secure the group rate.

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There are many ways you can help support this year's Mission Congress.

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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Rev. Frank DeSiano, CSP

President,
Paulist Evangelization Ministries
Mission, New Evangelization, and Discipleship



Most Rev. Daniel E. Flores, S.T.D.

Bishop of Brownsville
*Missionary Discipleship as a Call to Encounter
Different Cultures in the Spirit of Accompaniment*



Sr. Margaret Guider, OSF

Associate Professor of Missiology,
Boston College
*From the Memory of Missions to the Mission of
Mercy and Joy: The Roman Catholic Missiological
Imagination in Evolution*



Dr. Carolyn Woo

President,
Catholic Relief Services
Charity in the Word and Sacraments

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach Laudato Si' Study and Action Guide

July 10, 2015

By Susan Gunn, CCAO Communications and Outreach Associate



Praised be! On June 18, Columban missionaries welcomed and celebrated the release of Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*. The full title translated into English is *Praised Be, On Care for Our Common Home* and is [available online](#) for everyone to read.

While it is written in a way that should be accessible to most readers, it is 190 pages long and full of many thought-provoking teachings on the right relationships between religion and science, and between politics and the economy, as it pertains to the care for the environment. Most everyone who has read it agrees it is worthy of the time and attention. But it left me wanting to take more time to study the teachings, to discuss it with friends, and to answer "What should we do next?"

With this in mind, we created a *Laudato Si'* Study and Action Guide to help people learn and reflect on Pope Francis' teaching, and find direction on ways to respond. To download the guide, go to <http://bit.ly/LaudatoSiStudyActGuide>. You also can find a copy on the following pages.

The guide offers one page for each of the six chapters of the encyclical. For each chapter, there are a summary, reflection questions to be addressed individually or in small groups, details of the lived experiences of Columban missionaries, and suggestions for taking action. The last page of the guide offers two prayers shared by Pope Francis in the encyclical.

Pope Francis asks, "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" The answer is "It is up to us." We accept that "[m]any things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change." We see the great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge before us and we are inspired by his invitation "to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home" and "to integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."

Like the Second Vatican Council, which "opened a window to the modern world," Pope Francis has opened a window to the "splendid universal communion" with which humans and all creation are joined. He calls us to an "ecological conversion" to turn away from an over-consuming economy and a throwaway culture, and to turn toward deeper reverence for every living creature and the future of God's creation.

We are excited to study Pope Francis' teaching and take action to care for our common home. We hope you join us!

Faith in Action: [Invite your member of Congress to read *Laudato Si'*](#).

USCMA Members call for Action

Over the years USCMA members have passed resolutions at the Annual Members' Meeting calling for action on caring for creation?.

- [Resolution on the Environment and Global Warming](#) (Passed in October 2011)
- [Resolution on Reducing Our Carbon Footprint](#) (Passed in October 2009)
- [Resolution on Global Climate Change](#) (Passed in October 2006)
- [Resolution Opposing Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining](#) (Passed in October 2004)

To learn more about these resolutions, click on each one for a link to the resolution. You can also go to: <http://uscatholicmission.org/uscma-resolutions> to learn more about USCMA resolutions.

Laudato Si' Study and Action Guide for Individuals & Small Groups

Written by the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

MAKING LAUDATO SI' A PART OF YOUR LIFE

"What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" (#160)

Pope Francis asks this in his encyclical addressed to "every person living on this planet" and invites us to enter into a dialogue about our common home.

The letter takes its name from the opening of the Canticle of the Creatures by St. Francis of Assisi, *Laudato Si'* or Praise be, to remind us that the earth, our common home "is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us."

