
MARYKNOLL

VOCATIONAL NEWSLETTER

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Winter Scene At Maryknoll NY

During these cold months there can be something very invigorating about cold breezes and the freshness of newly fallen snow. I find that Pope Francis often invigorates us with his words and brings freshness to the word – Mission. It has been 100 years since the first Maryknollers left the U.S. for mission assignments overseas. It all began in China and eventually spread throughout Asia, then to Latin America and finally Africa.

When we first arrive in these countries there is both excitement and some trepidation. We all wonder if we have what it takes to learn new languages, adapt to new cultures and establish good healthy relationships with the people. We are required to be patient with ourselves as we become once again like children. Prayer becomes paramount in our lives as we depend so much upon God and slowly grow and acculturate in these new settings. In the end it is so often the people in our host country who show us the face of Jesus through their hospitality and warm welcome. The transformation that takes place in us is awesome and is best described as grace. And that grace brings us so much happiness!

I hope you recognize how much you and so many others like you are needed today. The message of God's love for all people is so important. It needs to be preached not only in words but in the actions of our daily lives. Each of you is a messenger wherever you go and in whatever you do. But, you still need to take some steps in the direction that will fulfill the dreams that have brought you in contact with us. So, don't be stymied by the challenge. Rather, dream on and make the dream a reality!

As always we look forward to hearing from you: Fr. Mike (msnyder@maryknoll.org), Fr. Joe Donovan (jdonovan@maryknoll.org) and Mr. Greg Darr (gdarr@maryknoll.org)

Maryknoll Chicago Vocation Retreat

October 13 – 15, 2017



A Bike Ride Along Lake Shore Drive Chicago

From Friday October 13th to Sunday the 15th we welcomed men to our Initial Formation Residence in Chicago for a vocation retreat. They hailed from Washington State, Louisiana, Illinois, Michigan, Utah via Mexico City and Texas. The weekend was highlighted by prayer, celebration of the Mass, Eucharistic

Adoration, talks by a senior Maryknoll who has served in Korea and China, testimonies on Maryknoll spirituality from candidates and a tour of the Catholic Theological Union where they take their studies. Vocation ministers (Fr. Mike Snyder and Mr. Greg Darr) were available throughout the weekend to talk and answer questions.

The next vocation retreat will take place at Maryknoll headquarters in Ossining, NY during Holy Week with arrival on Wednesday evening March 28th and departure on Easter Sunday April 1st. Contact Fr. Mike Snyder at msnyder@maryknoll.org for further information!



Retreatants & Maryknoll Personnel At The Initial Formation Residence Chapel

MISSIONERS' CONTRIBUTIONS



In past newsletters, we asked Maryknoll Missioners some questions. What follows is a testimony from Maranda Miller, a 2017 graduate in nursing from St. John's/St. Benedict's University in Collegeville MN who has just completed two months of volunteer mission service with us in Kowak, Tanzania.

While words can't quite capture the vast array of experiences and emotions that I felt while in Kowak, I will do my best. Traveling alone as a young, female, English-speaking college graduate, I stared out the airplane window, partially questioning my sanity. I had absolutely no idea what to expect. I didn't know if anyone would speak English, if I would enjoy the food, or if I would be using the bush out back as a bathroom. Fortunately for me, Kowak ended up being far better than anything I could have imagined. As I maneuvered through the joys and challenges of each day, I had to full-heartedly trust that God would guide me through. While in Africa, I experienced some extreme highs. I looked at a crowd of 150 students with eager eyes, wanting to learn more about healthy; I saw sick and nearly lifeless children recover after receiving antibiotics and blood transfusions; and I helped welcome dozens of babies into the world. However, I also experienced some extreme lows. I watched corpses being carried out on motorcycles; woke up to the sobs of a family who had just lost a loved one; and I put my hands on the chest of a young child, praying for the rise and fall of a breath that would never come. While it's extremely difficult to process and reconcile everything that I have seen and experienced, there are some major takeaways that will forever shape the way I live my life. First and foremost, I have learned that when you commit your life to God, making yourself uncomfortable and vulnerable, He will always provide for you. When you stop relying on yourself and your own understanding, it allows God to do some pretty incredible things with your life. Surrendering to God does not result in a boring and mundane life, it allows for a life that is beautiful and exciting beyond imagine. A second takeaway, in relation to mission work specifically, is that when you are willing to give, you receive SO MUCH more in return. In choosing to give my time and energy, I gained valuable nursing skills. I attained a better understanding of poverty and how to advocate for those in need around the world. I received life-long friendships. I was showered with love and hospitality from complete strangers. I felt closer to God than I have in years. I left Africa in tears, thanking God for an opportunity that many people don't get to have. Tanzania has my heart and I can't wait to go back again someday. Asante Sana (thank you very much), Maryknoll!



