

Mission Heart



"The Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others - with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction."

Pope Francis - December 2013
Evangelii Gaudium - Joy of the Gospel

Third Wave Mission Movement

In his keynote address at the Maryknoll Centennial Theological Symposium in Chicago in October 2011, Fr. Robert Schreiter CPPS, described what he calls a "Third Wave of Mission." Schreiter referred to the 1st Wave as those missionaries who accompanied the early explorers into the Americas. The 2nd Wave he referred to as those missionaries from the early mission societies and religious orders who were so influential in growing the local churches in Africa and Latin America, as well as in Asia. Though this 2nd Wave continues strongly today, there is a 3rd Wave of mission being engaged in by thousands of Catholics and other Christians from a multitude of dioceses, parishes, schools and universities who have taken up the *Ad Gentes* challenge to engage in mission.



Forward - Introduction

This handbook is a companion to the video "*Mission Heart*," which was produced by the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers' Mission Education and Promotion Department Southern Region in cooperation with St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills, Texas and the Misión Elias Profeta in Guatemala staffed by the Carmelite Sisters.

Mission is proclaiming, serving and witnessing to God's Reign of love, salvation and justice. From a different perspective we can say that mission is "*going outside one's comfort zone.*" The Catholic Church teaches that every Christian is called to mission by virtue of his or her baptism.

The parish is the fundamental unit of the church. In the words of Pope Francis: "*In all of its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers . . . it is the center of constant missionary outreach.*" As such, the parish must equip itself to do mission, whether in another hemisphere or across the street. The parish has the responsibility of fostering a spirit of mission among its members, of educating them about their call to mission and coordinating their efforts to engage in mission.

In the video, *Mission Heart*, we see how one parish works to fulfill its mission responsibilities. A key for this parish is periodic immersion experiences in Guatemala. The goal is to form ongoing relationships with people there by sharing faith and learning about their lives and culture. Note: there is nothing said about "helping people." Here we are talking about building relationships not about "doing projects."

We provide in this booklet a summary of the whole process the parish uses as they invite parishioners to engage in the Guatemala mission immersion program from their initial introduction to the program to its aftermath. We hope this will encourage you and your parish to embark on this kind of wonderful realization of your baptismal call.

The process is covered in three stages.

Stage One:

Discernment . . . Formation . . . Commissioning

Discernment: Before a person decides to engage in a mission immersion program, he/she should seriously discern if they are called - not everyone is called to this type of mission experience. This discernment will have each person evaluate their attitude, their openness to being immersed in a different culture, their level of fear about traveling to a foreign country, whether they have sufficient physical health and willingness to live in spartan surroundings, whether they can tolerate eating strange food, and the feelings of their family about their going. . . The leader of the program has the final prerogative to permit the person to go or not. In some cases, difficult judgments have to be made. . . The discernment is concluded with the signing of an agreement to participate in the entire program which will include preparation/formation, full engagement in the immersion, and participation in the reflection/integration process upon return.

Preparation/Formation: The preparation/formation program is mandatory. It may require up to 8 or 10 hours as participants engage in study of such topics as: Mission, Mission Spirituality, Culture, Inculturation/Popular Religiosity, Catholic Social Teaching, Solidarity/Integral Development, etc. It goes without saying that all should be accompanied by prayer.

Commissioning: All aspects of the mission immersion program should be well publicized in the parish and a commissioning ceremony should be held at one of the Sunday Masses. The commissioning not only affirms the participants but it serves to teach the congregation of the importance of mission.

Stage Two:

The Short-Term Mission Immersion Experience

The short-term mission immersion experience - if done well - can be beneficial to a parish as well as to the participants. As an *immersion* experience, it brings us into direct contact with peoples' lives and their culture - sharing faith and love with them. Its major focus is to form relationships. It is meant to be a springboard to a life of mission service wherever the participant may live.

Planning: Finding a place to go for the mission experience can be tricky. Talking with other parishes who have gone on similar programs may provide good leads. The Mission Education Department of Maryknoll would be an excellent place to get other good leads. Avoid commercial firms. . . It would be good for the mission leaders to travel to the site before taking the

group; in this way a lot of logistics can be worked out as well as first hand knowledge of the locale.

The Immersion Experience: Whether traveling to a foreign or a domestic mission site, the group should travel together. . . Upon arriving at their site, they should be given an orientation to the country or area by local people who understand the history, way of life and issues of the people they will be meeting. . . Each day should begin with prayer.

- The program should include meeting local people, preferably in their homes. Participants should be encouraged to exchange their stories with their hosts. Remember that the primary purpose of the program is to establish relationships.
- Each participant should be encouraged to write a journal during their program - not only about what they see and do but more about their feelings and reactions to what they experience. . . Time each evening should be allotted for guided reflection and prayer. . . The group should attend Mass at a local church and interact with the worshippers.
- In all cases, the people of the host country should be treated with utmost respect. Participants are guests and they walk on holy ground.

Stage Three:

Re-entry/Reflection, Integration

Re-Entry/Reflection: Upon returning, the participants come together to process their experiences. They reflect on the people they encountered and how they saw God in them. They think about how they have changed (or not) as a result of the experience.

Participants should be challenged to think about what kind of mission service they will engage in. They might write letters to themselves, saying what they are going to do. The leaders collect the letters and mail it back to the participants six weeks later.

Integration: The mission immersion is not meant to be an end unto itself - it is meant to be the *beginning* of a life of mission service. A list of opportunities could be provided to the participants, including a course on Catholic Social Teaching as a catalyst to help participants become involved in the faith issues which challenge their neighbors in the world and in their own city. . . They should also be encouraged to form a group in the parish for support of their on-going mission work.

Conclusion:

There is a spiritual axiom that says “*in order to keep what you have, you have to give it away.*” It is only through giving away the Good News of God’s love, justice and salvation that a parish can remain vibrant and faithful. And it can be one of the most rewarding experiences for the participant.

**For Further Information
Contact**

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You can view the video "Mission Heart" at: <http://goo.gl/b2dKPF>

(To obtain support files that accompany the video, contact the Maryknoll Mission Education Center)

The Second Vatican Council notes in the Decree Ad Gentes, "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father." (AG 2). Being essentially missionary means that in her constitutive reality she possesses a dynamism that concretely unfolds in the preaching the Gospel, in spreading the faith and in calling to conversion.

In his Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Francis says: "I dream of a mission option - a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything" and quotes Pope John Paul II, "All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion." (#27)

Modules for Mission Formation
Maryknoll Southern Mission Education Team
Third Wave Mission Movement