"Sister earth, along with all the abandoned of our world, is crying out, pleading that we take another course." (#53)

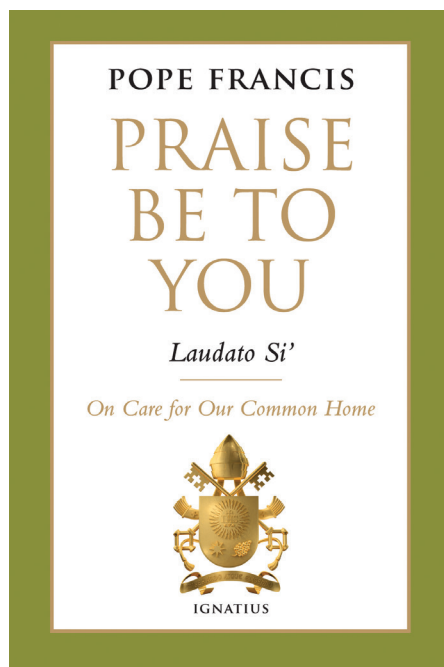
The encyclical centers around the concept of integral ecology to describe the relationships of the person: with God, with one's self, with other human beings, with creation. In six chapters, Pope Francis teaches that science is the best tool by which we can listen to the cry of the earth. Our faith and Church teaching call us to right relationships and dialogue, particularly between politics and economy, and between religion and science, as they pertain to the care of our common home.

Using this guide

This guide is for people of faith and people of conscience who are interested in studying the words of Pope Francis and taking action. It may be used individually or in a group, one chapter at a time or as a whole.

Each chapter of *Laudato Si'* is addressed in two ways: **study** and **action**. We offer a summary and questions for reflection, as well as ways you and your community can take action in order to care for our common home. "All it takes is one good person to restore hope!" (#71)

You may need a Bible and copy of the encyclical, [available here](http://bit.ly/Laudato-Si) or <http://bit.ly/Laudato-Si>



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Ways to Respond

- Water conservation
- Renewable energy
- Funds for poor nations adjusting to climate change
- Economic policies
- Personal covenant
- Ecological education
- Advocacy

For more information contact:

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Chapter One

What is Happening to our Common Home



The environment is a common good that belongs to all of us. All of humanity share a common home. But studies indicate that “most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases ... released mainly as a result of human activity.” (#23)

Pope Francis writes that climate change is “one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.” Five times Pope Francis names a “**throwaway culture**” as a root cause of the ecological crisis. We face pollution and waste, scarcity of water, loss of biodiversity, decline in the quality of life and breakdown of society, extreme consumerism and global inequality, and weak international responses.

A true “**ecological debt**” (#51) exists, particularly between the global north and south, connected to “the disproportionate use of natural resources.” Great attention must be given to “the needs of the poor, the weak and the vulnerable” (#52).

Like his predecessor, Saint John Paul II, Francis calls us to a “**global ecological conversion**”: “We need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair. Hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems.” (#61)

Questions:

- What images come to mind when I read “throwaway culture”?
- How have I participated in or reacted to a throwaway culture?
- How can I contribute to a sustainable future for the earth in my personal life, in my community, and as a global citizen?

“Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” (#49)

Take Action

Evaluate your water footprint
www.watercalculator.org

Evaluate your carbon footprint
www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator

Join local incentives for just use of water and other natural resources in your community.

Invite your member of Congress to read Laudato Si’ and uphold EPA standards for cutting carbon emissions from power plants.
<http://bit.ly/Act4ClimateNow>

Columban Response to this Lived Experience

“Columban missionaries are called to heal, reconcile, build bridges and create mutual understanding through dialogue which is expressed through our solidarity with marginalized people and the exploited Earth. We are called, as in the words of Pope John Paul II, to an ecological conversion. Our response to the crisis of climate change must be prophetic, that is good news for the poor and the planet.”

- [Columban Society Statement on Climate Change](#), 2014.

“Climate change should be a top priority for the Catholic Church if the Church really believes that its mission is for the flourishing of the life of the world.”

- Fr. Sean McDonagh, SSC, eco-theologian, author, advisor to the Vatican for Laudato Si’, recipient of the Partnership for Global Justice Award in 2011, quoted in [Tasmanian Catholic](#), Vol 3.2, 2007.



