

“Twinning Project – Our Experience”
St. Therese Little Flower Parish
Cincinnati, Ohio
July 25, 2002

Jubilee Year 2000, Pope John Paul II called the People of God to live “jubilee”. What did this mean? The people of St. Therese Little Flower Parish soon accepted the challenge to “Open Wide the Doors to Christ”, the theme chosen for this Holy Year of Jubilee. The people learned it was about “setting captives free” as the Book of Leviticus states, “Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.” (Lv. 25:10) (This quote is inscribed on our national monument, the Liberty Bell.) The parishioners of Little Flower realized the “Jubilee Year” was about what the prophet, Isaiah, speaks about in (Is. 61) to restore freedom and justice among people, to re-establish relationships and to remedy the conditions that keep people oppressed.

The members of the Parish Life Commission believed this call of the Church, rooted in Scripture, was a **call to action**. They wanted to make a difference! They wanted to live the “Jubilee Call”. To respond, this spirit-led group decided during its July meeting, in the year 2000, to embark upon a Twinning Project with the Sisters of Divine Providence in their mission efforts in the country of Madagascar. By the coming together of the Little Flower Parish with a parish in Madagascar, the people would create an active, mutual and ongoing faith commitment. Thus, began the initiation of a project that would lead this small, but spirited group of parishioners into an ongoing deepening experience of living the Jubilee Year theme, “Open Wide the Doors to Christ”.

Following, in outline form, is a presentation of the evolution of St. Therese Little Flower Parish’s Twinning Project, which is now known as:

“Living the Spirit – Partners in Mission with Madagascar”.

Getting Started

- Sister Francis Margaret Maag, CDP, Director of Religious Education at St. Therese Little Flower Parish told her stories of her experiences in Madagascar during the summer – August 1999
- Parish Life Commission desired to take up the challenge of the Jubilee Year to “set captives free and to bring the Good News to the Poor”
 - o Decided at their July Meeting in the year 2000 to do an outreach for Madagascar
 - o Kathy Shannon, a representative of the Parish Life Commission, along with Sr. Francis met with Archie Bruun, Archdiocesan Mission Director
 - Learned about the “Twinning” idea
 - Given advice on pitfalls to avoid
 - Given materials on aspects of “Twinning”

From “Dream” to Reality

- Presented the idea of “Twinning” with Madagascar to the Parish Council at their September meeting in the year 2000
 - o Gave their general consent and approval
 - o Asked the group to come up with a Long Range Plan

- Kathy Shannon and Sr. Francis, as a sub-committee, prepared a skeletal plan to present to the Parish Life Commission for input and refinement
 - o Used ideas from archdiocesan materials and from IHM's Twinning Project
 - o Established Goals and Objectives
 - o Developed strategies that would help achieve the goals and objectives
 - o Gave it a title that was in keeping with the parish's theme for adult faith formation, "Living the Spirit"
 - o Kept Council aware of the plan in the making over the months following its September meeting
 - o Presented "Living the Spirit – Partnership in Mission with Madagascar" to the Parish Pastoral Council at their meeting, June 24, 2001.
 - Were very interested and asked various questions
 - Gave their unanimous approval

Putting the Plan into Action

- Educational process begun
 - o Met with the principal, Mrs. Kennedy and the school teachers in August of 2001
 - Explained the overall plan and encouraged their participation & incorporation into their teaching
 - Called on their support along with their students in particular activities planned for 2001-2002
 - o Sister Emerita McGann, CDP missionary to Madagascar, was invited to speak about the conditions of the people of Madagascar
 - Gave three separate presentations to the school children; primary, intermediate and junior high on October 10, 2001
 - Spoke at all the masses, Mission Sunday, October 20 –21, 2001- with a follow up mission collection for the Archdiocesan Mission Office
 - Resulted in more parishioners getting involved
 - One decided to give monthly donations for Madagascar
 - Another, decided to share her expertise in water purification, learned from her job with Proctor & Gamble
 - Sister presented a hand-carved crucifix from Madagascar (Later, Fr. King had it beautifully encased for display in the church with an acknowledgment and the words, "Lord, be mindful of me and look with favor upon me." Tobit 3:3 translated into Malgase)
 - o Presented the Five Year Plan to the parishioners at all the weekend masses, October 13 – 14, 2001 (Included an insert into the parish bulletin)
 - o Published the Five Year Plan in the parish's November monthly magazine, "Focus"
- Prayer action and More Parish Involvement
 - o School children helped members of the Parish Life Commission prepare "Prayer Wreaths" Oct. 22 –26,2001
 - Primary children made copies of their "hand"

