

MISSION VISIONS

Unfolding the Mystery

By Fr. Peter Ciuciulla, mccj

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE OF CATHOLIC LIFE

First evangelization – a simple term for those of us who are familiar with it. But when I used it in conversation with a friend of mine recently, she heard it as “First, evangelization.” Hmm. Let’s chat about this for a bit.

In the traditional sense, first evangelization means to carry the Good News of salvation to places where it has never been heard. However, experience is the best teacher, and 12 years as a Comboni Missionary in Chad, Africa, helped me form a new perspective.

I came to realize that evangelizing is helping people put a name to that Someone they already know in their hearts exists. It’s the act of unfolding the Mystery they feel within themselves.

Jesus teaches us by his day-to-day life that we’re supposed to live out the Message with and among His people. He lets us know that evangelization’s an ongoing process. It includes the building of trust, relationships, and collaboration. I followed His example.

Like Jesus, I shared space, ideas, work, and tears. After a while, people start to wonder – what prompted this guy to come to us, to stay with us, to play and work and suffer with us? That, I came to understand, is the Moment of the Spirit. Time for the Jesus story!

When their curiosity peaks – Jesus went through suffering like us? He chose to suffer because He wanted to share with us? He died for us? If God becomes a man and goes through all of this just for us, then we must have value. – transformation takes place.

People learn a different way to view themselves and their situations. Sure, they still suffer, they still need help, but now they’re empowered by the Good News. They’re no longer passive. They first do whatever is within their means to help themselves, then they ask for outside assistance.

But even the asking is different. “Help me, please, but don’t make me dependent on you. Help me in a way that will free me from you.”

Committed, ongoing missionary interaction with people strengthens and validates their newfound self-value. For example, I took part in the formation of our first parish council. People learned and accepted that they had a voice in decision making.

I witnessed the birth and growth of small groups that met regularly to discuss the happenings of each week. People were free to talk about anything they wanted. It might be a sick child, a problem with livestock, or the need to improve road conditions. They discussed problems, but also how they could solve them.

One of my first experiences in Chad was to find my parishioners standing in long lines every morning, waiting to ask for money. They were trying to alleviate their poverty in a learned way that had worked for them in the past. I didn’t judge them, or blame them, but I fought from the beginning to free them from this dependency.

I met lots of opposition but eventually – success. One man in particular gave me an ongoing battle.

After a few years, though, this “sworn enemy” came to me and said, “Thank you, Father. Thank you for suffering to make me a free man.”

That freedom took root in him when he realized he was valuable to the God who became one with human beings. My humble part was being there day to day, working and waiting as the Mystery began to unfold.

So maybe it is “First, evangelization” through active waiting for the right moment and then – first evangelization. My friend’s comma makes sense!

Editor’s Note: Father Peter Ciuciulla, mccj, is Mission Director of the North American Province of the Comboni Missionaries, a worldwide religious institute founded by St. Daniel Comboni to carry the Gospel to “the world’s poorest and most abandoned people.” “Mission Visions” is a monthly column by the Comboni Missionaries to create greater awareness of the worldwide mission work of the church. Visit www.ComboniMissionaries.org



Father Peter Ciuciulla, mccj

CHARITY CONNECTIONS:

To help the people who live in southern and western Colorado live whole and healthy lives.

Predatory lending can devastate a family’s finances

PUEBLO - The phrase “predatory lending” is becoming more and more familiar to people living in Colorado. Predatory lending covers a broad range of unethical real estate practices; and generally it refers to any abusive or deceptive action by the lender to the borrower. Over inflated home appraisals is one of the increasingly common predatory lending practices.

Deanna Kirby knows first hand, how an over inflated loan can devastate your pocketbook and threaten what many people consider their largest financial asset – their home.

Deanna bought her home in 1972. A single mother, she always held at least two jobs and worked hard to meet expenses. On a couple of occasions she refinanced her home but was always able to meet her payment obligations.

In 2001, however, her life took an unexpected turn. Deanna had suffered from severe sleep apnea for several years, but her condition finally deteriorated to the point where surgery was inevitable. Over the course of several months doctors struggled to ease her pain; Deanna had over 35 procedures performed in an effort to correct her condition. Finally she was referred to the medical staffs of Stanford University and UCLA where she continues to receive treatments.

During the course of this medical odyssey Deanna became unable to work, for the first time in her adult life. She lost her job, her health insurance tripled in cost and she still had medical bills to pay. In 2004 Deanna did what she had done before; she refinanced her house to cover the medical expenses she had accumulated. But this time, it was different. She wasn’t feeling well, she didn’t pay close attention to the paperwork and she didn’t have anyone who could review it for her. So she signed for an Adjustable Rate Mortgage. Once affordable, her mortgage has now climbed beyond her reach.

