MISSION CONGRESS 2010
Celebrating the Many Faces in God’s Mission

1. Who were we?
Four hundred of us gathered in congress in Albuquerque. Many of the groups who have annual meetings, like us of USCMA, brought their membership to the congress. Overwhelmingly, the gathering was lay, was balanced across all the adult age cohorts, had a good gender mix, had good familiarity with languages, especially Spanish. Twenty two of us were bishops and one was a cardinal. Some of us were lifetime missionaries, and many brought short-term mission experience; a lot of us were involved with contributing to our families. Three of our number had important messages for the whole congress; others came with fifteen specialized discussions. Forty organizations or institutions came to exhibit and offer services. And a buoyant local community of Catholics honored this congress, provided support for worship, and welcomed the congress to its Sunday Eucharist.

2. What brought us together?
Simply, more of us are able to take a bigger share in God’s Mission. A lot has been happening in the consciousness of Catholics in the USA about mission. Yes, up until Vatican II, mission was, usually, a life-long calling for a professional (a priest or a religious) who left his or her culture to provide ministry and witness in another culture needy of Catholic presence. Vatican II helped the church see Baptism as the beginning of mission, and the decades since the Council have seen an explosion of new ministries done by newer groups in the church, many with a strong social justice concern. Evangelism is growing, and there are new and exciting movements in Catholicism, including new peoples from Asia, Africa, and Hispanic America. At base, it is all God’s mission, but it is being shared more fully and widely in the entire community. These broad trends have made Congresses a more urgently responsive place to collect the latest elements of what God is doing.

3. What did we talk about?
Mission is all about shared understanding and experience of the work of God, the call of God, and the people and communities who respond. That means that every Baptized person has the capacity to undertake mission, but there is a deep need for communicating this with fellow Christians in a community setting. So, the Congress spent a lot of time listening to important witnesses and to encouraging every person in attendance to tell his or her story. The keynotes provided witness in a public way, the small groups (called “home communities”) provided more intimate venues for mutual respect and a deep appreciation of God’s mission through individual effort, and the workshops provided some of the organizational and technical elements of mission and collaboration.

4. So, the “Keynotes,” what did they bring to the Congress?
Briefly, our three speakers gave a public testimony by means of theology, spirituality, mission practice and struggle, and personal faith.

Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez of Honduras communicated to the Congress the crystallized reflections of a 19-day process which the Bishops of Latin America recently undertook - the “Aparecida.” The Latin American Church hopes to re-engage itself as an evangelical and mission force for the building of community, faith, and ministries; he kept saying that the Church is again re-discovering that “…it all begins with Christ.” And, it is the entire community of the Baptized who keep the work of Christ going with special concern for inclusion of the marginalized, those alienated from the community, and for a forthright dialogue with civil society.

Continued on page 3

We pray:
That the peoples of the earth may open their doors to Christ and to his gospel of peace, brotherhood, and justice.

Pope Benedict XVI
Stephen Scott as our new Administrative Assistant. And we are grateful to both Sr. Janice McLaughlin, MM and Dr. David Suley who accepted to serve on our Board.

This year, we also saw the development of our new logo and a new website that captures best who we are as an Association of missioners. We also saw a stable financial account despite the economic crisis, and really thankful for the blessing that you have been to us in your continued support and partnership. USCMA has never been stronger in the past 5 years that I have been privileged to serve you as Executive Director.

And so with joyful hearts, we anticipate the blessings God has in store for us this coming year. There are already a lot of signs of good things happening. The entire staff enters this New Year with open heart and renewed enthusiasm, eager to serve you the best we can.

May you feel God’s overwhelming blessings this Christmas and may you experience even more this coming New Year. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all!

From the Board President
TERESITA GONZALEZ DELA MAZA

“Christian love is based on the common relationship of all, without exception…. The basis of the new belonging and acceptability is the recognition and acceptability of the common fatherhood of God…” Virgilio Elizondo

This Advent, sitting by the nativity, I had a conversation with a good Jewish friend. She thinks it’s funny my middle name is “de Jesús.” We had a conversation about how in Spanish speaking cultures, it is very normal to name children Jesús. I admit that it does sound rather strange to call someone by the same name as the Son of God, but curiously not so strange in Spanish. In fact, as a middle name, I happen to really like it. I am sure there is someone smarter than me, who has already reflected on this. But for me it connotes a feeling of closeness and of being “related” to Christ. Perhaps the practice is a reflection of a deep desire for closeness and familiarity with God.

To hear the name Jesús feels like a blessing. My uncle’s name is also Jesús. We believe he was given the name so regardless of what trouble he got into, it would be hard to forget he is a child of God. I suppose that’s how he survived childhood, since he was quite a handful! The name reminds me that we are a blessing, and that in each of us lives the opportunity for a “new creation.” In identifying with Jesus, we open ourselves to...
Cont’d from pg.1
Fr. Gary Riebe Estrella, SVD reminded the Congress of many realities for mission in the United States. In particular, he raised an issue which so frequently is just under the surface of our culture – an easy and distinctive American individualism which historically has benefited the church. Now, with new migrants who bring communitarian needs and capacities with them, the individualism needs to yield. Moreover, the church’s newer migrants are often poorer than their successful Catholic predecessor-migrants, and they may experience racial or ethnic discrimination; this cannot characterize the community and will require positive action.

Sister Janice McLaughlin, MM gave witness from a lifetime of work in Southern Africa. This witness has transformed over forty years to include now the Earth, the disgrace of human trafficking, and the ongoing development of Catholic laity as significant missionaries. Her constant metaphor was that when persons and communities get involved in mission, the world gets turned upside-down by God; injustice is addressed, the community struggles with its own weakness, and the individual grows through conflict or engagement.

Last, some of our participants from other parts of the world were able to react with our keynotes by video connection. Their solidarity and interest, as well as their concerns from the field, were able to enter into the heart of the Congress.

