

Mission Connections: Special Catechetical Leaders Edition

Youth CONNECTING IN MISSION

Mission Office, Catholic Diocese of St. Cloud

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Ever Ancient, Ever New

The following reflection was written by Bonnie Engstrom, a Catholic wife, mother and writer. She is a contributor to "Blessed Is She," an online devotion for women, where this was first published. As I, like so many, find myself feeling discouraged by the problems of our world and the chaos that seems to fill our homes, parishes, nation and world recently, I found her reflection too fitting not to be shared with all of you.

At the recommendation of friends I recently started watching the show *Madam Secretary*. I have really enjoyed it, but watching a television program about the Secretary of State has taught me that there's a lot about the world that I don't know. Almost every episode has me googling something. "Where's Moldova?" "What is the history of the USSR?" "Where is Algeria?" "Were Saint Augustine's parents Italian?" I am sure that between all the humanities, poli sci, and history classes I took through the years I had learned all these things once, but here I am learning them again as if for the first time.

The same thing happens in my encounters with God in Scripture. There are stories I have heard so many times before that I have stopped listening because I know the words, I know the story, I know the message. But when I make myself take it in again as if for the first time I am dumbstruck by the power in

the imagery, the beauty in the wording, and the intimacy of our Lord. Today's readings are familiar ones, and the message God spoke to my heart in reading them is familiar too, but just like Him they are ever ancient, ever new.

In the beginning the world was a messy, scary place and God brought order to the chaos and beauty to the void. In the time of Christ the world was a messy, scary place and Jesus brought hope and healing to the wounded believers. Today the world is a messy, scary place and our loving God still brings order, beauty, hope, and healing to us all. Thanks be to God.

Today I will pray for the real Secretary of State, all our government officials, and that I may help in God's work of bringing order, beauty, hope, and healing to the world.



I join Bonnie, and invite you to also, in praying for church and civic leaders, our communities and country, and all the many places found in our geography textbooks still very much in need today. May we remember that our world and our fears, like our faith and God's message to us, is ever ancient yet ever new; therefore, let us pray for the Living God to continue speaking to us in Scripture and one another, as we strive to fill the messy and scary of this world with the beauty and hope of the Kingdom!



Give it a Try!

Try incorporating these resources and activities into your ministry.



Mission Education Resources:

Today there is much talk about who our neighbors are and how we are to treat them. Along with other faith leaders, Bishop Kettler has encouraged us to remember Christ's mandate to welcome the stranger and treat all with respect and dignity. If your community is looking for help leading faith-based dialogue (not debate) on these current issues, check out JustFaith Ministries, specifically their module on "The Sultan and the Saint" (on St. Francis of Assisi's efforts to stop violence between Christians and Muslims of that time), and "Crossing Borders" (on the complex issue of migration and the theology of the human journey). Find these, and other modules, at: <http://justfaith.org/programs/justmatters-modules>

Don't forget, Rice Bowl will be starting soon! The many resources that can help in your Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, learning and alms-

giving can be found at: www.crsricebowl.org or by contacting the Mission Office.

Mission Service Idea:

Today is International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking. Your community can help by hosting a prayer service; prayer resources are available on the USCCB website. Another timely action would be to host a sale of "Prosperity Candles" (which make great Valentine's gifts!). These fair trade candles made by women entrepreneurs escaping human trafficking serve as both a reminder for those purchasing them to continue to pray and "shine a light" on this often hidden reality, as well as a means of alleviating a hardship too many of our brothers and sisters face. Learn more or purchase your candles at: www.prosperitycandle.com/products/crs-human-trafficking-candle



Don't Forget:



Feb 8: International Day of Prayer & Awareness against Human Trafficking

Feb 10: Discussion with Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars at the St. Cloud Public Library from 4-5:30pm.

Feb 20: Mission Office closed for Presidents Day

Feb 22-Mar 3: Mission Office closed during delegation to Kenya

Feb 23: Joint Religious Legislative Coalition's Day on the Hill

Mar 1: Lent begins

Words of Wisdom: "Hope is God's gift to us. But because it is a virtue, it is a gift that has to be cultivated, nurtured and practiced lest it shrivel and die." ~Paul Wadell, of *America Magazine* ~