



PROPHETIC WORDS Toronto International Conference 2016

“Listen My children. I call you to come with open hands and open hearts into My loving presence. I am with you all. I desire you to unite yourself to Me and be with Me each moment of your day.

Are hearts troubled? Are you uneasy and unsure of what the future holds? Give it all to Me. Place each anxiety, doubt and fear into My loving healing hands. Surrender them to Me and place them at the foot of My Cross. I have already blessed and consecrated each of you to My Sacred heart I carried each burden as I carried My cross. Speak to me. Give each of your concerns to Me Let Me make your needs My needs. I want to be the

Center and focus of every aspect of ACTHeals. Let Me in ! “

Antoinette Mc Dermott

“Trust ! Trust! TRUST! What I seek from you is Trust! Only as you trust in Me - in My Love- My care- My provision - will you be free to carry out the call I have placed on you: the call to redeem my people.. Listen and obey. Push forward with making My healing power known, and surrender all else to Me! For I am a faithful and covenant-keeping God. TRUST ME !”

Denise Dolff

“My Children,

Listen to the roar of My love for you. You are My shining star, My greatest treasure. Behold Me seeing you with loving eyes, trusting Heart and a willingness to be your All. Come. Be not afraid. I await you.

Antoinette McDermott

“ What do you see, Beloved as you gaze into My Sacred Heart? Look within now - I am closer to you than your own breath I am alive in you. Gaze into My Eyes. See the Firelight of My holy love on My Face? The Father and I burn with a Divine Desire to draw you closer to

Us! Can you let go and let yourself fall into this mercy-full Firelight -- free-fall into a tenderness you have never known before? Come. Only sweet ecstasy awaits you. Oh, My Beloved! Surrender your heart into Mine!”

Ann Arcieri

“Children of My Heart,

I have not called you here for your own glory nor have I beckoned to you just to increase your personal gifts. NO! I have called and chosen you because you are MY Beloved Ones! Because you once said, ‘YES. Send me!’ Because in your

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InterACT

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The vision of ACTheals is to be an international, ecumenical association of Christian healthcare professionals, clergy, and associates equipped and extending the healing presence, heart, and mind of Jesus Christ to their patients, clients, colleagues, and institutions, under the power and guidance the Holy Spirit.

The mission of ACTheals is to provide resources and support to enable healthcare professionals, clergy, and associates to: 1) Personally experience the healing power of Jesus Christ; 2) Integrate their professional skills, spiritual development, healing ministry, and theological understanding; and 3) Extend the healing presence, heart, and mind of Jesus Christ through their work and ministry.

We invite your comments/suggestions, written thoughts, or submissions. We reserve the right to edit submitted articles without notice. Your name can be withheld by request in *InterACT*, but must be included with a contact phone or email when your article is submitted. We also request that a current digital "headshot" photo of you accompany your submission.

The next deadline for *InterACT* is
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President's Letter

by Nancy Morgan.

Dear ACTheals members and friends,

It is with a sense of awe that I write this letter as your new ACTheals President. Following in the footsteps of our founders who faithfully answered the prophetic call during a retreat on Staten Island in 1975, is a call worthy of our efforts and dedication.

"Redeem MY people, in your hospitals, in your clinics, in your offices. Make them MY hospitals, My clinics, MY offices. Let ME care for them and bring them health beyond healing. Let ME care for YOU, and bring YOU to health, to wholeness, to holiness. Give ME your professional skills, your credentials, Yield them to MY authorization, consecrate them to MY name, for MY glory, and I will be glorified in your healing work."

First, I would like to thank all those who provided us with such an enjoyable and inspiring conference in Toronto. Your Canadian hospitality was like no other! The Catch the Fire ministry blessed us with holy laughter that will not be forgotten.

I also want to thank Fr. Bob Sears, SJ who is leaving the board as our Past President...but will stay as our Spiritual Advisor. Also, thanks to Denise Dolff, who is currently serving on the board as our Past President. She continues to be an inspirational leader, mentor and partner in prayer to me and to all of us in ACTheals.

*My personal goals for
ACTheals at this time are
to continue igniting the fire
of the original call and to
inspire new leaders that will
bring us into the future.*



Nancy Morgan
ACTheals President

With this in mind, Father Bob will guide a leadership retreat, "Releasing the Power of Jesus", scheduled for February 2017 at Marywood Retreat Center near Jacksonville, Florida. If you feel called to leadership in ACT, but have not been personally invited to join the leadership team, please let me know. Whether or not you can come to Jacksonville, we want to honor the Lord's call to you. We are also beginning an online Support, Empower and Witness group for leaders who will be meeting monthly in prayer for ACTheals and for one another. Ideally, this is just the beginning of something that will spread throughout our ranks.

