

THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH

One Family in Mission

"In the movie, the Dead Poet's Society, an English teacher challenged his students to live their lives with passion. He had them rip out from their poetry books the rules of poetry, not because the rules were bad, but because he wanted them to focus on the passion and soul of the poetry. He then invited all the boys to get out of their seats and stand on their desks so that they could see differently; to see above the clutter and above the noise, to see different horizons, a different perspective, and a wider and broader view - then seize it. The teacher constantly shouted out to his students, "carpe diem" - seize the day. Seize the truth of what really matters. Stand on the desk and see differently!

Isn't this true of our Catholic faith? Our faith is not primarily a collection of rules or a series of rituals but rather a way of seeing and being. But our way of seeing, our visions, are never for the sake of themselves. Our seeing is linked to mission. Seeing is never an end in itself, for we are given to see in order that others might see.

Abraham's call to pick up and go to an unknown place in his old age was for the sake of future generations. Moses' experience with the burning bush occurs for the sake of his people's liberation. Isaiah is given a vision of God's glory only that he might hear the divine voice ask: "whom shall I send?" Elijah heard God's voice in the wind so that others might listen. Paul is given a terrifying vision of the Christ he was persecuting in order that he might be sent forth to the Gentiles. Peter sees Jesus as the Messiah and is given the keys of the Church.

And so it is with you and me. Each one of us has a mission handed to us by someone else - so we can hand it to another.

When I was a young boy, I spent a lot of time with my Aunt Margaret, my mother's sister. She was single with no children and like a second mother to me. I often had tea with her. I can still hear the whistle of the tea kettle coming from the old coal stove and the simple kitchen table, and always in the corner of that table was the Maryknoll magazine and literature on the Propagation of Faith. Even though my Aunt and I would sit at the table over tea and talk, she was really standing on the table because she saw beyond her small world. She saw a need in the world and tried to meet that need in her own small way through the Propagation of Faith.

Prayer, insight, mission - who are the missionaries of the world? We are. All of us who listen with the ears of our souls and stand-up - stand up on the desk or the kitchen table so we can see God's creation, uncluttered, with the eyes of the soul. In Biblical times and right here and now, God uses unlikely people in unusual circumstances to accomplish His mission. He uses us!

As the director of the Pontifical Mission Societies for the past year, I am seeing more clearly because others have helped me to see - others like my Mother and Aunt, my co-missionaries in the office, Sharon and Miriam. Perhaps that is our mission - to help one another see each of us as made in the image and likeness of God. We are then one with the divine power and can therefore let go of fear and live in radical trust with a passion that gives our lives meaning.

If you and I are asked, "What do we want to see?" we can answer: I want to see over and beyond the borders and the boundaries and the races and the languages, to see the value and primacy of relationships. I want to see the people - the rich, the poor, the disadvantaged, the forgotten and the lost - whom I normally overlook. I want to see my own faults and spiritual needs. I want to see the signs of God's love for me, the little "coincidences" in life that give hints of God's presence. I want to see God's image in everyone. I want to see a faith that has passion and tells me that seeing is not believing - believing is seeing.

In the ceremony for my deaconate ordination, the Bishop said:

*Believe what you read
Preach what you believe
Practice what you preach*

This is my challenge. I want to see a world that, because of my small ways, others who do not know Jesus will come to know him through me.

- **Deacon Edward T. Kelly, Diocesan Director**

"The happiness you have a right to enjoy has a name and a face: it is Jesus of Nazareth, hidden in the Eucharist."

- **Pope Benedict XVI**



A Word from our National Director

This past spring I traveled to Central America to visit some Franciscan Sisters in El Salvador, where I was able to see first-hand both the effects of a long and bloody civil war and the remnants of a recent devastating earthquake. It also gave me a wonderful vantage point to feel the power and hope brought to so many believers through their faith in Jesus.

Many families suffered horribly during the civil war; almost everyone lost some members of their families. People lived in desperate fear, worrying whether soldiers would storm their homes in the middle of the night or if they might be pressed into service.

But throughout the ordeal they managed to endure because of their simple yet profound faith.

On my journey, I made a stop one Sunday afternoon in a village which had been mostly destroyed in an earthquake in 2001. There were three generations of faithful gathered to have catechism classes in their half-built modest chapel. The grandparents were instructing little ones, and all the older children were also helping in this role of evangelization. There was no priest for this dry and dusty village, but they would continue the tradition shared with each of them in Baptism - they would pass on the faith. It was the greatest gift they could give to their loved ones, in good times and in bad.

The lessons of the poor who suffer in times of war and poverty teach us a great lesson about the value of our own faith. We may, at times, take it for granted, but it is, we know, our most valuable possession - and we, too, are called to share it with others, especially with the very poor who are forced to endure great trials in time of war.



The Society for the Propagation of the Faith helps missionaries all over the world to bring hope to people who otherwise would have very little "good news" in their lives. But the Good News of Jesus can - and often does - conquer all.

Your prayers and generosity to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith are investments in making the world a better place by sharing with it the joy, hope - and, above all, peace - of Christ.

- **Monsignor John E. Kozar**