Chapter Two

The Gospel of Creation

Science and religion can enter into an “intense dialogue fruitful for both,” on the environment. Indeed, the word “creation” has a broader meaning than “nature.” It is God’s loving plan in which “every creature has its own value and significance,” and humans are “linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of **universal family**.”

The light of our faith, the wisdom of the Biblical narratives, and the mystery of the universe invite us into a loving “**communion**” with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself, yet these relationships, once harmonious, have been broken by sin. We need to join our concern for the environment with a “sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.” (#91)

Every ecological approach needs to take into account the fundamental rights of the **poor and the underprivileged**. The natural environment is “a collective good” and “the responsibility of everyone.” We break the commandment “Thou shall not kill” when “twenty percent of the world’s population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive.” (#95)

Questions:

- How am I in relationship with God, my neighbor, and the earth?
- Are my relationships healthy or broken? Read Matthew 6:26.
- What am I doing to share the gift of creation with others, especially the poor, and with future generations?



“Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river, and mother earth.” (#92)

Columban Response to this Lived Experience

“Our mission experience of living with communities and the natural world that have been marginalized and exploited, Scripture, Catholic social teaching, and science compel us to seek ways to restore right relationships with Creation. The reality of climate change invites us to ongoing personal and communal ecological conversion which leads to both personal lifestyle and structural change. As a result of insights from creation-centered theology, we realize that ethical behavior must no longer be confined solely to our relationship with God and other human beings. It must also extend and include our relationship with all Creation.”

- [Columban Society Statement on Climate Change](#), 2014.

“Our aim is awareness in the Church and society of the connections between peace, ecology and justice through dialogue and advocacy.”

- [St. Columbans Centre for Peace Ecology and Justice](#), Australia

Take Action

Adopt some of Pope Francis’ practical lifestyle changes: pray before and after meals, show care for other living beings, recycle, reduce use of air-conditioning, limit food waste.

Construct a plan to progressively replace your daily consumption of fossil fuels with renewable energy. The [Columban Mission Center in El Paso, Texas](#), installed solar panels, reduced water use and cultivated a community garden.



Chapter Three

The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis



What are the human roots of the ecological crisis? “A certain way of understanding human life and activity has gone awry, to the serious detriment of the world around us.” (#101) We need a “culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint,” especially in regards to **technology** and the **place of human beings** in God’s plan for creation.

Technology has brought wonderful achievements to the world, but when used unwisely it has created deadly arsenals of war and contributed to climate change. “Never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely, particularly when we consider how it is currently being used.” (#104) We need to “slow down and look at reality in a different way,” so that we can “appropriate the positive and sustainable progress which has been made” and “recover the values and the great goals swept away by our unrestrained **delusions of grandeur.**” (#114)

In a similar way, modern belief in the significance of humans over all other species devalues creation to a raw material and promotes technology over all else. “When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities – to offer just a few examples – it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected.” (#117)

Questions:

- What is my understanding of care for creation and care for the poor?
- Are there restraints that wealthy nations need to make to ensure that all can benefit?
- What restraints do I need to make in my own life?
- What restraints do we need to make as a global community?

“The fact is that ‘contemporary man has not been trained to use power well,’ because our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience.” (#105)

Take Action

Identify your connections with the poor and vulnerable in your community.

Name ways you can relocate socially, culturally, spiritually, politically, and economically in order to break down barriers and redistribute the common good to include the poor and vulnerable.

Ask Congress to support the Green Climate Fund to fund low-emission, climate-resilient development in poor countries.
<http://bit.ly/GCFund>

Columban Response to this Lived Experience

“All of Creation is under threat as a result of human-induced climate change created largely by an over-consumption of and dependence on fossil fuels which is driven by an economic model that places profits over the common good. Of particular concern to Columbans is the centrality of extractive industries to the exacerbation of climate change as well as the impacts climate change have on access to safe water and healthy food.”

- [Columban Society Statement on Climate Change](#), 2014.