A major challenge before your current leaders is that we are being required to find a new management support plan beginning January 1, 2017. Although change is difficult, "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Rm. 8:28 NIV)

None of us are here by chance. The Lord promises to be with us always and to equip us for his work. I promise you that I will do all that I can to serve you with prayer, dedication, purpose and love. Please know that I welcome your input and your prayers for leadership worthy of the ACTheals tradition.

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littleness My Glory may shine.

So I ask you today to surrender your fears and all doubts about your own adequacy and worthiness. The work-load is increasing. It is harvest time and I call you to walk beside Me out into the fields where My people are languishing, and yes, even dying spiritually.

But you must be prepared. So I ask you to come follow Me. Come into the Father's Throne Room with Me now. You must be centered in Him as I am. For it is within this Trinitarian Union that you will be imbued with strength from on High to do the work the Father assigned to you at the moment of your conception.

Come. Say YES again., Come into the abyss of Divine Love. Come, Beloved. COME! The Father awaits us. I am Yeshua, your Chief Shepherd, Lord of the Harvest.” Ann Arcieri

“My Beloved ACTHeals,

I love you with the depth of the prodigal Father. I love you with the depth of an all-forgiving and compassionate Mother. I cannot stop or block My love for you, for I am God. I am Love. But I will not force My Love upon You. For as I give My love freely, I desire that you receive My Love freely. Will You say “YES” to My Love? “

Antoinette McDermott

“Be not afraid of what might befall you. Am I not always

with you? I am your constant companion, Your faithful true Friend. I cover your days with My perfect merciful love. I am always covering you with My Resurrection Life. Bask in My light Be refreshed by My Word. Be united with Me. See how easy life is when you connect with the Source of all.”

Antoinette McDermott

VISION:

I saw Jesus smiling and looking up to the heavens. The rain had been pouring down soaking into the soil and forming beads of moisture onto the plants.

He bends down to tend His garden and gently pulls out weeds and casts them aside where they would wither and die The weeds come out easily and completely from stem to root. Jesus gently touches the growing plants, one-by-one as He does so, a drop of the Blood runs down the stem and fertilizes the rich soil at the base of the plant.

Maureen Orso

UNSPOKEN WORD

My Children,

Do not be discouraged by the darkness that surrounds you at this time. Remember always that the darkest hour is always just before the light of daybreak and gives forth to the bright sun(Son). It is in that darkest hour that I whisper to the seeds planted in the deep dark ground to germinate and bring forth

new life. Be still, be patient be vigilant for the coming of the new dawn! I am with you always. Renew your hope and your song of praise, My Children. May you be filled with the whisper of My joy and Peace I breathe upon you.

Linda Sacca

“Stand up! Be strong, the world says to you, but I say be strong in ME. I am the way the truth and the life you are called to live. I want to be the Source of all you want and need. Give Me permission to love you as only I can. Perfectly. Abundantly. My Heart cries for you. Let Me in to cover you, protect you and give you My Peace.”

Antoinette McDermott

VISION:

As I hear the call from Jesus to come to Him and allow Him into my heart, I see His Heart ahead of me. My spirit moves towards it and it seems to expand as I draw closer I enter through His Heart which continues to expand I am surrounded by space and great distances. Father god is greater than all of this It seems like the stars and planets are miniscule compared to the Father. He is beyond all of it and in all of it at the same time The whole of this experience is imbued with love and power - the Holy Spirit. There is great intimacy yet a call to move outwards-- far beyond where I am. It becomes a metaphor

for how He wants to draw me in and the wonders of the journey beyond. It is irresistible and I cannot do anything but say “YES”!

Maureen Orso

“Drink deeply of My everlasting enduring love. I call you NOW. Make a firm resolution to come each morning, daily, and into the night I wait for you. I long for you. Experience this deep longing of My Heart. Experience ME wherever you are, wherever you go. I wait for you.”

Antoinette McDermott

SCRIPTURE:

Isaiah 53:4-5

“Yet it was our infirmities that He bore, our sufferings that He endured, while we thought of Him as stricken as One smitten by God and afflicted. But He was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins, upon Him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by His stripes we were healed.”

