

Mission Connections: Special Catechetical Leaders Edition

Youth Connecting in Mission

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A Glimpse of the Kingdom

Tomorrow, April 22nd, is Earth Day! For the last several years, I have celebrated this day by running in the “Earth Day 5K.” So this past Friday, I, along with over 1500 others, gathered near St. Cloud State University to journey the 3.1 miles together. And what an incredible experience it was!

I was struck as I gathered with others at the starting line by two things: First, the *vastness* of people. There were 1,518 runners/walkers registered for the race, plus others not “officially” participating, but ready to take to the course along with their loved ones. And the 1500+ runners/walkers was easily doubled by those along the sidelines watching, supporting and cheering participants on. People, people and more people!

Second, I was struck by the *diversity* of people. All around me were fellow runners young and old. Really young (in strollers, as well as the children who gave their gym shoes a good workout), and really old (the crowd favorite being Irene, an 89 year old parishioner from St. Cloud, who finished her fifth 5K, even after two hip replacements). Men and women. Various races and ethnicities. Walkers and runners. True walkers (as in Irene’s push-walker) and true runners (as in those winners, who finished the race with times under 18 minutes). All abilities, demographics, reasons for being there, colors of shoes, etcetera. Variety, variety and more variety!

But this huge gathering of people, with all their diversity and uniqueness, were there *together*. All starting at the same starting line and with the same finish line goal in mind.

As I ran along, passing or being passed by others often quite different from myself, but there with the same purpose; as I


ran past spectators cheering on and supporting both those they love and those they never have nor never likely will meet; as I followed that challenging but life-affirming journey, knowing that others too were experiencing the same challenge yet finding similar strength, some of which came from our simply being there together; as I ran that race, I could not help but feel an overwhelming sense of *GOD’s Kingdom*.

This Earth Day, as we recognize and celebrate all that GOD has made—the vastness and the diversity of creation—from the oceans to the forests to the stars to the people—I think about that race day. I think about how vast and diverse our GOD is and the large, colorful array He has gathered on Earth. I think about the ways we can push and strengthen one another, and creation, when we are in it together, rather than in competition. I think about the ground we tread on, and the air, sun, and wind that fill our senses as we make our journeys. I think about the importance not of “winning” anything, but of trying. I think about how glorious it will be one day when all the participants of this earthly journey reach the ultimate finish line. And I think about how glorious it can be even before that final day, if we see GOD in one another, and one another in GOD.

I think about GOD’s Kingdom on Earth, and I want to run towards that goal!


Where have you glimpsed the Kingdom in your life or ministry lately?





Give it a Try!

Try incorporating these resources, projects or activities into your ministry.



Mission Education Resources

Earth Day week is a great time, as are all times, to talk with students, parishioners and groups about Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si* (“Praise be to You”). His beautiful message includes care for creation as well as care for one another. For resources to help unpack this encyclical and lead others in discussion and action around it, visit the Mission Office’s Mission Education Resources page: <http://mission.stcdio.org/mission-office-homepage/mission-education/mission-ed-resources>

Mission Activity Ideas

Plan an activity each day for a week focusing each on one of the days of the Genesis creation story. For the first day, encourage students to shut off lights when they leave a room to conserve electricity; for day three plant trees or flowers; on the fourth day encourage walking, biking or ride sharing to cut down on pollution, so we can better see GOD’s sky.

For young children, draw a “Creation Hopscotch” board with sidewalk chalk—with each square illustrating one of the days of Creation.

Don’t Forget:



- April 22:* **Earth Day**
- April 23:* Solidarity in Mission Workshop with Julie Lupien, at St. Francis Xavier in Sartell
- April 25:* World Malaria Day
- April 26:* Catholic Relief Services speaker, Shamsia Ramadhan, presenting on “Christian-Muslim Peace-building in Africa,” at St. Ben’s
- May 28:* Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine in LaCrosse, WI; fundraiser for the diocesan partnership with Maracay, Venezuela

“It is important to understand the objective of every race. Sometimes it is important to win. Sometimes it is more than enough if you just complete the race.”
(Abhishek Ratna)

“Let us run with endurance the race GOD has set before us” (Hebrews 12:1)