5. And what else was moving the Congress?
Some of the issues discussed in formal groups included Immigration Issues, Parishes in Mission, International Missionaries in the USA, Ecumenical Perspectives, Stewardship Challenges, Formation of Missionaries, Earth as a Mission Partner, and Spirituality. Other personal and professional dialogues helped the Congress to deepen the “portrait” of US Catholics in Mission it sought to paint.

For many, an award said it all. Dr. David J. Suley has worked for ten years at the USCCB as a senior staff person in its Home Mission Office; he is/well connected with mission efforts nationwide and internationally. He is an important bridge between the US Bishops and the missionary works of USA Catholicism. So, when the Catholic Volunteer Network presented him with their “Father George Mader Award,” the Congress was able to truly be grateful for the life and work of this dedicated lay person. More importantly, when Dr. David expressed gratitude to CVN, his heartfelt concern honored a wide global landscape of mission memory and love, the Catholic faith he lived by, his co-committed family, and the community of missionaries. Very few of the Congress members had dry eyes.

And what a fitting reminder and challenge of our call to promote mission and global solidarity when the United States Catholic Mission Association gave its Annual Mission Award to the Society of St. Columban Mission Education Program. The Columbans have long been recognized as leaders in the field of mission ad gentes. Their creativity and excellence in the materials they produce for the good of the Church in mission is truly a gift. As their Superior, Rev. Arturo Aguilar accepted the award he shared this award to another community in Pakistan whom he promised to send a financial contribution for their efforts in mission education. Truly a witness and a challenge for us to continue supporting and recognizing others who do so much in promoting God’s mission!

Last, a meeting concerned with mission will usually want to experience local culture and learn from those who minister within it. New Mexico was ready. Catholic for 400 years, the Congress learned of the disgrace of “conquistador” mission practice, its renewal in culture, especially Indian and Hispanic. A blend of deep natural faith and Catholic respect, of Marian affection, and of cultural inclusion as a norm for church life and practice got shared with the Congress by the local Archdiocese, Santa Fe. Something very positive happened to the Congress while the children’s choir led the “Alleluia” at the vigil Mass in St. Francis Basilica and Cathedral; their marimbas, their fine vocal training, their energy, their location in “La Conquistadora” chapel, their future – and more, got the entire community energized around Christ, God’s mission, and the challenges facing USA Catholicism.

6. So, What happens Now?
Mission Congress 2010 ended just two days prior to recent USA elections. Many voted Republican, and many simply did not vote. The “tea movement” influenced popular political culture deeply, and that activated problematic class and racial realities of the US which are always just under the surface of institutional life. Serious economic frustration, coupled with fear-tactics aimed at various “outsiders” or “clients,” deepened in the cultural imagination of many Americans. Some congress participants ask “What happens now?”

The 400 persons who took part in the Mission Congress and examined the “…many faces of mission” experienced themselves as active responders to the Call of God who is the primary Person on Mission, epitomized in the reality of Jesus Christ. They expect to work and live in some communitarian way, with some preference for helping the church to deeply activate its discipleship and witness. One of us asked, “God is definitely on mission, but will God find a church to keep it going?”

The work of God continues, and the Congress members live in active and committed hope that the church will be the true and just community which remains responsive to God’s own mission and invitation. ♦♦♦

Sign up to receive the Mission Update electronically!
Email us at:
uscma@uscatholicmission.org

Go Green

Winter 2010

United States Catholic Mission Association 3
God’s work of transformation. “Jesus introduces humanity to a new model of human existence…” says Virgilio Elizondo. The beauty of this challenge is striking. How do we live it as a church? How are we signs of God’s hope in the world at every moment, even here enjoying warm coffee, beside the nativity…. with my good Jewish friend.

Last October we gathered together as “relatives” as the U.S. Church in mission. Fr. Gary Riebe Estrella noted that we are made in the image and likeness of God, and as such we are called to relate to one another as a true community. Many faces came together to give us a rich portrait of who we are as a church in mission. The community of Santa Fe and Albuquerque welcomed us to reflect on this mission of God, and how this mission has “us”…a Church, to walk and spread the Gospel of hope, as Cardinal Rodriguez reminded us. In many ways, I felt called to a new “familial reality” as a Church. Clergy, religious, and laity, some people with names like John, Juan, Jean, Maria, Marie, Jesus and Jesús…we all reflected on this kinship, united by God’s immediate and clear call for healing. We agreed to continue to accompany the wounded and oppressed with our presence, our prayers and our actions, and to forge a community of joy to point tirelessly towards the Kingdom of God. We may not always look at things the same way, but at Christmas we remember we are all named Jesus. You and I are Galileans walking. Our hearts are open to the new creation. This Christmas I make a renewed commitment to work on that community relationship, as blessing, as child of God, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Although thanks is not what you seek, I still thank you and our loving God, for who you are and the blessing of your ministry. May the peace of the Lord instill Christmas joy in you and reflect in all that you do to serve others. ♦♦♦
Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I am very grateful to have been invited to address you in this important Mission Congress.

These lands which witnessed the first, intrepid spread of the gospel are a superb setting for reflecting on this essential dimension of the Church.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Document of Aparecida (DA) calls us forth to a MISSION on the continent “This Fifth Conference,” the Pope told us, “proposes to define ‘the great task of guarding and nourishing the faith of the people of God and also of reminding the people of this continent that by virtue of their baptism they are called to be disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ.”” – Benedict XVI (DA10).

Aparecida stresses that we are disciples and missionaries of Jesus. The relation that unites the disciple-missionary with Jesus is not first of all of an intellectual nature; rather, it is a strong commitment in faith to the person of Jesus.

The disciple is one who follows the Lord and makes a total commitment in faith to the person of Christ. This is made clear in the Document of Aparecida (DA 243) where it cites Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical Deus Caritas Est: “Being a Christian does not begin with an ethical decision or a great idea, but with an encounter … with a Person.” (DCE: 2).