MISSION REFLECTION

Escalator Lessons by Mr. Greg Darr

“Hatua kwa hatua” – “Step by step” in Kiswahili: As East Africans will occasionally remind frantically busy U.S. missionaries step by step is always the best way forward. But some steps are easier to take than others. Hardest among them are those that cross thresholds into the uncertain and the unknown, where a single simple step can require a profound act of faith.

It certainly took an act of faith for me to step outside the comfort zone of my U.S. culture and settle in to an unfamiliar East African slum as a Maryknoll missionary knowing that this was going to be my home for the next few years. Looking back now, I can say that this act of faith was not something that arose from my own abilities but was, instead, something that others extended to me – hands of welcome, hands of hospitality and hands of support given so generously by my poor neighbors who kept me, at times, from sinking into loneliness, isolation and even despair. It was not my act of faith that kept me afloat – it was the faith of others in me.

But I remember, in particular, an East African family who taught me something special about the courage and faith needed in taking the kinds of steps we often take for granted.

Daudi and his wife Beatrice (not their real names) were two East African refugees who, along with their two children, were granted asylum in the U.S. when it became clear that their lives were endangered in their homeland. Before leaving for America, Daudi and Beatrice asked me about the process through Nairobi’s airport since none of them had ever flown on a large plane before. As I explained how they would go through passport control and then up the escalator to the departure level where they would catch their plane, they stopped me and asked, “What is an escalator?”

I was surprised by the look of terror that darkened their faces when I explained that it was a kind of moving stairway. They wondered aloud in despair, “How can we ever go to the America? We don’t know how to climb moving stairways!” After a few awkward moments, Daudi then asked, “Where can we learn?” So, a few days later we went to the only other place that I knew of in Nairobi that had an escalator at the time – a shopping mall. There, we had “Escalator Lessons”.

After about half an hour of raw terror, nervousness and then, in the end, laughter, the family was ready to tackle the escalator at the airport on their own. It was Beatrice who explained to me what it was like for her to learn. She said that, if she was afraid of stepping onto one of the moving steps, the people behind her would be upset that she was blocking their way. And yet, if she was afraid of falling as the escalator neared its end, she would trip up people behind her and perhaps fall herself. So, I asked Beatrice, what enabled her to ride the escalator. She replied that she had to teach her feet confidence even while the rest of her remained afraid.

Months later, I stepped onto the same airport escalator that took Beatrice and her family to asylum in the U.S. -- steps for me that were among my first in a long journey “home”. Now, years later, I have the privilege of walking step by step with others who must muster their own courage and faith to step into the unknown as future missionaries. As Beatrice would tell them, “Teach your feet confidence, my friend.” Step by step, you will get there.

Missionary Formation in Maryknoll: Pastoral Formation within the Diverse Cultures in United States through Ministerial Work

Seminarian Matthew Sim Tzong Haur is a second year seminarian in the pre-theology program under the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Initial Formation Program. He is ethnically Chinese and comes from Singapore. He met Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers when he worked in Hong Kong, teaching Science and Mathematics in an elementary school. He was accepted in June 2016 and officially joined the initial formation program in Chicago in September 2016.

This is my second year in formation with Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers as a seminarian in Chicago. I am currently doing my philosophy and theology pre-requisites at Catholic Theological Union.

Besides intellectual formation, Maryknoll also forms us in many other areas. One of these areas is pastoral formation through ministerial involvement in the local community. Here at the Chicago Initial Formation House, the formation team believes that missions begin even at home – that we must be ready to cross over into the diversity of cultures already existing in the United States.

For my first year in formation, I managed to find ministerial work as a teacher assistant, at San Miguel School at the Back of the Yards. This middle school hosts students mainly of Hispanic background. It was my first time serving in a Hispanic community and it was a period of growth for me while journeying with them. The culture of this community has similarities with my Asian background in that they hold on to a very strong communal spirit. Yet, there are differences such as, they are very personal and they are very warm in their greetings.



The teachers and staff at San Miguel School greet the students daily one at a time before they start their lessons.

One of the enriching experiences I had was how the learning community reacted after some announcements of policies changes regarding immigration were made earlier this year. There was great solidarity among the people, and the teachers

encouraged the students to reflect on the sacred Scriptures to find peace and guidance in dealing with the situation. It was for me, an eye-opening experience, to how an institute can change the outlook of the challenges of life in the light of the Gospel, when the student-made banners started appearing along the hallways.



Posters made by students in response to the proposed changes in US immigration policies.

Now, in my second year of formation, I am serving the Chicago community in two different capacities. Through St. Thomas the Apostle parish I have been

trained as a Minister of Care. In this role, I visit the University of Chicago Hospital twice a week to offer companionship, prayers and communion services.