WORD:

“Dearest Children,

I see you are faithful to My call. Do not be afraid to persevere. My call has not changed. Do not be lukewarm but be on FIRE with Me! Do not be afraid to step out into the darkness. I walk ahead of you. You will

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not fall but will be lifted up. I am yours You are Mine. We walk together until the end of time. This light affliction will pass. Soon you will celebrate. Be ON FIRE with My Joy! I have gone before you. I carry all your concerns STEP OUT WITH HOLY BOLDNESS! Do NOT be afraid. Rejoice always. Be at peace.

Marilyn Dolcetti

“Rouse the Troops. Make demands. Shake them from their comfort zone... Go out and tell the good news to everyone... Go out to those who are burdened by pain and failure, who feel their lives are empty, and proclaim the truth of a loving Father who wants to anoint them with the oil of hope, the oil of salvation... go out with the ointment which soothes wounds and heals hearts. Evangelize at all costs!!”

Carol Inacio

“My Children,

We are in a war and I would have you arm yourselves with My love and grace. ACT is, and will be, MY powerful vessel for healing and reconciliation.

Do not be afraid to call upon Me and My power. I am ready, are You?”

Renee Lavitt

UNSPOKEN WORD

“My Beloved,

I bless you, I anoint you, I commission you and send you forth. I send you as sheep to the wolves, but be not afraid, for I am the Eternal Good Shepherd. I will not abandon or forsake you. My

rod and my staff are with you and I will protect you from all evil that is sent against you. Go in the power of My Name. My Holy Spirit is upon you. Witness to the world that I live, I heal and I call all people into My love and Mercy.”

Denise Dolff

**UNSPOKEN WORD/
VISION**

Image of Mary: Gentle Woman, peaceful Dove. “Do all My Son tells you to do!”

Carmen Shave

UNSPOKEN WORD

“I will give you (great) anointing this weekend !”

Anonymous

FROM THE NURSES’ MEETING:

“Hands that heal, hearts that love. My Presence is with you always. Continue in My power. You are anointed to do My work. Be brave. Have courage. Give what you have with Joy, My Beloved.!”

Carmen Edwards

“Breathe, receive, give, receive, give receive... give! You are My faith filled servants loving with My heart and healing in My Holy Spirit. Continue dear ones to “be” My Presence to all”.

Elaine Barstow Gale

Coordinator, Ann Arcieri, Assistant Coordinator, Antoinette McDermott



**ACTheals
New
Members**

**Rosemary Galbraith
Christine Westerhoek
Bernadette Toledo**

One Minute Wisdom
by Anthony de Mello



To a disciple who was often complaining about others the Master said,
“If it is peace you want, seek to change yourself, not other people. It is easier to protect your feet with slippers than to carpet the whole of the earth.”

-- *Anthony d’Mello, (1931-1987) was a Jesuit priest, psychotherapist and spiritual writer.*

The Holy Spirit in Clinical Practice

By Douglas W Schoeninger, PhD



Douglas Schoeninger, PhD

Douglas W. Schoeninger, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist and President of the Institute for Christian Healing in Coatesville, PA. His private psychotherapy practice integrates spirituality and prayer as healing resources, and is focused on the healing of persons and relationships within

an intergenerational perspective. He is also the editor of *The Journal of Christian Healing*

Several months ago, Dr. Anna Pecoraro, an associate professor at the Institute for the Psychological Sciences of Divine Mercy University, interviewed me as part of an ongoing book project on *Healing from the Hearts at the Intersection of Psychology and Faith*. I was grateful to reflect on God's work in my life and my development as a Christian psychotherapist.

Doug: I grew up in a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where I went from grade school to high school. I then went to DePauw University (1957-61) in Greencastle, Indiana, a small Methodist liberal arts college. I joined the engineering curriculum, because my father was an engineer, and I had decent math skills. With a roommate who was a psychology major, I got interested in reading his material. I ended up with a psychology major and a minor in math and chemistry.

The faculty of the psychology department at DePauw was experimentally oriented. There was one clinician there, but the primary attitude towards clinical psychology was very negative. "This isn't real science. This isn't important." I nevertheless chose psychology as a major as I was intrigued by it. This interest grew such that I was prepared to be a psychotherapist with a deeper understanding of family history. My grandfather (father's father) committed suicide when my father was 7. Consequently, my father was

severely wounded emotionally. My mother taught me to take care of him, to protect his vulnerabilities.

When I was a senior at DePauw, a fraternity brother and I had credits to burn. Having fulfilled all our requirements we created our own course with a philosophy professor. It focused on the integration of philosophy and psychology. I began reading Carl Rogers and was attracted to his way of thinking.