Faith is also the key attribute of the missionary. Pope John Paul II tells us in Redemptoris Missio, Mission is an issue of faith, an accurate indicator of our faith in Christ and his love for us (RM 11). The conclusion is clear: we must nourish the faith of our flock. Our faith must be integral, that is, it should consist not just in believing in the truths of our faith, but in making a firm personal commitment to Christ. We should strengthen our faith as a loving, devoted commitment to the Lord.

Faith is a decision which commits the whole of one’s life. If we are believers, then we will concretize our faith and make it a believable testimony in our lives. That is what Saint Paul tells us: “You have made your faith manifest in works” (1 Th 1,3). We need to go to the very roots of our religious life, to its inner, originating principle, that is, to faith, in order to strengthen it, renew it, and confess it with our lives.

In the measure that our faith grows we will truly be disciples of the Lord and authentic missionaries, “witnesses of the light” and “prophets of the living God.”

Faith in Christ produces a vision of humankind which confirms human dignity, with its rights and duties, and gives them a new foundation, thereby promoting a more humane human history.

Pope Benedict XVI in his initial discourse at Aparecida stated: “More than anything else, these peoples long for the fullness of life which Christ has brought: ‘I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly’ (Jn 10,10).” With the help of this divine life, human existence also fully develops in all its personal, familial, social and cultural dimensions (DI 4). For this reason our faith has a social thrust. Our faith must demonstrate how effective it can be in transforming the life of society. Our Christian faith has the task of ordering temporal realities in accord with the Gospel.

The aim of evangelization is proclaiming or proposing Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, so that he is accepted through faith and baptism and so that faith itself becomes real through a Christian life in which the new commandment of love holds sway.

Thus the task of the Church is above all communicating the Christian faith, and it should do so by awakening it, nourishing it, consolidating it, and bringing it to maturity. Saint Peter had these words for the paralyzed man who was begging at the temple entrance: “I have neither silver or gold, but what I have I will give you: in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise and walk” (Acts 3,6). The Church, like Peter, must offer people faith, invite them to faith, encourage them to believe, and sustain them in their faith.

This is the meaning of MISSION which is proposed to us by the Document of Aparecida. As Church, we must evangelize; that is, we should awaken and foster the faith of our people, both in our ordinary pastoral work and as part of the New Evangelization.

In our ordinary pastoral work, we should strengthen the faith of practicing Christians and pastoral agents, whether they be priests, religious, or lay people.

In the New Evangelization, we should nourish the faith of non-practicing Catholics.

We should therefore undertake our MISSION as a Ministry of Faith which fortifies both the faith of our pastoral agents and that of those who have fallen away.

Faith arises only in the presence of the proclamation, the kerygma: “How are they to believe,” writes Saint Paul, speaking of faith in Christ, “if they have not heard of him? And how are they to hear of him, if no one preaches (Rom 10,14).”
And he concludes, “Faith, therefore, comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes from the preaching of Christ” (Rom 10, 17). Today we have need of such kerygmatic preaching in order to awaken faith where it does not exist or where it is dead. Faith comes, therefore, from hearing what is preached.

It is necessary that the basic proclamation be proposed in clear terms for everybody, keeping in mind that most of the faithful have not passed through a catechumenate or been educated in their faith.

We should recognize that some of the new ecclesial movements have provided many young people and adults with the opportunity to hear the kerygma and experience a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. We should ask ourselves whether the same process is taking place also in our parishes.

The proclamation of the kerygma should hold a key place in our Sunday preaching and in all the important moments of Christian life, such as death, sickness, the birth of a child, etc.

II. MISSION AS A CONSTITUTIVE FEATURE OF THE CHURCH

An essential objective of the Continental Mission is becoming aware that the missionary dimension is a constitutive aspect of the identity of the Church and of the disciple of Christ. Thus, with the kerygma as a foundation, the Church seeks to vitalize the encounter with the living Jesus Christ and to strengthen the sense of ecclesial belonging, so that baptized Christians move from being evangelized to being evangelizers and so that, through their witness and evangelizing activity, our Latin American and Caribbean peoples come to possess the fullness of life in Christ.

In order to reach that goal, all of us who are baptized are summoned to “begin again from Christ,” that is, to recognize and follow his presence with the same sense of realism and novelty, and with the same force of affection, persuasion, and hope that was experienced by his first disciples when they met him on the banks of the Jordan 2000 years ago – and that was experienced as well by the “Juan Diego’s” of the New World. Thanks especially to that encounter and that following, which soon become familiarity and communion overflowing with gratitude and joy, we are rescued from our sense of isolation and go forth to communicate to everybody the true life, joy, and hope which it has been our blessing to experience and enjoy.

The concluding document of the Fifth Conference in Aparecida, recalling the command of the Lord to go and make disciples of all nations, seeks to awaken a strong missionary impulse in the Church of Latin America and the Caribbean. This is without a doubt one of the principal conclusions of this great ecclesial gathering. This missionary impulse focuses on four practical consequences:

- taking the best possible advantage of this hour of grace;
- earnestly requesting and living a new Pentecost in every Christian community;
- awakening the missionary vocation and missionary activity in all baptized persons, and giving support and encouragement to all the vocations and ministries which the Holy Spirit gives to the disciples of Jesus Christ in the living communion of the Church;
- going forth to meet individuals, families, communities, and peoples, communicating and sharing with them the gift of our encounter with Christ, which has filled our lives with “meaning,” with truth and love, with joy and hope.

The Holy Spirit goes before us in this missionary path. For that reason we are confident that our witnessing to the Good News constitutes, in turn, a strong impulse for Church renewal and social transformation.

III. THE CONTINENTAL MISSION IN THE DOCUMENT OF APARECIDA

The Fifth Conference in Aparecida, recalling the command of the Lord to go and make disciples of all nations, was not content with offering us a Final Document, but decided rather to inspire a great missionary impulse in Latin American and the Caribbean with the aim of putting the Church into a permanent state of mission. This invitation involves all of us, and no community is exempt from such a mission.