On the weekends, I serve as a youth minister at the Korean Martyrs Catholic Church. Here, I accompany the youths in their journey of faith through reflecting on the scriptures and developing projects for community service learning.

As a Minister of Care, I meet a great diversity of people at the hospital. People from different ethnic backgrounds, social standings and occupations all have their identities erased temporarily as they assume the role as a patient. Some of them have been there for a long time, others just for a couple of days for a check-up. In meeting these people, I am offered an opportunity to share the Eucharist with them. In our prayers together, we find peace in that Jesus accompanies us even when we are unable to attend Mass.

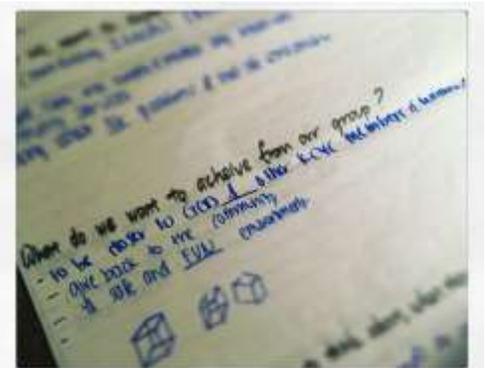
With the people I visit, I have experienced with them, their anxiety when they await a procedure, or the results of their recent tests. I am included in their joy when I visit people who have received news that they are ready to be discharged. But out of all these experiences, I enjoy most the peacefulness after they and their family receive communion and pray in silence in thanksgiving.



This is me, with the University of Chicago Hospital chaplain, Father Lukas.

On Sundays, I accompany Korean-American youths in their journey of faith. It is a privilege for me to be welcomed into a culture that is different from my Chinese-Singaporean background. Through this opportunity to serve them, I am given the chance to experience the great hospitality of the Korean culture. I learned from them a more solemn and serene manner of encountering the liturgy. I encounter familiar presentation symbols in their worship that I can identify with: deep bows, longer silent pauses in the transitions during the liturgy and the holding of hands during prayers.

The Korean-American youths are very inclusive. They guide me in understanding their cultural practices and spirituality, while I share my experiences in hope that they will enrich their perspectives. This is the first time I am working with this age level (grade 9 – 12). Our interaction is refreshing for me as they explain to me their experiences in the American middle and high school system. I also recently learned from them the anxiety of college application. These mature youths share their perspectives of how the Scriptures can advise our day-to-day encounters. During our envisioning activity, their desire to enter into a deeper relationship with God,



The youth share their vision of what they want to achieve from being part of the group.



Youth group on their Reflecting with God's Creations trip at the Japanese Garden in Chicago Botanical Garden.

and at the same time, to develop deeper bonds within their community gave me great joy in the knowledge that even at their age, they understood the *Golden Rule* (Mark 12: 30 – 31) of our faith.

I pray daily for God's continual inspiration to accompany the people in my ministries. I humbly ask for your prayers, for the different groups of people that I am accompanying, and I especially ask for your prayers that the Holy Spirit will guide me to be an impactful instrument of God, for these people I meet in my ministry.

**Pope Francis: "Being Christian
means being missionary"
Catholic News Service
10/23/2017**



The Pope told visitors in the square, "It is my intention to promote an extraordinary missionary month in October 2019 with the goal of increasing the passion for the church's evangelizing activity 'ad gentes,'" a phrase meaning "to the nations" and used to describe missionary activity focused on people who still have not heard the Gospel.

The special missionary month will coincide with the centennial of a major document on missionary activity issued by Pope Benedict XV. "In 1919, in the wake of a tragic global conflict (World War I) that he himself called a 'useless slaughter,' the Pope (Benedict XV) recognized the need for a more evangelical approach to missionary work in the world, so that it would be purified of any colonial overtones and kept far away from the nationalistic and expansionistic aims that had proved so disastrous," Pope Francis wrote.

The document, and the Second Vatican Council 50 years later, emphasized how missionary activity is essential to the life of the church, Pope Francis said. And St. John Paul II noted how Christians' mission to spread the Gospel could be seen as having just begun.

To be Christian is to be missionary, he insisted. It "can no longer be enough" simply to try to keep one's parish or diocese going... Let us not fear to undertake, with trust in God and great courage, a missionary option capable of transforming everything, so that the church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation," the Pope wrote.

Pope Francis prayed that the centennial of Pope Benedict's document and the extraordinary mission month would "serve as an incentive to combat the recurring temptation lurking beneath every form of ecclesial introversion, self-referential retreat into comfort zones, pastoral pessimism and sterile nostalgia for the past."



Fr. Joe Thaler In Service To God's Mission Among The People Of Nepal

MaryknollSociety.org/Vocations