



For We Are God's Helpers

Share your gifts, live your faith, change the world ... and let the world change you.

The Powerful Work of Formation

"Formation has been a powerful experience," says Matt Kadavy, one of four candidates in the LMH Formation Program this fall. "I went from thinking, 'I'm not going to last two weeks' to 'God is going to change my life so that someone in Africa can see Him in me.'"

Formation is a four-month program that helps prepare Lay Mission-Helpers for the range of experiences and emotions they will endure while on mission. Through communal living, coursework and daily prayer, this process can unearth some uncomfortable truths about themselves.

"Being the only introvert in a house with three other extroverts, I'm realizing it is not always easy for me to express my feelings," says Diane Yonga. "I also realized that I grew up with a very narrow view of Catholicism and my faith."

According to LMH Director Janice England, these self-realizations are essential to preparing to serve on mission.

"There is a big emphasis in the program on knowing your own self and what makes you tick as you prepare to live in another culture," says England. "Stress is a part of the mission experience, and we want missionaries to have developed coping strategies to use when they are away from the comforts of home."

"As a former member of a religious community," says Maria Luisa Garcia, "I realized that it takes a lot of work to live in a lay community. In the lay community there is no authority figure. I am learning to be more patient, more collaborative and work on conflict resolution skills with my housemates."

Professors who are experts in their fields teach the Formation Program curriculum. Classes on "Living and Serving in a Turbulent World: Violence, Trauma and Safety," and "Managing Stress Overseas" give missionaries



LMH candidates include (l to r): Maria Luisa Garcia, Matt Kadavy, Karen Hunka and Diane Yonga.

practical training for the range of experiences they will have.

Other classes invite the candidates into personal reflection, like Sister Judy Gomilla's course on "Action & Contemplation." Sister Judy began by having the candidates reflect on this quote by Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM: "A disciple is both a learner and a companion of Jesus Christ, as well as one open to the movement of the Holy Spirit toward a gracious generosity of heart." The reflective time preceded her key message for missionaries: "Use economy of words."

"My favorite class so far has been Sister Judy's," says Kadavy. "The thing that stuck with me was her emphasis on the economy of words: 'Say what needs to be said. Then stop.'"

(cont.)

Second Chance Students' Bright Future

By Danita Kurtz, LMH Missioner
serving in Papua New Guinea

Caritas Technical Secondary School may be known as a school for second chance girls, but there are students who are going to succeed despite the label.

"I have wanted to become a surgeon ever since I read the book on Ben Carson," says Ursula Kamo. Ursula is always at the top of her class and her grades reflect her ambition to become a doctor.

"Ever since I met a friend of my mother's who is an airline pilot, that's what I wanted to do," says Jahlyne Jerry. "Her stories of traveling the world make me work harder in my studies." Jahlyne is the number one student in her class and is on her way to accomplishing her dreams.

Joshuanna Watur, the shyest student in my class, is a good writer. She may not say much, but what she writes speaks louder than my vocal students. I have introduced Journal Wednesday in my English classes and in her journal was a special note thanking me for the opportunity to express herself. She went from the lowest achieving student to a high achieving student. Her ambition is to become a lawyer. I look forward to reading everything she writes.



Danita Kurtz and her students.

Work of Formation continued

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"I'll be spending my first year doing a lot of listening to what's going on," Kadavy continues. "I'm not going to say 'this is Christ in me.' I'm going to show them and listen."

"Sister Judy helped me realize that during the rough times in mission, I will need to slow down and get in touch with what I am thinking and feeling so I can make good and sound choices," says Karen Hunka. "She helped me realize that our decision to go on mission is what God is calling us to do."

The classes in Formation do not shy away from the fact that life in mission can be hard.

"I'm learning that in order to survive the times of loneliness and challenges with situations I've never experienced before, I need to be in union with God, understand His will in my life and feel Him in my heart, mind and soul," says Yonga. "Knowing He's there for me will help me survive the difficult times."

And slowly, but surely, the transforming work of the Holy Spirit begins.

"Not only are classes expanding my view of mission, but they are opening up to me a lot of different ways to love the Lord," says Yonga. "I'm learning to be open to the way Mass is celebrated, to the lively music and dancing. I realize that God works in people's lives in many different ways."

Is four months too long? Not according to the candidates. "I'm



LMH candidates learn valuable skills in Sister Judy Gomilla's class on "Action & Contemplation" (top), and participate with LMH staff and friends in a community fundraising walk for Los Angeles-based Homeboy Industries (below).

grateful to have been plucked out of my daily life and routine and given four months to prepare. How many people get a fourth-month retreat to prepare your spirit and ask 'Is this really what I want to do?'" says Garcia.

"Any shorter would be a disservice," says Kadavy. "I don't think you could see the transforming work in a shorter amount of time."

"We are all on this journey together," says Yonga. "I am very much looking forward to serving."

Sharing 'Faith, Gifts and Hope'

By Eileen McKenzie, LMH '95. Now a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration, she shares her reflection of LMH's past and present mission of bringing cultures and faith together where Christ is profoundly met.

FSPA supports the work of Lay Mission-Helpers for several reasons. One is that it is a lay-led movement that, in the spirit of Vatican II, highlights the gifts of the laity in promoting the mission of the church. They underscore the witness of the family as missionary and offer each volunteer a lengthy, high-quality, faith-based, cross-cultural formation experience before being commissioned.