Most importantly, this Fifth Conference invites us to rediscover our essential vocation as disciples of the Lord. And if we are disciples, we cannot help but be missionaries in the manner of Jesus. For that reason, undertaking the Great Continental Mission in the spirit of Aparecida gives us a great opportunity for:

- being missionary disciples of Jesus Christ on the basis of an experience of encountering the Lord personally and in community in order to begin again from Christ in the spirit of the first community in such a way that our people have life in Him.

To this end we desire to:

- foster a dynamic encounter with the Lord on the personal and community levels, an encounter which makes missionary disciples of everyone in the Church,
- form communities of faith and shared life which are the fruit of this hour of grace and the new Pentecost which we seek for the Church,
- encourage all the vocations and ministries which the Spirit grants to the disciples of Jesus Christ in the living communion of the Church,
- go forth to meet individual, families, communities, and peoples in order to communicate and share with them the gift of the encounter with Christ which has filled our lives with “meaning,” with truth and love, with joy and hope,
- be available for living a process of personal, pastoral, and ecclesial conversion so as to awaken the spirit of service in the whole Church,
- help transform society and human relations with the vital force that comes from the Gospel of the Lord.

1. What is the Continental Mission of Aparecida?

The Continental Mission is the Lord Jesus Christ’s sending (“mission”) of each one of us personally and as a member of the Church, a sending animated by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of sharing the Gospel of Life with all people, beginning with those who have fallen away from the community of the Church, but also offering the Gospel even to those who claim to be agnostics or
The Continental Mission is therefore:

- a missionary impulse of the whole Latin American and Caribbean Church;
- a missionary impulse whose main objective is putting the Church and all its members in a permanent state of mission. This means progressing from pastoral ministry which is simply preservative to pastoral ministry which is decidedly missionary; it means helping all of us in the Church to be committed servants of Life;
- a missionary impulse which uses the methods of Jesus himself: questioning, listening, and offering an experience of encounter with the Lord which fills our lives with joy and meaning.

This Mission means going forth from our churches, rather than remaining in them and hoping that people come; it means showing people that the Church is a welcoming home, a mother who goes forth to meet others, a permanent school of missionary communion.

- The Mission involves personal, pastoral, and ecclesial conversion and demands spiritual, pastoral, and also institutional reforms. That is to say, it requires profound changes in our ways of living the faith, of organizing our pastoral ministry, of administering the Church, and of serving the world. It requires us to leave aside the outmoded structures that hinder our forward movement.
- The Mission involves ecclesial and social transformation, for the Gospel imparts New Life to persons, communities, and cultures. Therefore the Continental Mission proposes to offer our evangelizing service to society itself.
- Finally, the Mission has an ecumenical character and does not seek to proselytize, for the Gospel spreads through an overflowing of joy and spiritual contagion, never by proselytizing. For that reason it is suggested that we invite our brothers and sisters of other Churches and Christian communions to accompany us in prayer during this missionary process; we are even encouraged, where possible, to take on some joint actions in solidarity with them.

2. What is the novelty of the Continental Mission?

We are frequently asked what is new about this “Great Continental Mission” and how does it differ from the “missions” that we have always had or the “general missions” which we have organized in the past and which have done good work.

This new missionary impulse differs from the “missions” we have customarily given in the following ways:

- it seeks to put the whole Church and all its members in a permanent state of mission; it therefore does not have a fixed limit but extends indefinitely in time;
- it is undertaken in dialogue with the world in which we live, and it seeks out interlocutors rather than “addresses” – that is, persons we speak with, rather than to – in order to share with them our experience of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ;
- its aim is to offer, share, and impart the Christ-Life as the Life of humankind, the Life of the world – both for persons and for society as a whole;
- it seeks to be carried out at all levels of the Church and not only at the parochial or territorial level; it seeks to involve parishes, schools, universities, monasteries, religious congregations, secular institutes, apostolic movements, and new communities;
- it is taking place in a cultural context in which the freshness of the Gospel is our best contribution to the integral development of each country.

In the words of Aparecida:

“The Church is called to rethink profoundly and to re-launch with fidelity and boldness its mission in the new circumstances of Latin America and the world. … It is a matter of confirming, renewing, and revitalizing the freshness of the Gospel as it has taken root in our history, and of doing so on the basis of a personal and communitarian encounter with Jesus Christ which produces disciples and missionaries. This undertaking depends less on great programs and structures than on new men and new women who incarnate that fresh tradition as disciples of Jesus Christ and missionaries of his Kingdom, as protagonists of new life for a Latin America that seeks to be recognized in the light and the strength of the Spirit” (DA 11).

In effect: “The pastoral ministry of the Church cannot prescind from the historical context in which its members live. Their lives are situated in very concrete socio-cultural contexts. These social and cultural transformations naturally represent great challenges for the Church in its mission of building up the Kingdom of God. That is why the Church must, in fidelity to the Holy Spirit who guides it, renew itself in ways that involve spiritual, pastoral, and also institutional reforms” (DA 367).

“This firm missionary commitment should pervade all the ecclesial structures and all the pastoral plans of the dioceses, parishes, religious communities, movements, and other institutions of the Church. No community should excuse itself from undertaking decisively, with all its might, the constant processes of missionary renovation and of leaving behind the outmoded structures which do not favor the transmission of the faith” (DA 365).

The Fathers of Aparecida are aware that, more than a message, what we possess is a living Person, the Lord Jesus, who is true Life for a world which looks for life in a thousand ways but fails to find it.

Chapter VII of Aparecida is profoundly inspiring, for it identifies the mission with the proclamation of life, the giving of life, the sharing of life, and the caring for life. There is rich meaning in the two laws which are found in Aparecida: the first is that life grows and develops in a community that is just and fraternal; the second is that life is the only reality which is attained and which matures in the degree to which it is surrendered in order to give life to others – that is to say, which increases even as it is shared.

