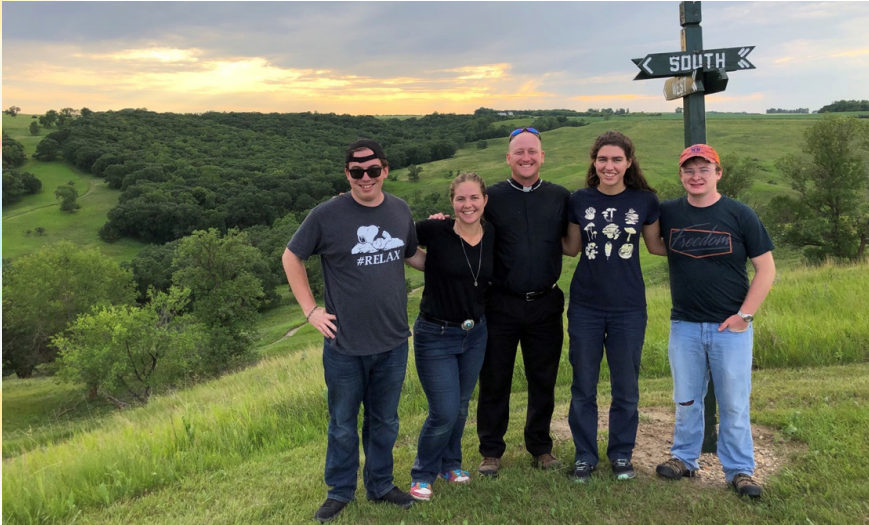




**CATHOLIC
HOME
MISSIONS**



Fr. Chris Markman, pictured with some of the 2019 Young Disciples team, served as a missionary with the program in 2003. Now, as pastor, he's invited teams to lead camps in his parishes.

By Beth Griffin

Catholic bishops in every diocese struggle to nurture our rich faith tradition among the young people in their care. At their general assembly in November 2019, the bishops of the United States heard the experience and perspective of Most Reverend Robert E. Barron, auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles and chairman of the bishops' Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis. Bishop Barron said the parish is a great place to reach out to young people in a missionary spirit. "Young people aren't going to come to us; we have to go out to them," he said.

The Dioceses of Fargo, North Dakota, and Baker, Oregon, are using creative ways to go out and engage youth and young adults in catechesis and evangelization through formation and activities. Their initiatives are supported by the Catholic Home Missions (CHM) Appeal.

YOUNG DISCIPLES APOSTOLATE IN THE DIOCESE OF FARGO

Each summer since 2001, missionaries in the Young Disciples Apostolate have fanned out across the diocese to conduct weeklong vacation Bible schools for Catholics in kindergarten through sixth grade. The parish-based program also includes evening sessions for teens.

Ashley Grunhovd, director of evangelization for the Fargo diocese, says the young adult missionaries are college students whose two-week training covers human and spiritual formation. "We introduce the missionaries to forms of prayer they might not have known, such as the Liturgy of the Hours, and also discuss how to live life on a team and be good houseguests in the parishes they visit," she says.

"Training also includes formation in Catholic doctrine, catechetics, evangelization, and camp-related skills," she adds.

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Overheard during a parish church tour for kindergarteners at Young Disciples Apostolate camp in Fargo:

Missionary: The tabernacle is where Jesus stays in the church. Let's say a prayer and then listen to what he might want to tell us.

Camper One: How does he fit his legs in there?

Camper Two: Shhh, he's sleeping.

Camper Three: If he wants to go away, does he blow out the light to let us know he's not there?

Neighbors

ISSUE 1 2020

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM MISSION AMERICA

FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Dear Brothers
and Sisters in Christ,

One of the exciting aspects of serving on the USCCB's Subcommittee for Catholic Home Missions is seeing the many ways that leaders in mission dioceses work to pass on the faith, whether to immigrants and refugees, to young families, or to youth and young adults.

In a time of individualism that is accompanied by a growing number of people disaffiliating from religious institutions and practices, Catholic bishops everywhere recognize the need to foster discipleship among Catholics, especially the youth. In this issue, you will read how young adult missionaries in Fargo, North Dakota, bring the joy of the Gospel to Catholic schoolchildren from kindergarten through sixth grade. Meanwhile, in Baker, Oregon, retreats and camp sessions for schoolchildren in grades four through six, as well as youth in middle and high school, are strengthening the faith of young people in their diocese.

Finally, in this issue we remember the contributions and spirit of Bishop Paul Sirba of Duluth, Minnesota, a valued member of the Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions who always showed great love for his flock and for the mission of bringing the Gospel to all he encountered.

These stories illustrate the valuable ways in which your support for Catholic Home Missions builds the faith among the next generations of Catholics. Your contributions make efforts like these possible, and we are grateful to you. Enjoy reading these stories and be assured of my gratitude for the difference you make with your support.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend W. Shawn McKnight
Bishop of Jefferson City
Chairman, USCCB Subcommittee
on Catholic Home Missions



Each summer the Young Disciples missionaries load up vans and travel from parish to parish leading vacation Bible schools and teen retreats.

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The Fargo program runs for 10 weeks and sends out three teams to rural and urban parishes whose pastors have invited them. The program offers an alternative to the widespread non-Catholic vacation Bible schools. Ashley says each camp reflects the needs of the host parish, but all include typical camp activities as well as daily Mass and instruction about the Rosary, the Divine Mercy chaplet, and the example of the saints. “We tour the parish church and talk about the priest’s vestments and the religious sisters’ habits. We also have a mini-Mass kit to familiarize campers with the vessels used at Mass,” she says.