“[We see] what is happening to the rivers, to animal life, to bird life, and particularly to the people who are the age-old first inhabitants of the [Amazon] region. Their lives are being destroyed, their lands are being taken, their cultures are being trodden down. They are filled with the evil effects of disorganized mining operations.”

- Fr. Peter Hughes, SSC. [Vatican Radio](#), 03 May, 2015.



Chapter Four Integral Ecology



Ecology is the **relationship** of living organisms and the environment: “Everything is closely interrelated.” All of creation is a web of life that includes “human and social dimensions.” By “environment,” we mean the relationship existing between nature and society. We ourselves are a part of nature. The social and environmental crises are intertwined: “Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combatting poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.” (#139) This is **integral ecology**.

Analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the “analysis of human, family, work-related and urban contexts, nor from how individuals relate to themselves, which leads in turn to how they relate to others and to the environment.” This suggests the need for a “**social**” and “**economic ecology**” which includes protecting the environment. Together with our natural heritage, we also should value our cultural heritage, with “special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions,” (#146) and provide for common areas, housing and transportation in a way that promotes “the common good.”

The global nature of the crisis requires “**solidarity** and a **preferential option for the poorest** of our brothers and sisters,” (#158) as well as solidarity with **future generations**, “since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us.” (#159)

Questions:

- What is my understand of “integral ecology”?
- What responsibilities do I have to creation?
- What responsibilities do I have to the poor, to future generations?
- How is poverty an environmental issue?

“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” ... “We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn.” (#160)



Columban Response to this Lived Experience

“The threatening reality of climate change—which is advancing and will bring pain, suffering, and death to millions of humans and other creatures that are facing huge levels of extinction, particularly due to habitat loss—has yet to impinge seriously on our church communities worldwide. Political and economic decision makers and Church leaders hardly appreciate the extent to which the insatiable demands of our global economy are thoroughly tearing apart the web of life, with disastrous consequences for future generations.”

- [Columban Society Statement on Climate Change](#), 2014.

“The system that denies the poor a livelihood is also the system that is destroying the earth, and therefore denies them the possibility of ever having a livelihood.”

- [Center for Ecozoic Living and Learning, \(CELL\)](#) Philippines, founded 1998.

Take Action

Learn more about poverty
www.povertyusa.org

Identify ways you can combat poverty, restore dignity to the excluded, and protect creation in your community.
www.catholiccharitiesusa.org

Join peoples of faith in urging global leaders to take strong action at the U.N. Climate Talks in Paris in December, 2015.
www.ourvoices.net

Chapter Five

Lines of Approach and Action

There are five major paths of dialogue to counter the ecological crisis.



1. **Interdependence means “one world with a common plan.”** (#164)
A global economy based on fossil fuels must be replaced without delay by renewable energy. We urgently need a “true world political authority” to protect the environment.
2. **National and local policies need to promote best practices,** “modify consumption,” develop “an economy of waste disposal and recycling,” promote “renewable energy,” “small producers” and preserve “local ecosystems.” (#180)
3. **“Affected communities need “a special place at the table.”** (#183)
Decision-making needs transparency and dialogue to access the environmental impact of ventures and projects during the planning process. (#190)
4. **Politics and economy need to join together,** rather than blaming each other, to serve human life. We need to reject the notion that “problems can be solved simply by an increase in the profits of companies or individuals.”
5. **Religion and science need to help each other.** Religion offers ethical and spiritual resources that science lacks when explaining reality. “The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good.” (#201)

Questions:

- What is my understand of “integral ecology”?
- What responsibilities do I have to creation?
- What responsibilities do I have to the poor, to future generations?
- How is poverty an environmental issue?



“Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan. Yet the same ingenuity which has brought about enormous technological progress has so far proved incapable of finding effective ways of dealing with grave environmental and social problems worldwide. A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries.” (#164)

Take Action

Identify ways you can include solidarity with the poor and vulnerable and the environment in the decisions you make with your family and your community.

Urge Congress to ensure the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal defends workers’ rights and dignity, protects the environment, and promotes justice and peace throughout the world.