This Mission also invites us explicitly to keep before our eyes always – and transversally – the poor and the excluded. In reality, an important aspect of the Continental Mission is the decision to highlight each year one sector of the suffering persons...
mentioned by the Fathers of Aparecida, especially the sick, the imprisoned, the drug-dependent, the migrants, the homeless, the shut-ins, etc.

3. Why are we undertaking the Continental Mission at this time?

Because we are in a time of grace: we are in the midst of great cultural transformations that we cannot undergo simply passively, much less reluctantly. Rather, we need to ask for the grace of a new Pentecost. We Christians are not dry leaves driven by the wind, nor are we people who submit passively to cultural changes; we are believers who are ready to create a new culture and become key actors on the stage of history.

We are the heirs of the first community, which had to bear witness to their faith in the Roman Empire; we are the heirs of the Church Fathers who knew how to inculturate their faith in societies that were diverse and sometimes adverse; we are the heirs of those mothers and fathers of the Latin American Church who have kept pace with the times in this Continent of Hope and of Life. We refer especially to the General Conferences of Río de Janeiro, Medellín, Puebla, and Santo Domingo, and to the Synod of the Americas and the Conference of Aparecida.

We need to go forth to encounter other persons and cultures, not with a defensive attitude, but with a proposal, convinced that the Spirit of the Lord is directing history, and persuaded as well that crises yield fruits when they are confronted and so transformed into opportunities.

The Fifth Conference, recalling the command to go forth and make disciples (cf. Mt 28,20), desires to awaken the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean for a great missionary drive.

- We cannot lose out on this hour of grace. We need a new Pentecost!
- We need to go out to encounter individuals, families, communities, and peoples so as to communicate and share with them the gift of our encounter with Christ, which has filled our lives with “meaning,” with truth and love, with joy and hope!
- We cannot sit back and wait passively in our churches. Rather, we must move out in all directions to proclaim that evil and death do not have the final word, that love is strong, that we have been liberated and rescued by the Lord’s paschal victory in history, that he calls us to become Church, and that he wants to increase the ranks of his disciples and missionaries for the building up of his Kingdom on our Continent.

4. Who are the agents responsible for carrying out the Continental Mission?

The agents responsible for carrying out the Mission are the missionary disciples, and that means everyone in the Church. This is not the time just for priests, or just for religious, or just for lay people: it is the time for the whole Church, a moment to be lived and offered in Church, that is, in communion.

- The Document of Aparecida does not have many chapters dedicated to the different church ministries and charisms, but it encourages us to promote them intensely and enthusiastically.
- This has surprised not a few people who were expecting a chapter on religious life and another on ministerial life or on lay life.
- This document confirms our vocations and charisms in all their richness and diversity and insists on the full participation of lay people, men and women, in the discernment, the decision-making, the planning, and the execution both of diocesan pastoral projects and especially of the pastoral endeavors of the Continental Mission.

So that this spirit of communion will flourish, our pastors warn us both about the danger of clericalism, which often impedes and obstructs pastoral growth, and about those lay people who take refuge in Church communities so that they are incapable of transforming by their witness the prevailing social life and structures. What we need today are missionary disciples in a Church that is ready for changing times.

Communion is the great prophecy that the Church can offer our times. That is why Pope John Paul II and the Document of Aparecida summon us to be “a home and a school of communion” through the variety and richness of vocations, charisms, and ministries which the Spirit awakens in us. The Church must be able to assist and encourage the development of all the gifts which the Lord bestows upon its members. For that reason, it is all the more urgent that we live a spirituality of communion.

5. Who are the principal interlocutors (“addressees”) of the Continental Mission?

In this Mission we prefer to speak of interlocutors rather than addressees or an audience, words which suggest passivity. To be an interlocutor, on the other hand, means having a great deal to say and share. We are not missionaries who “carry” the Truth, but rather we share the truth we have, always willing to give reasons for our hope, even while we learn from the truth we find in others. This was the style of Jesus, who marveled at the faith of the centurion and the Syro-Phoenician woman and who commended the charity of the Good Samaritan.

That is why there is much insistence on the evangelizing method of Jesus in his relations with the first disciples, with the Samaritan woman, with Zacchaeus, with the good thief, and so many others. The same method is evident also in his conflict with the Pharisees and the doctors of the law who “impose” heavy burdens that they themselves will not lift a finger to move.

Our first interlocutors should be those who have left the Church more because of our own attitudes than because of the contents of the faith. And in cases where the estrangement is due to the contents of the faith, the reason might be less the contents themselves than our inability to communicate them better, or it might be that they were communicated in a moralistic or overbearing manner and without dialogue. Our interlocutors should also include those who profess to be agnostic or atheist, with them we would want to share respectfully the joy of our faith.

The spirit of dialogue implies identity

- For that reason, dialogue should not be confused with a lack of convictions or of personality.
• The person who dialogues best is the one who has the greatest clarity about his/her own faith.

• That is why the formation given to missionary disciples is so important, especially the formation of those who have the mission of bearing witness to the Gospel in the heart of the world.

• We are not, nor can we be, “amateurish” with regard to the Gospel.

• As missionary disciples, we are called to play in the big leagues of faith, hope, and charity.

To obtain this objective we need solid itineraries of formation, putting ourselves in the School of Mary, living memory of the Church, in order to pass through the pedagogy of encounter and of the “places of encounter” with the Lord. We should take good advantage of the pedagogical potential that is found in popular Marian devotion. We find there an educational path which cultivates personal love of the Virgin, the true “educator in the faith.” Such a path leads us to become ever more like Jesus Christ and fosters a progressive adoption of her attitudes.

The places of encounter are not independent of one another; they are linked together in the logic of faith, since they lead to one another and open up as a true spiral in the life of faith of both individuals and communities. In this way we progress from faith to faith and from grace to grace, until we find ourselves face to face with him in the fullness of life and of his- •

Also among the interlocutors of the Continental Mission are:

• those groups of primary interest (for example, educators, those who serve the poor, public servants, social communicators);

• specific sectors to be attended by the Mission, such as families, young people, schools and universities, workers, business people, artists, etc.