I knew that I wanted to go to graduate school because there wasn't any career path per se with an undergraduate psychology degree. I applied to the University of California, University of Michigan and the University of Wisconsin. Though I was accepted at both California and Wisconsin, I chose Wisconsin, as it was closer to home. I began as a graduate assistant in experimental psychology and spent the first year and a half working in a lab researching avoidance conditioning to complex stimuli on rabbits. I completed my master's thesis on conditioning rabbits.

Anna: How did you get from the masters program in experimental psychology to the PhD program in clinical psychology? Did you work with Carl Rogers?

Doug: I chose Wisconsin because Carl Rogers was there. He was a professor in both the psychiatry and psychology departments. I didn't have the courage to go for clinical psychology at first. After a year and half of experimental psychology, it became clear that I didn't want it as it was increasingly difficult. So, I made an appointment with Carl Rogers to request if he would be my major professor. He agreed. That's how my relationship with Rogers began. He had his research project focused on psychotherapy with schizophrenics. He applied Client Centered Therapy on a schizophrenic population. I became a research assistant in that research study. It was a great place to be.

Anna: So, what was Carl Rogers like?

Doug: He was a very good kind listener, interested in the philosophical assumptions that undergird psychological theories. He loved to dialogue. Over the years, I developed a friendship with him. People always thought that Carl Rogers must be an "anything goes" type of person, but he wasn't. He had his limits and boundaries, and he could be very forceful.

Anna: What other influences did you have, in your 'learning phase'?

Doug: After I earned my Ph.D., I went to the University of North Carolina as an assistant professor of psychology for four years.

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Holy Spirit in Clinical Practice

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I was so fortunate, so blessed. *Looking back, I can see the Lord's hand leading me, opening opportunities.* I didn't do anything dramatic to try and create some of the opportunities that were there. I said "yes" to them, but I'm not a pusher in that sense, I'll say "yes" if I discover that I need to go in a specific direction. I became a little bit assertive at times, but I'm not someone who goes out and tries to make something happen.

When I was at the University of North Carolina, I met Fernando Colon who became a life-long friend. He was a foster child from Long Island, and he was searching for his Puerto Rican family in Puerto Rico. It was an exciting time, as he and I began to work on family therapy together. We'd observe each other's work. He was in the psychiatry department and I was in psychology. So, I could go over to the psychiatry department and where we could see clients, observe each other, make transcripts and study them.

That got me going in my lifelong passion for the healing of relationships. Fernando pursued training with Murray Bowen. At his initiative, we would travel on a Friday each month to Richmond, VA from Chapel Hill and watch Murray Bowen do therapy. Murray Bowen came to Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, one Friday a month, to teach the psychiatry residents his method of therapy. Fernando had been in workshops with Bowen, and he convinced him to let us come up and observe those sessions. Subsequently (1968) we learned that there was a family therapy gathering occurring at Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute (EPPI) in Philadelphia. It was a closed conference, by invitation only, a roundtable with Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy (Chair of the Family Psychiatry Department at EPPI) and Murray Bowen and some 20 other family therapists. We were not invited, but Fernando pushed and finally they let us 'fish bowl' it. We sat on the outside and listened. That was where Murray Bowen gave his paper on his own family and his differentiation process. This was a whole new development among family therapists to not only work with their own families therapeutically, but also to present that work.

After four years at University of North Carolina, I decided that I didn't want to be in academia. Frankly, at that point, I'd been in school since 1st grade. Going from graduate school right to teaching was too disconnected from life. I

needed more grounding in the complexities of the world rather than teaching without a background of experience. So, I came to Philadelphia in 1969 to work with a friend on a project integrating faith and psychology and work.

Anna: Right, so during the four years when you were kind of out of the psychotherapy field, you were working on integration for yourself?

Doug: The project was called Metropolitan Associates of Philadelphia. It was ecumenically funded and lasted about eight years. The funding churches were interested in peoples' whole lives. The philosophy was that your faith was your daily walk, not just what you did on Sundays. Hopefully what you engage in on Sunday prepares you or nurtures you, but the action of faith is daily, hour-by-hour, moment-by-moment, in terms of the work of the Holy Spirit. I worked from that angle. I helped a Christian physician to develop a mid-wife centered maternity practice at the Salvation Army hospital. I facilitated the Salvation Army administration, midwives, the doctors and families in developing the maternity service.