<http://bit.ly/JustTradeAgreements>

Columban Response to this Lived Experience

“While all people are impacted by climate change, our global sisters and brothers living in poverty and at the margins of society are the most vulnerable and least able to adapt, yet they have contributed the least to the greenhouse gas emissions causing global warming. We believe countries and industries which have contributed most to climate change have a responsibility to reduce carbon emissions through policy change which prioritizes clean, non-fossil fuel technologies, and make it available to the Global South.”

- [Columban Society Statement on Climate Change](#), 2014.

“The environmental and economic challenges we face often appear insurmountable. We can choose to give up in frustration, blame others, or wait for the Church or government to start something. Or, like Jesus and the disciples, we can go off in twos and threes and proclaim the Kingdom of God by living simply, creatively, and in solidarity with those in most need.”

- Fr. Bill Morton, SSC, [The Renovation of the Columban Mission Center](#)

Chapter Six

Ecological Education and Spirituality

Many things have to change, but it is “**we human beings above all who need to change.**” and to remember “our common origin,” “our mutual belonging,” and “a future to be shared with everyone.” (#202) People tend to feel free only because they are free to consume. This breeds selfishness and greed, a disregard for the common good, and increasing inequality that leads to social unrest and mutual destruction. But there is hope!

Ecological education calls us to “a new ecological sensitivity” and “ecological conversion,” characterized by a “generous spirit.” (#209) Like St. Francis, our “encounter with Jesus Christ” becomes evident on our “relationship with the world.” “Our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue.” (#217) The Christian life calls us to “**a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle.**” (#222) Love, “overflowing with small gestures of mutual care,” sets before us the ideal of “**a civilization of love.**” “We need one another,” and “we have a shared responsibility for others and for the world.” (#229) God offers light and strength “beyond the sun.” With God, we can care for our common home.

Questions:

- In what ways am I free?
- In what ways am I bound?
- What ways can I change my lifestyle to reflect my relationship with God?
- What are steps that I can take to live out the call for ecological conversion?



“In calling to mind the figure of Saint Francis of Assisi, we come to realize that a healthy relationship with creation is one dimension of overall personal conversion, which entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures, and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change.” (#218)

Columban Response to this Lived Experience

“We believe that our missionary vocation contains within it an ecological vocation to be in solidarity with the poor and with Creation... Columbans strive to help society and particularly the Catholic Church understand the magnitude of the climate change issue and its consequences... Columbans support sustainable economic models that value the dignity of all life... We believe that the natural world by its relational and regenerative nature can teach us how to live sustainably... We join with people of other faith traditions in a spirit of respectful dialogue and prophetic witness, knowing that climate change has universal impacts... As a Society we are called upon to use the resources entrusted to us for the life of the world... Our option for the poor and Creation invites us to live intentionally in relationship with communities and the natural world that are most vulnerable.”

- [Columban Creation Covenant](#), 2014.

“One effective way of educating people would be through a traditional Church process called a synod.... A synod on the environment would involve study, robust sharing, prayer, and liturgical celebrations.”

- Sean McDonagh, SSC (2015, June 19 [blogpost](#))



Take Action

Create a personal creation covenant about guidelines for:

- Water use
- Food consumption and waste
- Living space
- Use of technology
- Travel
- Personal time
- Financial investing
- Consumer purchases

Educate yourself:

U.S.: [To Care for the Earth](#)

Philippines: [CELL](#)

Australia: [Faith Ecology Network](#)

Ireland: [Columban Ecological Institute](#)



Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

We are the national advocacy office for the U.S. region of the Missionary Society of St. Columban. The office serves as the line of communication between Columban missionaries in 15 countries around the world and policy makers in Washington, D.C.

Our four social justice priorities are:

- Environmental Justice
- Migration
- Economic Justice
- Peace & Conflict Transformation

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Prayer for Our Earth

All powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.

- Concluding prayer of *Laudato Si'* to be shared "with all who believe in a God who is the all-powerful Creator."