• other social or pastoral groups which we may decide to focus on in the course of the Mission.

IV. THE PEDAGOGY OF ACTION IN THE CONTINENTAL MISSION

In the process of forming missionary disciples, we would stress five basic aspects which take different forms at each stage of the process, but which are closely connected with one another and nourish one another:

- the Encounter with Jesus Christ
- Conversion
- Discipleship
- Communion and Mission

This means:

• knowing the desires of the persons – and peoples – that God confides to us, and leading them to an encounter with the living Jesus Christ, who fosters in them an attitude of conversion, and the decision to follow in the footsteps of Jesus,

• so that, by their living in communion with Christ and being called by him within the communion of the Church, a sense of ecclesial belonging grows strong and generates life,

• so that they undergo a process of formation that is integral, gradual, kerygmatic, permanent, diversified, and community-oriented – and includes spiritual accompaniment,

• so that baptized Christians assume their missionary commitment and progress from being evangelized to being evangelizers, to the end that the Kingdom of God becomes actively present among our Latin American and Caribbean peoples and that they thus have fullness of life in Christ.

We can explain these dimensions of the process with words we find in the Gospel itself, words which describe the manner of encountering, forming, and sending those persons who receive the vocation to be missionary disciples so that all peoples might have life in Christ:

Everything begins with a question: “What are you seeking?” (Jn 1,38). The Document of Aparecida comments on this (279):

a. “Those who will be his disciples are already seeking him. We need to discover the deeper meaning of this seeking and encourage the encounter with Christ which gives rise to Christian initiation.” (Seeking)

b. The disciples, who want to meet Christ, ask him: “Teacher, where do you live?” (Jn 1,38). Jesus invites them to go through an experience: “Come and see” (Jn 1,39); “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (Jn 14,6). (Encounter)

c. When Jesus meets Philip, he says to him, “Follow me.” Later, beside the Lake of Galilee, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, amazed at the Teacher’s words and the miraculous catch, “left everything and followed him.” (Conversion and Discipleship)

d. Jesus called them “so that they would be with him” (Mk 3,14) and “remain in his love,” forming a community of disciples that would later be known for its solidarity and for its union in prayer, in the breaking of the bread, and in the teaching of the apostles. (Communion)

e. But the call of Jesus to discipleship is inseparable from the missionary vocation. Already in the encounter on the shores of the lake, Jesus makes clear to them his purpose: “I will make you fishers of men,” and when he calls the twelve he says explicitly that he is calling them in order to “send them to preach” (Mk 3,14). And before ascending to heaven, he sends them “to make disciples of all peoples, baptizing them …” (Mission)

To accomplish this process and win back those people who have fallen away, we have to strengthen four aspects of our Church:

personal encounter with Jesus Christ, as a profoundly intense religious experience, a kerygmatic proclamation, producing the personal witness of the evangelizers, which leads to personal conversion and an integral change of life;

living together in community, since our people desire communities where they are warmly welcomed. It is important that our faithful feel that they are really members of a church com-
missionary disciples will arise only as our communities dedicate themselves to evangelizing and accompanying those baptized persons who are not conscious of being disciples, so that they can mature gradually toward a desire to serve and thus respond to the mission which the Lord gives them through the Church.

In this process, the ongoing personal and pastoral conversion of the pastors and all religious is an indispensable element for making a coherent testimony of life the basic pedagogical foundation.

Paths to the encounter with Christ.

An authentic proposal for encountering Jesus Christ should take into account the following elements:

- Experience of the presence of Jesus Christ in the personal and communal life of the believer: in the reading of sacred scripture in liturgy and personal meditation; in the celebration of the Eucharist, inexhaustible source of the Christian vocation and limitless font of missionary commitment; in the dynamism of a community life that is participative and fraternal; and in service to the poor and the excluded.
- A new appreciation of popular piety, which is a legitimate way of living the faith, a way of feeling part of the Church, and a manner of being missionary that puts us in touch with the deepest vibrations of the heart of America.
- A increased feeling of nearness to Mary, the finest image of faithful following of Christ, and mother and educator of the missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Rescue of the witnesses of the Gospel in America, of the men and women who lived their faith heroically on the path of sanctity, along with those who shed their blood in martyrdom.

Furthermore, we should develop a pedagogy of encounter and communion.

Pedagogy of encounter:

The mission should be carried out within the dynamic of the pedagogy of all the encounters which happen between persons, between families, between communities. Since every pastor – and likewise every missionary – should reflect the Good Shepherd, it is evident that our pastoral ministry has to be interwoven with conviviality, simplicity, cordiality, solicitude, and attentiveness and service to others. In this evangelizing effort the church community makes itself known through pastoral initiatives as it sends forth its lay and religious missionaries, especially to the homes in the most marginalized urban and rural sectors, seeking to dialogue with everybody in a spirit of understanding and loving kindness.

Pedagogy of communion

It is important that this Continental Mission be carried out as a great expression of communion. Communion with God should be made manifest in universal prayer which invokes the Holy Spirit with Mary, the mother of Jesus, to bring about unity with the Pope, among the bishops’ conferences, and among the local churches, so that they help one another reciprocally, especially in sharing personnel and resources.

Every local church should open itself generously to the needs of others. Collaboration among the churches, through a genuine reciprocity that prepares them both to give and to receive, is also a source of enrichment for all of them, and it should include all the various sectors of church life. In this regard, the declaration of the bishops at Puebla is exemplary:

Finally, the hour has arrived for Latin America to project itself beyond its own borders, to the nations. The truth is that we ourselves need missionaries, but we must also give out of our poverty. … The mission of the Church is much greater than ‘communion among the churches’: this communion, besides helping toward the new evangelization, should also have a special orientation of a specifically missionary nature.

V. THE PRIVILEGED ROLE OF LAY PEOPLE

Any missionary effort requires, in a special way, the active and committed participation of the lay faithful in every stage of the process.