Three months in arrears, Deanna contacted CCDP’s Housing Counselor Coco Robinson. CoCo did some investigating and suspected that Deanna’s home was fraudulently appraised and recommended that Deanna obtain a new independent appraisal. Her loan

Colorado reported 5,392 foreclosures in March, making for the highest rate per household of any state, RealtyTrac, a provider of foreclosure listings. Of the Colorado foreclosures: -31%, or 1,648, were in the notification stage, where delinquent borrowers have the best chance to keep their property. -54%, or 2,894, were headed to auction, where outside investors can claim the property by paying off the mortgage. -16%, or 850 homes, were with lenders, who are often forced to sell for whatever they can get.

papers indicated the house’s value at \$114,000, but a new appraisal values the home at \$82,000.

An examination of the original appraisal documents reveals that the appraisal claims the house had new carpets (not true) new storm windows (not true) and lists the square footage much higher than the true square footage.

Her case has been reported to local, state and federal authorities. She has applied for relief funds from the National Community

Reinvestment coalition in Washington D.C. Deanna is not out of the woods; six months behind in her mortgage payments she still doesn’t know whether she will lose her home of thirty five years.

Deanna has some words for the wise: “Read before you sign”. And if you can’t read the documents or don’t understand them, find someone who does and make sure they are your advocate. Deanna is still fighting for her home but she is also concerned about all the other people who might be or become a victim of predatory lending practices. “I’ll do whatever I can to make sure it doesn’t happen to someone else. I refuse to be a victim.”

Deanna is not alone. Colorado has one of the highest foreclosure rates in the country and predatory lending practices drive that figure. In this issue of our newsletter you’ll find more information about how you can protect yourself from predatory lenders.

Take time to educate yourself. Share the information with prospective new homebuyers. If you live near Pueblo you can participate in our Homebuyer Education Classes. If you live outside the area, call us and we will help you find a class near you. According to CoCo Robinson, CCDP’s Housing Counselor, “all mortgage holders can benefit from a Home Buyer Education Class”.

And if you think you have been a victim of predatory lending practices, call our office for information and help at 719-544-4233 or 1-800-544-4215.

Sincerely,

Jayne Mazur
Executive Director



Diocesan Youth Council to visit, assess programs

“Young Pilgrims...the Church needs your energies, your enthusiasm, your youthful ideals...”

Pope John Paul II, World Youth Day- Denver

PUEBLO- Members of the Diocesan Youth Council are enthusiastic about their upcoming visits with the Youth Ministers, teachers, and volunteers working with youth in the parish communities of the diocese.

“Over the past decades the Church in the United States has been greatly enriched by the renewal of ministry with adolescents. Our newly formed Diocesan Council has completed it’s formation of goals, mission statements, bylaws and structure,” said Janet Johnson, “The Diocesan Youth Council is eager to begin a new phase of developing processes to network the folks working with the youth of our diocese!”

Teams of Youth Council members will travel in May and June to each deanery in the diocese and through the arrangements of the deanery coordinators visit with the adult youth leaders.

“The council members are hoping to hear of the ‘best practices’ of the parish youth groups and gather a list of needs from those working with youth...” said Johnson.

The June meeting of the Diocesan Youth Council will be spent collating the information and working toward responding to the needs of the Youth Ministers.

“The vision is to be able to develop guidelines, resources, and networking systems that will help the growth and development of our ministries with adolescents,” she said.



Bishop Robert J. Shaheen, head of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, a Maronite diocese that includes Colorado, uses incense during a March 18 dedication Mass at St. Rafka Maronite Church in Lakewood, Colo. St. Rafka is the first Maronite Catholic church in Colorado.

CNS photo/James Baca, Denver Catholic Register

Maronite community dedicates first church in Colorado

LAKEWOOD, Colo. (CNS) — After 33 years of longing and work by the Maronite Catholic community, the first Maronite church in Colorado was dedicated March 18. Bishop Robert J. Shaheen, head of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon — a Maronite diocese that includes Colorado — dedicated St. Rafka Maronite Church in Lakewood in a joyous midmorning celebration.

Based in Lebanon, the Maronite church is an Eastern Catholic church in communion with Rome; it shares belief in the seven sacraments and the primacy of the pope. The local Maronites are a congregation of about 50 families comprised primarily of Middle Eastern immigrants, some American-born Lebanese and others.

The Mass was celebrated in the traditional Maronite combination of English, Arabic and Syriac — a derivative of Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke.

St. Rafka, the Lebanese Maronite nun for whom the church is named, is revered for enduring great suffering with grace and infectious joy in Christ. She was canonized in 2001.