While many U.S. church organizations working in developing countries concentrate on short-term projects and aid, Lay Mission-Helpers focuses on the mutual exchange of gifts and resources that happens when ordinary people reach out to each other, across cultures and in faith, and spend years working and living together. Volunteers from the U.S. often offer their professional resources and become the recipients of spiritual and cultural experiences that change their lives in unexpected ways.

The conversion that many Lay Mission-Helpers missionaries express after serving in another country is perhaps one of the greatest gifts the organization offers to the church, particularly our U.S. church.

Single people, married couples and families return home and sit in the pews with us. They know what it is like to be a stranger in a strange land, they know what it is like to not understand languages and

customs in a new place, they know what it is like to be totally helpless when first arriving, they know what it is like to need others for their daily needs — and they know that this is where Christ is most profoundly met.

When they share their faith with us, a faith that embraces vulnerability and needs others, they witness to us a faith that doesn't make sense in a culture of individualism and consumerism. They share their faith, gifts and hopes in a culture that desperately needs them.



Sister Eileen McKenzie, LMH Class of 1995 (top), served for three years in Cameroon (bottom).

Being Christ to a Child in South Africa

By Lucille Malaney, LMH '83/92

One weekend while I entered an orphanage for disabled and unwanted children, I heard a child crying a 'hurtful' cry at the end of the large room. I went to see what was giving him so much distress. There he was in bed, facing the wall a few feet away. My heart sank.

As I gently picked him up in his tightly wound fetal position, I could feel his body was cold and stiff. And sitting with him at the end of the bed, with a foot on a stool, I cradled him in my arms wrapping his blanket around him and facing the center of the room where all the

"He wanted to know he was accepted."

activity was taking place.

I began to sing to him quietly and soothingly while my fingers gently stroked his fists, enticing them to open. Slowly he began to relax. Before I knew it, he was fast asleep with the most adorable smile on his face I had ever seen.

I remained this way for some time as I contemplated the birth of Jesus. As I began to stir, he awoke and just lay there looking up at me with bright, beautiful eyes and gave me a big smile.

The other local assistants asked how I got him to stop crying since he had been doing that since he was brought there hours earlier. I told them that he just wanted to know that he was accepted. They, like me, were in awe. He was then a happy child.

"We Need Help!"

The Bishops' Cries Remain Strong

Over 60 years ago, Msgr. Brouwers heard one request when he toured the African dioceses: "We need help!"

Today, the cry from the bishops is still the same, and thanks to your partnership, our Lay Mission-Helpers are answering that call. Early next year, the Class of 2019 will respond to the following needs from bishops in Uganda, Ghana and Papua New Guinea.

"We have a high illiteracy rate, almost 75%, among men and women, so I am in dire need of teachers for our schools," says Bishop Peter Paul Angkyier of the Diocese of Damongo, Ghana. "We need mathematics and science teachers, especially for our girls' school. People still think that women should be in the kitchen doing chores. But where there is Catholic education in our country, we realize how much women are able to contribute and the leadership skills they have."

"We also need teachers," says Bishop Bill Fey of the Diocese of Kimbe, Papua New Guinea. "My diocese has 160 primary schools and one secondary school. Health and education are two big things the church does in PNG because the government is very limited. So we need people with medical training too."

And the needs are similar around the world.

"We need Lay Mission-Helpers in our hospitals, health centers, offices and schools," says Bishop Callist Rubaramira of the Diocese of Kabale, Uganda. "We are a young diocese, and we need the skills of Lay Mission-Helpers to help us grow and to build the kingdom of God among the people."

Besides teaching and working in schools and clinics, sometimes the buildings themselves need attention. "The German missionaries did a good job of planting the faith in Papua New Guinea," says Bishop Bill, "but physically, the place is collapsing. Most of the Religious Sisters have left because there isn't a decent convent to live in. So carpentry skills or electrical skills would be very helpful. I have local workers, but they need a project leader."

But more importantly, the very presence of Lay Mission-Helpers helps broaden the cultural understanding of the universal church wherever they go.

"We have 23 different tribes in our diocese, and that can create cultural barriers within the church," says Bishop Peter Paul. "The fact that we have missionaries coming from abroad helps change that mentality, showing we belong to one faith community. It doesn't matter what color or what country or what faith community you belong to, our shared faith in Jesus Christ is what is



Pictured are: (top) Bishop Peter Paul Angkyier of the Diocese of Damongo, Ghana; (second, l to r) Father Fred Byaruhanga, Uganda; Bishop Bill Fey, Papua New Guinea; Bishop Callist Rubaramira, Uganda; (third)

Girls at St. Ann's Senior High School in Ghana; (bottom) A student in Papua New Guinea displays her Independence Day attire.

important. And this faith unites us."

Looking at the class of 2019, God has gifted each of our Lay Mission-Helpers with a specific skill set to bless these dioceses. Maria Luisa Garcia will go Papua New Guinea to teach at Caritas School with current missionary Danita. Matt Kadavy will serve as a project manager in Uganda. Karen Hunka and Diane Yonga will both travel to Ghana. Karen will work in the finance office of the diocese and Diane will teach at St. Ann's Senior High School for girls.