“One of the most powerful things we do is teach children to pray,” Ashley adds. “We use the very simple PAL method—Praise, Ask, Listen—and encourage them to talk to Jesus and listen to the voice of Christ.”

“We are teaching them to be little evangelists, and we know they are bringing home to their families what they receive,” she says. “One mom told us her child demonstrated PAL and then got everyone to pray together as a family for the first time.”

St. John Bosco is the patron of the Young Disciples Apostolate. According to Ashley, he was chosen because the program uses his method of teaching children by earning their respect while also having fun.

Although the camp program serves both catechetical and evangelical purposes for the campers and their parishes, it has proven to be life-changing for some of the missionary participants. Ashley says the ranks of 220 former missionaries now include 17 priests, 25 seminarians, 20 religious, and numerous parish and diocesan directors of religious education and youth ministers.

Ashley herself was a missionary in the program for three summers. “It’s how I fell in love with the Catholic Church and how I was called to ministry,” she explains. Five men from her summer teams have since been ordained.

Fargo’s diocesan vocation office encourages students in the minor seminary and pre-theology year of seminary to participate in the Young Disciples Apostolate camp. As a result, seminarians who had little previous experience with children outside

a church environment are now priests who can relate more easily to them in their new assignments. They also recognize the impact of the program and have invited Young Disciples Apostolate teams to run camps in their own parishes.

Each year, the camp theme is drawn from one of the four sets of mysteries of the Rosary. The lessons focus on the Scripture passages aligned with those mysteries, so the children and their counselors explore a different perspective of the life of Christ each summer.

“Pastors like the program because they know the content is good and they can trust that it is authentically Catholic. They also appreciate the witness of the young adults,” Ashley says.

“We wouldn’t be able to run the Young Disciples Apostolate without Catholic Home Missions funds,” Ashley says. The CHM grant is used to provide stipends for the missionaries and to offset the program cost for small parishes with limited resources.

CAMPS AND RETREATS IN THE DIOCESE OF BAKER

The Diocese of Baker is spread out over almost 67,000 square miles, about two-thirds of the state of Oregon. Youth outreach incorporates both summer camps and a retreat program, according to Josh Schaan, diocesan director of evangelization and catechesis.

Every summer, four-day/three-night camp sessions are held for students in two age groups: those in grades four through six, and those in middle and high school. Campers are welcomed to a retreat house in central Oregon, where traditional activities, games, and crafts are interspersed with Masses on the annual theme.

“This year, we focused on ‘encounter’ to facilitate an encounter with Christ,” Josh says.

In the camp and in late fall retreats for older students, “we give young people an opportunity to experience the Lord. We take them out of the busy world into a place where silence is important,” he

says. “They have told us how grateful they are for a quiet event that is so foreign to their day-to-day life.”

To accommodate the challenging geography of the diocese, Josh says the diocese will offer overnight Lenten retreats this year in each of the five deaneries. “We are equipping each of them with materials, and I will train the local leaders,” he says.

With help from CHM, the diocese will double its capacity for the summer camp program. Baker’s Bishop Liam Cary celebrates at least one Mass with the campers during each session.

The effort to reach and engage young Catholics is universal, but mission dioceses in the United States face unique hurdles because of vast distances, limited personnel, finances, and a Catholic population that is smaller and dispersed. Catholic Home Missions is dedicated to strengthening the faith by helping these dioceses overcome these challenges. ☞

IN MEMORIAM: BISHOP PAUL D. SIRBA

We remember with gratitude the Most Reverend Paul D. Sirba, Bishop of Duluth, Minnesota, who died December 1. He suffered cardiac arrest as he walked from his rectory to celebrate an 8 a.m. Mass. He was 59 years old.

Bishop Sirba was a member of the USCCB Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions from 2012 to 2018.

“He was truly a gentleman and a good priest. He was the type of man you want as a bishop: kind, personable, pastoral, and down-to-earth,” Ken Ong recalls. As the CHM grants specialist, he worked closely with Bishop Sirba during the bishop’s tenure on the subcommittee.

“Bishop Sirba understood what mission was and cared about people in mission, not just in his own diocese,” Ken says.

A Minnesota native, Bishop Sirba was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in 1986. Pope Benedict XVI named him bishop of Duluth in 2009.





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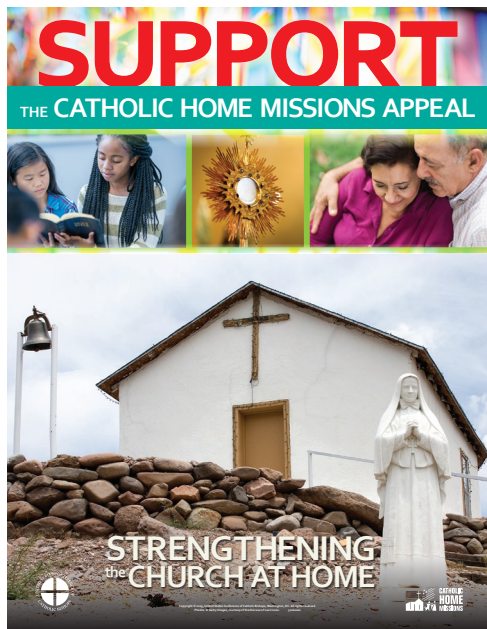
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READ ABOUT HOW YOUTH and young adult disciples in North Dakota and Oregon are growing in their faith with support from Catholic Home Missions.



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