When the project ran out of funds, I went through a period of very deep depression. There were just two of us left on the staff, and we had to close the doors. I was at a major transition and was depressed, from 1971-1976. I was fortunate that I could still work, but getting out of bed in the morning was difficult. I felt worthless. My way of saying it was, "I have vision. I feel like God's given me goals, but not the talent to accomplish them." I just didn't feel capable. I wasn't viewed that way by others, but that's how I felt.

I reached out to Barbara Krasner, whom I had met when I was at Metropolitan Associates of Philadelphia who was involved in a project in North Philadelphia. I remembered her and I knew she was now on the staff of the Family Psychiatry Department at Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute (EPPI) where Fernando and I had observed the family therapy gathering in 1968. So, I made an appointment with her, talked with her, and felt a deep connection. She's a Jewish woman and faith centered in everything she does. She invited me to sit in on an Arab-Israeli dialogue gathering, in which she and Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy were involved. During a break, I talked with Ivan. Several days later he called and offered me a job in the Family Psychiatry Department. A door had opened. I learned family therapy while I was on the staff of Family Psychiatry. It was also a very germinal time because Ivan

was developing a new therapy modality, which became Contextual Family Therapy (CFT), a multigenerational perspective.

Anna: Yes, I am familiar with CFT. It would seem to me that your later work, which you have done in a Christian integrative manner, stems from this.

Doug: Yes, it absolutely does. At the same time, I was depressed and searching for healing, my wife found a church in Narberth, Pennsylvania. There I witnessed the charismatic renewal. I am now a non-denominational Christian with Baptist origins. But at that time, I became a Presbyterian for a few years.

Anna: I figured the Holy Spirit would be flying into this story.

Doug: Right. I was very depressed. I was beginning my work at EPPI. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and learning healing prayer occurred while I was learning family therapy.

Anna: That's an amazing coincidence: Those two things at once.

Doug: Exactly. It was amazing because I began to do some active integration of healing prayer and family therapy while I was there at Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute. In that Institute, you basically created your job. You were obligated to see a few families, but seeing three or four families per week sufficed. With the rest of the time you were to create your own projects and do your own thinking and writing. So I had these two worlds simultaneously going on. I was going for spiritual help, receiving prayer for healing and was prayed over for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I began to study healing prayer and I was learning family therapy.

Anna: You were seeking healing for depression. Maybe this search for healing led you down the path to discover ways to help others find healing.

Doug: Yes, absolutely. *My own healing and my learning were all connected. Completely connected. Really, it's how God works.* My work at EPPI ended in 1977. The Institute for Christian Healing (ICH) was founded in 1976 as an extension of the healing ministry at Narberth Presbyterian Church, in Narberth, PA. I started working there part-time in January of 1977, as things were ending at EPPI. Bill Carr was hired to establish ICH and became the first director when the elders of Narberth Presbyterian Church (NPC) voted not to have oversight over ICH. This turned out to be God sent because Bill then established ICH as an ecumenical therapeutic ministry over the years. Our therapists were Roman Catholic, Messianic Jewish, Presbyterian, and

Episcopalian. This turned out to be extremely good as we reached more people, educated each other about our different traditions and theologies and appreciated the whole Church. We came to believe that what we were doing as therapists living across these boundaries was part of healing the Church.

Anna: Did any other experiences help you to develop your personal integration of psychology and Christian spirituality?

Doug: I was involved at NPC in the Charismatic renewal and was working daily on the integration of psychology and spirituality. This integration became very central to my work with Ivan Nagy and Barbara Krasner in Contextual Family Therapy. I saw that what Ivan was saying to me was grounded in God, and it made sense to me. One of the fundamental family dynamics highlighted in Contextual Family Therapy is giving forward. In other words, you repair injuries that have been passed generation to generation for the sake of future generations, and you also take what has been given and translate it into something of value for future generations. That's core to Contextual Family Therapy.

Gratitude for life isn't just gratitude for one's grandparents and parents, or one's cultural placement, positive or negative, but that all comes from the Creator and the Spirit who lives among us.

Anna: Right, so that moves it into the spiritual realm. So, then the wounds aren't just relational, but they're spiritual. And the treatment becomes not just relational and human, but also spiritual and God focused. That makes sense.

Doug: Exactly. *Ultimately relational healing is spiritual healing because you're bringing relationships into the pattern that God made. You're responding to what God has done. You're not just creating something on your own. Every relationship has a call upon it.* It's not simply, "Yes, I met this person, I like this person." It's more than that. A relationship has a call upon it. So, there's an ordination to every relationship in that sense. Therefore, to bring things in to right order means being penetrated by the work of the Holy Spirit, who's making that order within us, through us, between us. You can't separate inner healing and healing relationships.