A Christian Prayer in Union with Creation

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;
they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender
love.
Praise be to you!
Son of God, Jesus,
through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,
you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.
Today you are alive in every creature in your risen glory.
Praise be to you!
Holy Spirit, by your light
you guide this world towards the Father's love
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.
You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good.
Praise be to you!
Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.

Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.
God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you! Amen.

- Concluding prayer of *Laudato Si'* for Christians to "take up the commitment to creation set before us by the Gospel of Jesus."

USCMA Executive Director Search

The United States Catholic Mission Association seeks an Executive Director who will work with the board and staff to invite the U.S. Catholic Church to a deeper witnessing of and participation in the universal call to mission.

Key Responsibilities:

- With the Board of Directors, develop strategic vision and plan with regular evaluation;
- Provide leadership and direction of staff for daily operations;
- Invite and grow the Membership in USCMA programming;
- Represent the Association at national and international functions of the Church;
- Develop new and cultivate existing relationships with partner organizations and dioceses;
- Responsible for the fiscal health of the Association

Requirements:

- Master's degree or higher. Preferred areas of studies are theology, missiology, cross-cultural studies, or Church/non-profit leadership.
- Minimum of 5-8 years mission and/or cross-cultural experience either in the U.S. or internationally;
- Minimum of 5-8 years of leadership experience in the Catholic Church;
- Knowledge of Catholic Church's teachings, structures, and organizations;
- Bilingual English-Spanish or English-French highly desirable;
- Excellent verbal and written skills including public speaking;
- Knowledge of standard Microsoft Office programs;
- Availability to travel and work nights and weekends.

For consideration, please submit a letter of application, Curriculum vitae or resume, salary requirements and contact information for references to Search Committee, via e-mail to uscmasearch@uscatholicmission.org.

For more opportunities, go to www.uscatholicmission.org/job-opportunities

Do you have a job opportunity that you would like to share with USCMA Members?
Send an email to us at uscma@uscatholicmission.org
and we will be happy to post it online and in our publications.

Job Opportunities

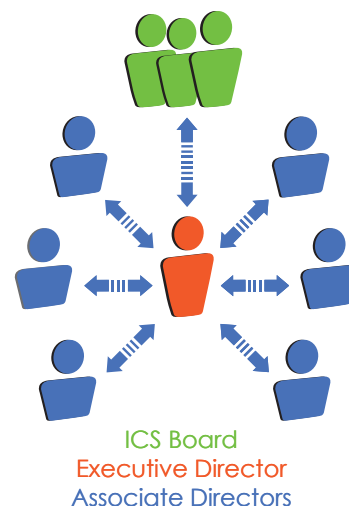
ICS SHARED DIRECTORATE

Based on our past seven years experience, we envision a new way of directing Intercultural Consultation Services (ICS) as a Shared Directorate with the division of work in three interactive areas:

ICS BOARD — MISSION and VISION of ICS,

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR — ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT,

ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS — PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT,
SCHEDULING, PROGRAMMING,
TRAINING DESIGN AND FACILITATION.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Executive Director will handle all organizational detail for ICS, such as collaboration with the ICS Board, development needs, and master calendar oversight; some travel would be required. The National Office location could be the preference of this Director. It is proposed that this position be $\frac{3}{4}$ time.

The four to six Associate Directors will handle design and facilitation of ICS program and training offerings both in the U.S. and international settings. Each Associate Director will work on a part-time basis.

It is anticipated that the Executive Director and the Associate Directors will provide coordinated marketing of ICS programs and recruitment of participants.

To maintain the quality of ICS programs, it is expected that the Associate Directors will have had and processed their own cross-cultural experience, be trained in a specialty field, be qualified as an intercultural trainer, and practiced group design and facilitation.

Planning for task delineation, individual compensation, and coordination of work will arise from collaboration between the principals. The present ICS Executive Director will help facilitate this process during the first/second year of the ICS Shared Directorate.