- Today the whole Latin American and Caribbean Church seeks to put itself in a state of mission. The evangelization of the continent, Pope John Paul II told us, cannot be realized today without the collaboration of lay people.
- Lay people must play an active and creative part in the elaboration and execution of pastoral projects for the community’s benefit.
- This requires, on the part of the pastors, a greater openness of mind, so that they will understand and welcome the reality and the action of lay people in the Church, who by their baptism and confirmation are disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ.

In other words, lay people must be taken fully into account in a spirit of communion and participation.

VI. FORMATION OF MISSIONARIES

Aparecida made a clear and decisive option to give formation to the members of our communities for the benefit of all baptized persons, whatever their function in the Church’s development.

- The formation should be suffused with missionary zeal, which is an impulse of the Spirit energizing all spheres of existence, penetrating and configuring the specific vocation of each person. Thus, the spiritualities proper to priests, religious, parents, business people, catechists, etc., each take on their proper form and develop accordingly.
- Each of these vocations has a concrete, distinctive type of spirituality, which gives depth and enthusiasm to the concrete
exercise of their different tasks. Thus, life in the Spirit should not shut us up in comfortable intimacy, but rather should make us into generous, creative persons, joyful in our proclamation of the Gospel and our missionary service.

- Our vocation commits us to considering the just claims of our social reality and enables us to find profound meaning in everything we do for the Church and the world. The Spirit weaves bonds of communion among the diverse vocations, so that all together, as complementary members of a single Body, they accomplish a single mission.

VII. CRITERIA FOR MISSION

Personal and pastoral conversion

This mission necessarily requires pastoral conversion, both in persons and in the very structures of the Church. We must recognize what structures are outmoded and seek the new forms that are demanded by our changing times.

- Pastoral conversion of our communities requires us to move beyond pastoral ministry which is simply preservative toward pastoral ministry which is decidedly missionary.

- This will make it possible for the unique program of the Gospel to be introduced persistently into the history of each church community with new missionary ardor, thus helping the Church to manifest itself as a mother who goes forth to meet people, as a welcoming home, as a permanent school of missionary communion.

Paying heed to cultural signs: inculturation and presence in the new Areopagus

We must keep in mind how complex and varied is the reality of our continent: it has its megalopolises and its vast urban peripheries, and also its huge farming, mining, and maritime spheres. Nor can we forget the hospital, the prisons, the rehabilitation centers, or the peculiarities of the churches themselves in the different regions.

The mission, even though a single, unified effort, should at the same time be diverse. It is therefore necessary to pay heed to the cultural signs of the epoch, so that all the new and different expressions and values become enriched with the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In this way we will have more success in uniting faith with life and will also contribute to a more expansive catholicity, one that is not only geographic but also cultural.

Using new languages: communication

In our mission we must take fully into account modern-day culture, which should be studied, evaluated, and in a certain sense adopted by the Church, so that we use a language understood by our contemporaries. Only thus will Christian faith appear to be a pertinent, significant vehicle of salvation. At the same time, Christian faith should offer present-day society alternative cultural models.

Our using new language will help us communicate the values of the Gospel in a positive, creative way. There are many people who claim to be unhappy, not so much with the content of the Church’s doctrine as with the form in which it is presented and lived.

In the mission we must use of the Church’s communications media to good advantage, making them more effective and relevant, whether for communicating the faith or for promoting dialogue between Church and society.

Another important task is giving our missionary proclamation a pronounced presence in the general mass media, as well as in cyberspace, which the new generations use with frequency. Just as we already have experience of educational programs about the faith on radio and television, so also an interactive website might be a useful option for helping to move our mission forward.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In the context of normal pastoral action

The carrying out of a continental mission should inject dynamism into existing pastoral plans, with whatever renewal of structures that may be needed. A firm missionary commitment should pervade all church structures and all pastoral plans of dioceses, parishes, religious communities, movements, and other institutions of the Church. No community should excuse itself from entering wholeheartedly and energetically into the constant processes of missionary renewal, nor should it refuse to abandon those outmoded structures that no longer favor the transmission of the faith.

And I conclude with the words of Pope Benedict XVI:

“Christian faith will not be able to withstand the ravages of time if it is reduced to baggage, to a list of norms and prohibitions, to fragmented devotional practices, to selective and partial adhesion to the truths of the faith, to occasional participation in some sacraments, to repetition of doctrinal principles, to bland or curt moralisms which do nothing to change the lives of baptized Christians.

“The greatest threat facing us is the gray pragmatism of the Church’s daily life, where everything apparently proceeds normally, but where in reality the faith gets worn down and degenerates into meanness.

“We all are obliged to begin again from Christ, recognizing that being a Christian does not begin with an ethical decision or a great idea, but with an encounter with an event, with a Person who provided life with a new horizon and so with a decisive orientation.” (Ratzinger, J., Present Situation of the Faith and Theology. Conference given at the meeting of the presidents of the Latin American episcopal conferences for the doctrine of the faith, held in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 1996.)
The pictures feature many of our members at different programs from the schedule of the Mission Congress 2010. If you would like to share copies of your pictures email them directly to uscma@uscatholicmission.org. We look forward to many more fun and fantastic times with our friends in mission!!
The USCMA recognizes the mission creativity and excellence of the Columban Mission Education at its annual business meeting.

From the first films made in 1974, through the development of curricula such as *Come and See!* and the *Barrio Series* right down to *Journey With Jesus* (school: 2007; parish: 2009), approximately 2,500,000 elementary and secondary school students have learned about mission through the Columban Mission Education materials. All mission education materials, whether for children or adults, whether school or parish, are offered as part of the service of the Columban Fathers to the home Church. Even in these present times of diminishing numbers of personnel and resources, they recognize the impact of their mission education and awareness programs and continue to develop them and make them available.

