



The joy of the Lord is our strength!

Dear Friends in Christ,

My first year in missions was more than I would or even could have hoped for. The Mexican people welcomed me with open arms and showed me how to really love Christ. I have spent countless hours with the poor of Mexico, learning about myself and about how God is moving in the world around me. The Mexican people are so open and eager to hear the Good News of the Gospel. It makes me sad to think that my year in Mexico has ended, but I am excited for what God has planned for my missionary journeys in the year to come.

I have recently been studying an encyclical by John Paul II called Mission of the Redeemer. I have been learning about my call to missions and what it means to be a missionary. Being a missionary is not just about giving alms and taking care of those less fortunate than us, but more so, of preaching the Gospel where it is needed most. Where people have forgotten about Christ and who He is, where people have stopped believing and where the Catholic Church is dying - there is the need for a "new evangelization" or "re-evangelization".(p.44-46) One of the most important calls as a missionary is to be a witness for Christ. "People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission....The first form of witness is the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family, and of the ecclesial community, which reveal a new way of living. The missionary who despite all his or her human limitations and defects, lives a simple life, taking Christ as the model, is a sign of God and of the transcendent realities."

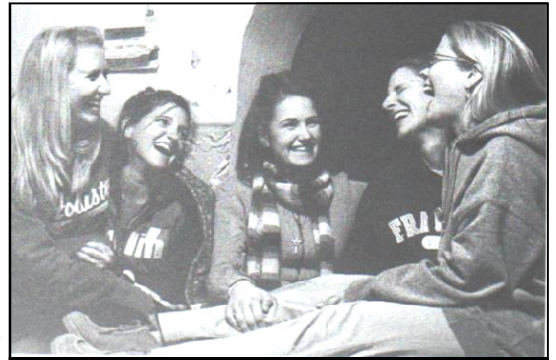
While reading this I can't help but think about the Catholic Church in our world today and of how much in need it is of re-evangelization, especially in Europe. I recently read an article called "The Catholic Church Withers in Europe." In the article Pope Benedict is quoted as saying, "the erosion of the Church in Europe is one of the greatest challenges facing my papacy." The percentage of Catholics who attend Mass regularly is usually less than 20%. In some dioceses in Catholic countries, no priests are being ordained out of their seminaries. "One of the most important efforts to stem the tide shifting away from the church in Europe will be reaching out to the youth", says Rev. Augustine DiNoia, undersecretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

I have been invited to serve God in this crucial time of upheaval in the church in Europe. A Spanish priest whom our FMC missionaries met over the summer recently in Calcutta wrote a letter begging FMC to send missionaries to help him in his outreach to youth in the Diocese of Cordoba Europe, and especially to concentrate on bringing youth into the life of the Church, I am grateful to have the opportunity to respond to his call and to serve Jesus as a missionary to the church in Spain.

Your support in the past has been essential to my work building the Kingdom of God in Mexico. I humbly ask that you consider continuing to support my missionary efforts to one of the most spiritually impoverished places in the world today, a place that our Pope says "has become empty from the inside, crippled, as it were." Help me to fill Spain with the truth and joy of Jesus Christ and to strengthen the crippled body of Christ there.

All contributions made to Family Missions Company are tax deductible.

Peace & Love in Him,
Kristen Istre



The Spain Mission Team: from left to right Kristen Istre, Sheila Agresta, Maria Moran, Bridget Kohring, and Sarah Speihler

P.S. Check out my Blog at : www.fmcmisions.com

"GO! YOU ARE SENT"

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