IMPACT AND BENEFITS OF SHARED DIRECTORATE

The ICS Shared Directorate will be programmatically flexible, financially sustainable and provide many other positive benefits:

- The outreach and effectiveness of ICS will be greatly extended by having several qualified programmers in different geographical areas
- **A greater global outreach by having qualified staff available at different times and places**
- This new model can be more creative and collaborative in offering a broader curriculum and expertise
- Greater use of social media technology to promote ICS programs **as well as incorporating such technology in designing materials**
- The 'public image of ICS' will be extended to many more locales through multiple directors
- Potential for bilingual directors to provide bilingual programming when requested
- Wider and more diverse programming lead to greater financial stability.

NEXT STEPS

- Continue to disseminate this document to constituencies connected to ICS (Alumnae of ICS, Sending Groups, LCWR, CMSWR, CMSM, USCMA, US Catholic Bishops, and other groups and interested persons)
- Organize an Ad Hoc Committee with ICS Board Members and other persons to further develop and implement the Shared Directorate
- Organize small invitational events to share the new ICS model with interested persons
- Contact interested individuals for the different positions, i.e. Executive Director and Associate Directors.

We request your comments and collaboration to further shape this proposal with ICS.

Send your thoughts to Kathryn Pierce IHM, Executive Director at: ktierce1@juno.com or (313) 341-4841 (office).

2014 USCMA Annual Conference Resources

Are you looking to learn more about what happened at this year's USCMA Conference- *Gospel Justice: A Living Challenge for the Church in Mission*?

The *Reflection Guide for the 2014 Annual Conference, Gospel Justice: A Living Challenge for the Church in Mission* is now available online for all USCMA members, conference participants and those interested in mission promotion and education. The Reflection Guide includes the prayers, major addresses, and pictures from the 2014 USCMA Conference. It is our hope that the Reflection Guide for the USCMA 2014 Annual Conference will help you to consider the relationship between mission and working for justice as an integral component of our response to our baptismal promise. [Click here to download your copy of the reflection guide](#) or go to our website.



The 2014 USCMA Conference DVD set is available for **\$17.50 (shipping included)** and can be ordered using the “[donate today](#)” button on our webpage. Simply put 2014 USCMA Conference DVD in the comment section and we will mail you your DVD when it comes in.

If you have any questions, please contact USCMA's Associate Director, [Stephen Scott](#).

Study Guide to the Aparecida Document

In his latest Papal Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis speaks about the importance of the Aparecida Document published by CELAM, of which Pope Francis was a member before his election.

The Study Guide is in both English and Spanish (offered in a bilingual edition) and is perfect for group discussions, parish trainings and further study into what it means to be a missionary.

The Study Guide for use with the Aparecida Document is only **\$10.00 plus shipping**. To order your copy, contact our office staff at uscma@uscatholicmission.org or call us at (202) 832-3112.

USCMA Annual Conference Resources

Are you looking to learn more about what happened at previous USCMA Conferences?

The USCMA office has DVDs of previous USCMA Conferences. The DVDs contain Keynote presentations and Panel discussions. Here are some of the Mission Conference DVDs that we currently have available:

- 2013: **Social Media: A New Language for Mission**
- 2012: **Forging New Paths- Interreligious Dialogue**
- 2009: **Behold, I Create a New Heaven and a New Earth... Seeing Mission with New Eyes**
- 2008: **Mission: A Journey of Hope**
- 2007: **“Are Not Our Hearts Burning?”**

We also have DVDs of the Keynotes from:
Mission Congress 2010- God's Mission, Many Faces: A Portrait of US Catholics in Mission

To order, please email the USCMA staff
uscma@uscatholicmission.org.

All prices include USPS Media Mail shipping cost.



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**Please remember the
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CAMPAIGN**



In Jesus' command to "go forth", we see the scenarios and ever-present new challenges of the Church's evangelizing mission. All her members are called to proclaim the Gospel by their witness of life.

Pope Francis, Message for World Mission Day 2015

Images: Stephen Scott, USCMA's Associate Director, with missionaries in Bolivia (above). Bardara Wheeler, Development Coordinator, with missionaries in Honduras (right).

