

Modern Day Mission "Saints"

Meet a Soccer Mom with a Mission!

While she may be a medical doctor, Margrethe Juncker relies just as much on prayer and her faith in Jesus to help heal the young people with whom she works in Uganda. Dr. Juncker is a Maryknoll Affiliate, a lay person involved in the missionary work of the Maryknoll community.

In 2001, Dr. Juncker, a native of Denmark, started an HIV/AIDS initiative in Uganda, with an Italian Comboni missionary priest, Father Joseph Archetti. Part of this work includes coaching a soccer club for street children in the country's capital, Kampala.

One of the devastating results of the HIV/AIDS crisis in much of Africa, Dr. Juncker says, is the growing number of children who end up on the street after their parents have died from the illness. Dr. Juncker, who has five children of her own, recruited volunteers to help these children get off the streets. The soccer club drew many young people.

Last year, the team traveled to Northern Europe at the invitation of Soccer Festival Denmark to compete in a tournament with teams from Scandinavian countries - and they won!

While some may refer to her as the "Queen of Uganda," Dr. Juncker is happier when the boys on her team simply call her "mom."

Meet a Missionary with a Mission!

In Uganda today, some 80 percent of the guerilla army's forces are abducted children – both boys and girls. Living with the people of Northern Uganda amid the fear and violence are Catholic missionaries and local priests, Sisters and Brothers, many of whom have been attacked for promoting the Gospel of peace, protecting young people and providing respite for former child soldiers.

Sister Rachel is one such missionary who has experienced firsthand the devastation of Uganda's resistance movement. As principal of a catholic boarding school for girls in Aboke, Sister Rachele witnessed the kidnapping of 140 of her students. Determined to save "her girls," she and another teacher set out to look for them the morning after the kidnapping. Sister Rachele caught up with them and begged for the girls' release. After her ransom offer was refused by the group's leader, Sister Rachele offered her own life for their safe return. With much negotiation, Sister Rachele returned home with all but 30 of her students. To this day, she continues to pray for each one of them.

Meet a Priest-Doctor with a Mission!

In January, 2005, Father Scott Binet traveled to Banda Aceh, Indonesia, to help those who survived the tsunami of December 26, 2004.

Father Binet is a priest-doctor of the Order of Saint Camillus. Father Binet knew he could help people who were sick or injured because of the tsunami. He just wasn't sure how he could help heal their hearts. So, he prayed. And, before his plane landed, he knew what he would do.

"I decided that I wanted to start my mission in Indonesia by helping make Christ more present to those who survived the tsunami and to those helping," he said. So when his plane landed, he celebrated Mass.

Father Binet felt called by God at an early age, but did not consider becoming a priest at that time. After graduating from college, he worked as an actor. He even appeared on several episodes of a popular soap opera. Feeling he wanted to do more with his life, he enrolled in medical school.

During his third year of medical school, he knew he was ready for the priesthood. He looked through a directory of Religious Communities and found the Order of Saint Camillus. There are more than 1,100 priests and Religious Brothers in this group dedicated to caring for the sick; some are doctors themselves.

Today, Father Binet is traveling throughout the United States to tell people about the work that he does and about the Order of Saint Camillus. You may even hear him speak in your parish!

To learn more about the Camillian fathers and Father Scott Binet, visit www.ctfmercy.org.

These stories are courtesy of The Holy Childhood Association, New York, New York.
www.hcakids.org.

Meet a Filmmaker and Author with a Mission!

Gerry Straub has written many books, and made many movies. Many of his documentary movies have aired on PBS. He produced *General Hospital* and was the executive producer of *The Doctors*, a long-running soap opera on NBC. Now he heads the San Damiano Foundation, whose purpose is "to communicate through films the spirituality of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. It uses film to communicate concern for the poor, social justice, peace and nonviolence."

Here is a description of one of his films:

When Did I See You Hungry? Produced, written, and directed by Gerard Thomas Straub

Introduction to the Film

This 37-minute film, narrated by Martin Sheen, is a photographic meditation on the plight of the poor and our responsibility to help. Gerard Thomas Straub spent months living among the poor in the impoverished sections of 29 cities in nine nations: India, Brazil, Kenya, Jamaica, the Philippines, Mexico, Italy, Canada, and the US. The photographs, which document the life of the poorest of the poor,

including a leper colony in Brazil, are taken from a startling and disquieting series of 250 intensely personal black-and-white photographs contained in Gerry's book, *When Did I See You Hungry?* Gerry uses the camera as an instrument of contemplation, and his photographs, with wordless gentleness, allow us to see more closely things we know about but are not attentive to. More than just capturing the agony of life in the slums, Gerry's photographs reveal the hidden humanity of the poor, their spirit of joy, and their will to survive.

Many of the photos used in this lesson plan come from this book.

This information is found on the website www.sandamianofoundation.org. Visit this website to learn more about Gerry and his wonderful films and books about poverty.

Meet a Pediatrician with a Mission!

Dr. Anthony Lazzara is a pediatrician who left behind a very successful career to serve the poor children in Lima, Peru. Once a highly recognized pediatrician who was on the faculty of Emory University in Atlanta, sometimes called the "Harvard of the South", Dr. Tony left his wealth and position behind in 1983 to open a home for sick children which he named "Hogar San Francisco de Asis" (St. Francis of Assisi Home). Here he is able to care for children whose parents have no money. The children live in the home until they are well, and Dr. Tony treats them and gives them medicine without any charge to the family. Some of the illnesses he treats are diarrhea, malnutrition, tuberculosis, and respiratory diseases. He also receives children with cleft lip and palate, congenital malformations and other surgical conditions.

Dr. Tony spends his day cleaning the house, caring for the sick children who live there as well as the outpatients who come on a daily basis. He has given his entire life to serving the poorest of the poor, and although he has nurses who help him, he is the only "doctor in the house."

Dr. Tony tells his story this way on his website www.villalapazfoundation.org

"I first came to Peru in 1983 after ten years in academic pediatrics at Emory University in Atlanta. If one were to ask me why I left my work in the United States and came to a country I had never seen and knew very little about, I guess I would have to say I felt an unease, a feeling that I was not where I was supposed to be, that the Lord would have me elsewhere. I wrote to various charitable agencies offering my services but heard nothing for six months and began to doubt if my calling was genuine. Then, by chance, a Franciscan came to my Atlanta parish for a fund raising endeavor, describing the Franciscan missions in Africa. I sensed an opportunity and wrote to the Franciscan provincial mother house in Wisconsin. Two weeks later, a Franciscan who had a medical dispensary for the destitute in Peru invited me to work with him. When push came to shove, the decision to leave a tenured position in a well known university with guaranteed job security to work in a situation which had no definite guarantees was quite difficult to make, but I felt that familiar unease and knew I had to try. I arrived in Peru in April of 1983, remained in the dispensary four and one half years and was then able to buy the present home and branch out on my own."