- Intermediate children made up “Prayer Petitions” to place on the “hands”
 - Junior High children put the wreaths together and hung them in the church and school the following weekend
 - Parishioners were invited the following weekends to take a “hand”, place it on their refrigerator as reminder to pray for that particular intention related to a need of the Madagascar people
 - Special prayer petitions were prepared to be included in the masses on weekends
- Communications with the Sisters of Divine Providence
 - Sent the Five Year Plan to the Superior General of the Congregation, Sister Marie Therese and to the Provincial of Madagascar, Sister Felicitas
 - A parishioner had it translated into French
 - A special letter, expressing our desire and plan to be in relationship with them for our “Twinning Project” was included with the plan
 - Were advised by the Superior General to focus on one particular mission – Antsakabary, where Sister Adelphine works along with three young Malgase Sisters
 - Are in the process of creating Education Centers in the areas where children can’t come to the regular mission center
 - The parish priest, Pere Thomas, has rigged up email, via a ham radio, that allows us to communicate with them
 - Sister Adelphine has sent words of thanks and appreciation to us and informed us about the missionary work going on under her direction
 - The Sisters in the General Administration and Sister Felicitas, in the country for a Congregational meeting, paid the Parish Life Commission a visit at their regular meeting, June 10, 2002 (All parishioners were invited to attend)
 - Shared pictures of Antsakabary and stories
 - Received a check for \$1042, raised by the Parish Life Group (see below)
 - Deep appreciation expressed by Sister Felicitas as well as an acknowledgement of the wonderful efforts of the parish and the Parish Life Com.
 - Told us of the one value of great importance to their country – “relationships” (Finavanana)
 - The Catholic Telegraph was present to take pictures and to get a news story on this historic event
 - Mike Gable, Mission Director for the Archdiocese, was present to meet the Sisters and to give his encouragement for the parish project on “Twinning”
- Fundraising Plan – “Music Extravaganza” – April 27, 2002
 - Involved getting company sponsors to donate food for refreshments
 - Involved a parish family, (From a family of TV fame, the mother was the 1st female Rockabilly Player, was an entertainer on Mid-Western Hayride

and was a writer for Acuff & Rose of Nashville) to offer their time and talent to put on this show

- Offered impersonations on Elvis Presley, Bonnie Raiter, Patsy Cline, Roy Orbison and other famous musical talent
- Provided for TV personality, Larry Smith and Puppets, to do part of the entertainment
- Raised \$1042 after expenses were covered, and presented it in person to the Sister from Madagascar

Thus, Little Flower Parish has come to the end of its first year of putting their Long Range Plan into action. To conclude the year with an actual visit from the Sisters of Madagascar was a sign that the Providence of God is guiding this important project. To see the joy in the faces of the Sisters as they met with the group of parishioners and hear their words of appreciation for the generous donation and assurance of its use for the education and needs of the people in Antsakabary was truly rewarding. New energy came to the group in planning for their 2nd year of the project.

Planning for the Year 2002 – 2003 has begun

- Plan for a “Water Purification Project” is under way
- Sister Emerita gave talks at all the masses, the weekend of July 13-14, 2002, with a collection taken up – this time - earmarked for Madagascar because of our “Twinning Project”
- Second Annual “Music Extravaganza” set for April 26, 2003
- Plans are in the making for visiting Madagascar
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Our hope is to live “Ongoing Jubilee” as we faithfully carry out our “Partnership in Mission with Madagascar”.