I hold the view that everything that is true is of the Holy Spirit. It doesn't matter what terms it is in. But if it's true, it's the way God made things. If it's truthful, if it mirrors or

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represents reality, then it's in tune with and reflects the Holy Spirit. So, good science is Holy Spirit science. If you're doing good science, and discovering something that has validity to it, then it's in union with God. It's just the way it is.

Anna: That makes sense because they say God is truth: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life... (Jn 14:6)"

Doug: And God is creator. Creation hasn't stopped. It's ongoing. *The Holy Spirit is active every moment, everywhere.* So, the Institute for Christian Healing (ICH) became the context in which I would then integrate all of this. The practice I have even right now is still ICH. We've changed the organizational structures, but the practice I have right now is the same practice that I had in 1976.

A Love Poem for People Trying to Connect

Right Now

We sensed it
We felt it
We knew it
The new heaven
The one we live in every day
Nothing is discarded
Everything exists

So as we sensed, felt and knew
Surrounded by greenery underfoot
Overhead the sky being itself
Always there
And speaking to those who listen
The mystery of known and unknown descended
(or did it rise up)

Objects become other than they are
Speaking in a love language
Taking on meaning more profound
Than something designed by human,
Manufactured of earth elements by many
Yet we experience the mystery of transformation
Taking us by surprise

Was it the surprise
The surroundings
The foreign object making its entrance
Or people not looking for a miracle
But ready and open to accepting it
The time was right

The time was right
Frightening and right.

© Royce Johnston, August 21, 2016



My husband and I are aging at home as we enter yet another phase of our 'Learning to Be Human'. I continue to learn Ecumenical Prayer while serving on the Heights Christian Church Community Advisory Board and HCC Peace and Justice Committee.

My poetry gives me words for what I find deep within. It is always a surprise discovery.

Royce Johnston

Ecuador Mission Trip by Mike MacCarthy



Mike MacCarthy

Mike MacCarthy is the former Editor of *InterACT*, and has recently published *Maiden General: How 17-Year-Old Joan of Arc Saved France at the Battle of Orleans--A True Story*. This has been selected as a finalist in the Historical Fiction category of the 2016 Next Generation Indie Book Awards. www.mikemaccarthy.com

Week Two:

At the end of our first week in Ecuador (by previous arrangement through our wonderful friend Katie), Father drove the three of us into downtown Guayaquil on Sunday to the residence of Sister Annie Credidio, a member of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (B.V.M.). She has dedicated the past 33 years of her life to bringing care and dignity to Hansen's (leprosy) patients. In the early 1990s, Sister Annie and other local nursing volunteers came together to found Damien House, a medical and patient care facility dedicated to transforming the lives of patients infected with and recovering from Hansen's disease.

Sister Annie—as she prefers to be called—was a bundle of non-stop energy. No sooner had we been introduced and checked into our new digs next door from her, when we all left for Damien House—a “10 minute walk.” Sister may be in her 60s, but she set a mean pace, striding ahead of us like a military leader leading troops into battle. To reach our destination, we raced with her across wide roads where there were no crosswalks, street lights, or traffic controls. We soon discovered that on Ecuadorian streets and highways it's open season on pedestrians. Before we knew it, we were standing at the front door to Damien House; it had only taken 10 minutes, but walking had seldom been an option.

Sister now took us on a “grand tour” of her facility of which she was clearly proud, and with good reason. When she first saw this place as a volunteer three decades ago, filth, rotting trash, and vermin were its main occupants, and it wasn't nearly as big. In those days, Hansen's disease patients sometimes lay in bed for days with little food or medical care as rats crawled over and around them. Before our trip to Ecuador, Kathy and I didn't realize that the extreme prejudice and disgust toward those afflicted with leprosy in Biblical times still exist today among the people of Guayaquil—a city that

advertises itself as modern and on its way to 21st Century economic growth and cultural enrichment.

Just a few months before we arrived, the city police found a 93-year-old man abandoned by his family in a wheel chair on the streets with nothing but a sleeveless undershirt and pajama bottoms. The officers brought him to Damien House where he was welcomed, fed, bathed, given a place to sleep, and the weeping wounds on his face given immediate and appropriate medical care. Today, Ernesto is one of the most beloved patients at Damien House. He's usually very quiet, except when he's given the opportunity to sing—then it's hard to quiet him back down!

Ernesto has now joined about 38 other men and women adults who live at Damien House full-time. That doesn't count the many dozens who come each week for out-patient treatments of their Hansen's disease. Sister never turns anyone away, no matter how badly they're infected or angry at the world—as long as they're not a criminal on the run. She understands the emotional pain of those infected and has great patience with them, but makes them agree to treat everyone at this facility with kindness and grace. That's her only rule—their religion is of zero concern.

So as Sister led us around, she introduced us to everyone—one-on-one. Again, Katie had been there many times before, and it was like “old home week” for her and most of the residents, as well as the staff. Even though none of these mainly senior citizens had ever met Kathy or me, they welcomed us with open arms, hugs, and genuine warmth. Here they were, these incredibly loving diseased survivor strangers with missing digits, hands, arms, feet, legs or worse, hugging us and whispering, “*Mucho gusto*,” in our ears, and then, “*¿Hasta mañana?*”

They weren't sure if we would be coming back. You see, that's a big thing with Hansen's disease patients. They seldom have visitors. They love visitors—any visitors, even complete strangers. The thing that was so

amazing about them all was their attitude—no feeling sorry for themselves; always cheerful and taking things one day at a time. Most of them keep their minds and hearts filled with love by being creative—painting or making things with their hands such as jewelry, clothes bags, or hammocks. A group of men held a daily game of dominos.

Later that afternoon on the way back to our rooms, we asked Sister if we could bring our guitars tomorrow and sing for the residents. “Go ahead,” Annie said, “but try to do it before lunch. Around noon is when they get their meds, and then they want to sleep.”

Over the next several days, Kathy and I played and sang for both the women and men in the morning hours, in their separate wings and common areas. At first, the men were a little stand-offish, and the women more responsive. Everyone seemed to like “Guantanamera,” “Resucitó,” and “De Colores” and they clapped and sang with us—especially when we provided them with song sheets. At one point, some of the women joined in with percussion instruments—miniature marachas, tambourines, and shakers. They shouted and cheered almost like they were at rock concert.

On Tuesday afternoon, one of the office staff asked if we would play and sing at Wednesday's Mass in their chapel. They asked us to do an Entrance song, a Communion song, and a Recessional song. We agreed and then they told us the names of the songs they wanted; we'd never sung or heard any of them.

We spent the rest of that afternoon and evening on the Internet, finding the words and chords to each song, and then listening to them on “YouTube” so we would have an idea of how they went. By Wednesday morning, we had a fairly good idea, but it really didn't matter. By the time Mass started, the chapel was packed—standing room only. As soon as the priest started

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toward the altar, we began and were immediately drowned out by a tsunami of voices and clapping hands so loud, we could barely hear ourselves—no one needed songbooks. It went that way for the rest of the Mass, and they didn't wait for us to lead them either. They sang on their own for the rest of the celebration, except for the Communion and Recessional.

The only reason they didn't start singing without us was because they were waiting for someone to give them the key. During Communion, the priest walked to where we were singing and playing and placed the wafer on our tongues. And after the end of the Mass, a blind older gentleman, who had been playing his accordion with us throughout the Mass by ear, stood in front of the congregation and played and sang a song to the Blessed Virgin. The whole place rocked as they sang and clapped and stomped another song from their hearts—again no songbooks needed. The young priest said a perfect Mass and gave a moving homily, which Kathy translated for me the best she could.

Kathy and I are still stupefied when we think back on that Mass because the spirit of the Lord was so powerfully there in that chapel with all those people whose only possession was their complete love of the Lord and His Mother. Everyone felt the presence of the Holy Spirit, and commented about it afterward. Kathy and I had a hard time hiding our tears of joy.

What a beautiful surprise!

Two days later it was Friday and our last day in Guayaquil. After daily Mass and an early trip to the Malecon (a beautiful new boardwalk along the Rio Guayas), we planned to spend the rest of the day singing and playing at Damien House for as long as Sister Annie would let us. We started with the women and were having a great time—lots of group participation and clapping—when one of the staff asked us to come and play for the men.

When we arrived in the men's common area, a big amp system had been set up, playing loud Spanish music with a great beat, and so Kathy and I started dancing. Pretty soon, we had a lot of company—both men and Damien House staff. Then someone turned off the amp system, and asked us to play

and sing, so we did. Pretty soon some of the women residents showed up and joined in the singing and clapping. The place was jumping.

Then, one of the male residents stood up and sang a whole song *a cappella* and was soon joined by those (both men and women) who knew the words, while everyone else clapped. After a few more men solos, one of the staff took over the mike and began sounding like an MC. We looked around and noticed that a lot of the women and Damien House staff had arrived. The MC woman asked Kathy and I—and two others that were also leaving in the next day or two—to sit down near her.

Next thing we knew, one of the men residents stood up, took the mike, and addressed us in Spanish. Fortunately, Kathy understood that he was saying nice things about us—thanking us for coming and singing with them, wishing us well on our journey home, blessing us and our families—and then he handed me an incredible 4" x 4" butterfly he'd created out of yarn. It was interwoven with many colors, beautiful to the eye. He then ended his little presentation by inviting us to come back soon, and then sang a short song that everyone else knew and joined in singing with him. I had all I could do to stop from breaking into tears.

Right after that, one of the women residents got up and did the same thing for Kathy and the other two of our team. When we thought they were done, we took turns saying how much we appreciated their welcome and their kind gifts and the time we had spent with them—me in English with Sister Annie translating, Kathy did it all in Spanish. Before we knew it, someone else was up giving us another homemade present and saying nice things...and another...and another! We then realized that this presentation was going to last for a while. Each time, we had all we could do to hold back our tears—their unconditional love and generosity to virtual strangers was mind-boggling. Talk about a surprise!

Bear in mind, these people own no material goods or wealth except the clothes given them. These diseased people run the gamut of any population with respect to education or sophistication; their main cross is that they've been struck by a disease for which modern medicine has found treatment that will terminate its growth, and if caught early, can be completely cured. Unfortunately,

they live in a country that's lying to the world about its leprosy population for fear that foreign investment would diminish or cease if word of their leprosy population were well-known. As a result, their public health officials falsify reports about the number of leprosy cases to their own government as well as to the World Health Organization. Moreover, those running Ecuador have taken over control of the distribution of the medicine that can cure or prevent leprosy. They will not permit importation of curative drugs by independent local, national, or international organizations. Anyone who attempts to do so is subject to immediate arrest and imprisonment.

Damien House has sufficient medicine to treat its patients and those who come there for out-patient treatment, but there are innumerable others in the city and country who have the disease and don't know about DH or cannot get there. Worse yet, the vast majority of Ecuadorians treat those who have or "may have" leprosy with vicious hatred, fear, and prejudice, as in the case of Ernesto. Another such example is that of an Ecuadorian Catholic nun who had leprosy as a young woman and was cured, but dared not tell the truth to anyone, even her fellow Sisters. When she finally summoned the nerve to tell them, one of her fellow nuns would have nothing to do with her and asked for an immediate transfer.

In the song, "Be Not Afraid," we hear and see the words, "Blessed are your poor, for the kingdom shall be theirs. Blest are you that weep and mourn, for one day you shall laugh." For Kathy and I, the thing that left us speechless and beyond tears about these wonderful people at Damien House was that they are those about whom this song was written. Yes, they're poor, and yes, they've known days of mourning and tears, but today they were laughing and clapping and singing for people they barely knew. Why? Because we came to see them and spent time with them and listened to them and sang with them.

Talk about surprises. They were indeed the face of God! We were and remain humbled to the very marrow of our being into speechlessness. All we could think to do was to hug them back, and tell them that they will always be in our prayers—no matter where we go.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you for all these blessed surprises! ☪

Did You Know?

In this month of November, even though the Jubilee Year of Mercy has come to a close, practice of the many facets of mercy (compassion, justice, forgiveness, stewardship), will continue to grace us in our journey to Christ. November is also the Month of the Holy Souls for Catholics, when there is greater emphasis on offering works of mercy, charity, prayer and Masses for the forgotten souls in Purgatory. The visions of several saints including Saints Padre Pio, Faustina (Diary of St. Faustina), Bridget, Theresa of Avila, Gemma Galgani to name a few, attest to the existence of this place of cleansing/atonement before we journey to Him, who is all Perfect and Holy.

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Editor's Note

Dear InterAct Readers, Subscribers and Advertisers,

Welcome to *InterAct Winter 2016*.

I hope that you would enjoy this issue, share the message of ACTHeals and extend an invitation to anyone seeking Christ-centered healing connections.

This issue is only possible because of the kind assistance of many in my team.

For those of you who are considering submitting something of interest for our readers, please note that the deadline for the next issue is January 14, 2017.

A photo and a short description of yourself should be included with your submission.

Peace,
Alphiene Anthraper,
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