The Mission Award is given every year at the annual Mission Conference (since 1983). Those recognized are individuals and organizations which embody and reflect the mission spirit. Past recipients have included: Ms. Edwina Gately, Foundress of the Volunteer Missionary Movement; The Jesuit Community at the University of El Salvador in honor of Elba and Celina Ramos and the 6 Jesuits slain Nov. 16, 1990; Catholic Extension Society, Catholic Volunteer Network (formerly Catholic Network of Volunteer Services); and the Center for Social Concerns, University of Notre Dame.

The USCMA membership would like to offer our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Mr. Sam Stanton and Sr. Tellie Lape, ICM for their dedication to the USCMA by serving on the Board of Directors. We wish them the best of luck in their upcoming endeavors and look forward to their continued presence at USCMA events!

The USCMA membership would like to welcome our newest Board Members—Dr. David Suley and Sr. Janice McLaughlin, MM.

Dr. David Suley is the director for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Home Missions Office. David has nearly a decade of experience with the pastoral and financial challenges the US Catholic Church faces in Alaska, the Rocky Mountain states, the Southwest, the Deep South, Appalachia, and the island diocese in the Pacific and Caribbean. He and his wife, Arceli, served for three years as lay missionaries in Malawi, Africa.

Sr. Janice McLaughlin, MM entered the Maryknoll Sisters in 1961 and became the President of the Maryknoll Sisters in 2009. Sr. Janice has a wide range of mission experience. She has spent much of the last 40 years as a missionary in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. Sr. Janice obtained her doctorate in religious studies from the University of Zimbabwe in 1992.

Based on the moral imperative to rid the world of nuclear weapons, we, the US Catholic Mission Association, join the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in supporting a strong and bi-partisan action on the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) as an important and essential step toward a nuclear-weapons-free future.

Be it resolved that we, the USCMA, continue to advocate justice for immigrants by calling on our membership to support and campaign for the passage of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act).

Using the lens of the Gospels and the Catholic Social Teachings, USCMA calls for the restructuring of the current enacted legislation, Public Law 107-110, No Child Left Behind, to bring justice and improved equitable education to the Title-1 and inner-city schools.


The USCMA membership would like to welcome our newest Board Members—Dr. David Suley and Sr. Janice McLaughlin, MM.

Dr. David Suley is the director for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Home Missions Office. David has nearly a decade of experience with the pastoral and financial challenges the US Catholic Church faces in Alaska, the Rocky Mountain states, the Southwest, the Deep South, Appalachia, and the island diocese in the Pacific and Caribbean. He and his wife, Arceli, served for three years as lay missionaries in Malawi, Africa.

Sr. Janice McLaughlin, MM entered the Maryknoll Sisters in 1961 and became the President of the Maryknoll Sisters in 2009. Sr. Janice has a wide range of mission experience. She has spent much of the last 40 years as a missionary in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. Sr. Janice obtained her doctorate in religious studies from the University of Zimbabwe in 1992.
Mark your Calendars:

January:
- Crossing Borders: 30th Anniversary Commemoration of the Death of the U.S. Churchwomen in El Salvador, Washington, DC
  January 6, 2011
- Referendum for the Sudan
  January 9, 2011
- Archdiocese of Cincinnati’s Forum on Race: All are Welcome Race in the Church Today
  January 28-29, 2011
- University of Dayton Kennedy Union in Dayton, Ohio
  $35 includes lunch.
  Find more at www.forumonrace.org.

February:
- 49th Session of the Commission for Social Development
  February 2-10, 2011
  New York City, New York
- World Social Forum
  February 6-14, 2011
  Dakar, Senegal
- Catholic Social Ministry Gathering
  February 13-16, 2011
  Omni Shoreham Hotel, 2500 Calvert Street, NW
  Washington, D.C.

March:
- USCMA Board Meeting
  March 3-5, 2011
  Washington, D.C.
- The 100th Anniversary of International Women’s Day
  March 8, 2011
- CARE Conference & International Women’s Day Celebration
  March 8-10, 2011
  Washington, D.C.
  Find out more by e-mail at nationalconference@care.org.
- Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice
  Conference: Development, Security and Economic Justice: What’s Gender Got to Do with It?
  March 25-28, 2011
  Doubletree Hotel in Crystal City, VA near Washington, D.C.
  Find more at www.advocacydays.org.

DVD ORDERS OF MISSION CONGRESS 2010 STILL AVAILABLE

For only $15.00 you will be able to watch the Keynote Speakers and other main gatherings from Mission Congress 2010!

- Rev. Gary Riebe Estrella, SVD
  God’s Mission, Many Faces: A Portrait of U.S. Catholics in Mission
- Sr. Janice McLaughlin, MM
  Turned Upside Down: Lessons from the Margins
- Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga:
  Emerging Directions in Mission
- Dr. Kim Smolik and Rev. Clarence Williams, CPPS, PhD
  U.S. Catholics in Mission: New Faces, New Opportunities, New Challenges
- Ms. Teresita Gonzalez de la Maza and Mr. James Lindsay
  Emerging Directions in Mission

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

Study Guide for Use with the Aparecida Document

This Bi-lingual Study Guide is a project of the United States Catholic Mission Association in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Chicago Office for Mission Education and animation, and the Missionary Society of St. Columban to help individuals, groups, parishes, and dioceses in their mission promotion and education. In using this study guide, it is hoped that mission becomes integral in our response to our baptismal promise. Spanish translation is made by Fr. Ramon Caluza, President of Union Dominicana de Emisoras Catolicas and General Director of Radio Enriquillo, Dominican Republic.

Study Guide for Use with the Aparecida Document on Sale now at the USCMA! Only $10.00 + shipping & handling.
Almighty God,

Your eternal Word leaped down from heaven in the silent watches of the night, and your Church is filled with wonder at the nearness of God.

Open our hearts to receive your life and increase our vision with the rising dawn, that our lives may be filled with your glory and peace.


A Blessed Christmas
and a Grace-filled New Year to You!

FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT THE
UNITED STATES CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION