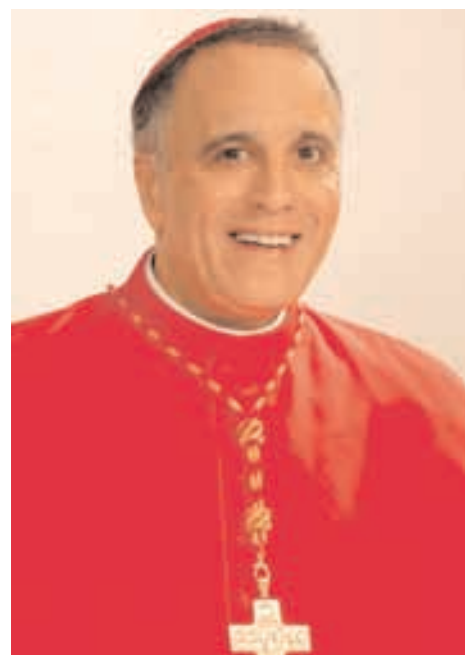




## Catholic Leaders See Value of Cross & Its Mission

The Church continues to play a critical role in serving the poorest of the poor in developing countries around the globe. This is a collaborative mission undertaken by visionary Catholic leaders, socially minded Catholic organizations, and the priests and nuns who live and work among the poor, and it stands as a tribute to the shared spirit and dedication of all those who take part.



Cardinal Daniel DiNardo

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo recently wrote to Jim Cavnar, the president of Cross International Catholic Outreach, expressing his thoughts on the subject: "I wish to commend Cross for incarnating the mission of the Church in serving the poor, much as Christ did through his own incarnation. Your ministry is a fine example of how the Church is called to respond to the needs of the poorest of the poor throughout the world by offering hope in the name of the entire Catholic Community. By standing in solidarity we witness Christ's love for all, as was expressed in the Holy Father's encyclical, 'Deus Caritas Est.'"

"Your close relationship with the Holy Father's Pontifical Council Cor Unum also ensures not only the integrity of your mission, but allows you to reach the missionary Church throughout the entire world," the



Jim Cavnar, president of Cross International Catholic Outreach (right) met with Cardinal Cordes, president of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, during the NCCB meeting in Baltimore.

Cardinal added. "It is my hope that the greater Church will become familiar with the fine work of Cross International Catholic Outreach in the missions through the work of your dedicated preachers."

As Cardinal DiNardo points out elsewhere in his letter, the preachers serving Cross speak in parishes in the U.S., creating a stronger link between American Catholics and their brothers and sisters living and working overseas. This makes these U.S. parishes part of the amazing collaboration of the faithful so effectively serving the poor.

Bishop Paul Swain of Sioux Falls, has also commended this effort in the U.S. and has helped "spread the word."



Bishop Paul Swain of Sioux Falls (at left) and Bishop William Lori of Bridgeport (at right) have a heart for the poorest of the poor. They are committed to Christ's ongoing mission of mercy – a mission the staff of Cross proudly shares.

"I shared your materials and information with our Council of Priests and they enthusiastically endorsed what you are doing," he wrote. "Therefore, I look forward to the opportunity for speakers from Cross to visit our parishes and inform the people of this special and very needed ministry of mercy."

Bishop William Lori of Bridgeport added his "second" to that point.

"I wish to commend Cross International Catholic Outreach for their exceptional work to aid the poor and needy in developing countries. It is my hope that in addition to supporting clergy and religious around the world many others will discover and support Cross' vital missionary outreach," he said.



# CrossRoads

## Cross Gives New Hope to the Vulnerable, Abused

The Tigray State is located in the northern part of Ethiopia – a mostly rural area where the inhabitants depend heavily on agriculture for their livelihood. The Diocese for this region is Adigrat.

Unfortunately, Tigray has been plagued by recurrent drought, outbreaks of war and an extremely rough physical landscape, all of which hinder the people from flourishing. In addition to serious levels of poverty, the area has daunting social problems as well. The women of this extremely poor area are discriminated against – often harassed, abused and bullied by men, including their husbands and other male family members. For example, marital rape is not recognized under Ethiopian law, and it has become an added hardship for many of the women.

Responding to these issues and problems, The Daughters of Charity, founded by St. Vincent De Paul to serve the poor and disadvantaged, have developed a strong presence in Tigray. They now run a number of programs for the area's women and children, including four clinics, two women's self-help centers, three kindergartens, a project supporting orphan and vulnerable street children, a housing project for the most disadvantaged and poorest women, two hostels for girls, a youth outreach and a program that supports women who are elderly or disabled.

"It's important to note that women who suffer such hardships or have been abused develop mental and health issues that plague them and make it difficult for them to work and care for their dependent children," pointed out James Cavnar, president of Cross International Catholic Outreach. "There's also a social stigma attached to domestic violence and abuse. Tragically, women are often blamed for this behavior. I thank God that the Daughters of Charity can counteract some of these issues through



Through Cross Catholic, women who once felt trapped and isolated by their circumstances now have access to new opportunities that give them hope and greater self sufficiency.

their outreaches."

The project most beneficial to these women was organized by Sr. Medhin Tesfay, and it seeks to help 20 women through counseling, training and income-generating opportunities. It's goal is to help the women become self reliant, putting them in a position to support themselves and their families should that become necessary. This program also gives the women a positive outlook, relieving stress in their lives and giving them hope for a better future.

Cross International Catholic Outreach is extremely excited to help fund this project.

"The efforts of the Daughters of Charity are a good match to the philosophy of Cross because they change the face of poverty by empowering the poor," Cavnar said. "It can

literally break the cycle of poverty – and have an impact on the next generation of women, as well."

An interesting aspect of the project is the fact that staff members with Cross have taken on the funding of this project themselves, donating to support the work from their own resources.

"Our staff feels that it's important to make a personal commitment to this work and to take ownership of the projects we ask others to support," Cavnar said. "In this case, our staff is becoming a vested partner in changing lives this Lenten season. And the sense of hope we feel at Easter time gives us pause to reflect on the Paschal Mystery and the redemptive suffering of Christ for all of us in this world."



# An insightful Interview with a dedicated parish priest – **WHY GET INVOLVED?**

St. Mark the Evangelist parish in Norman, Oklahoma has a long-standing relationship with Cross International Catholic Outreach. Fr. Len MacMillan and other Outreach Preachers from Cross have visited the parish over the years, and the parishioners have remained committed to their mission of serving the poor.

About two years ago, St. Mark's pastor, Fr. Boyer, looked at the parish situation and saw a new opportunity. He describes the moment: **"I said to myself: We are a tithing parish and we spend a million dollars a year for the Parish budget and a million dollars for the school. I knew that we needed to do something for the most needy in the world too, and the parish needed to be challenged to tithe to a project. That's when I approached Cross to present some possible projects to us."** Fr. Boyer was interviewed about what happened next:

### How did you select the specific project your parish would undertake?

Fr. Boyer: *I gave the three projects to three families in the parish. None of them knew I*

*was doing this with other families. I asked them to prioritize the projects that were given to us. All three of them picked the Espwa Orphanage project of Fr. Marc in Haiti. I knew then, that this would be our parish project.*

### How does the parish support the project?

Fr. Boyer: *Besides the monthly tithe, the children bring up a special collection every week. They know that this is for the orphans in Haiti. The school has been very involved with the project. They keep up with the events at the orphanage by following Fr. Marc's blog daily. Fr. Marc also posts letters online and the children are always hungry to read them and follow the developments there in Haiti.*

### Are children in the Parish doing anything special this Lent for the project?

Fr. Boyer: *I recently went on a pilgrimage with Jim Cavnar, the president of CICO and we visited Fr. Marc's orphanage. We took many photos, and we are going to do a dis-*



Fr. Marc of Espwa Orphanage – His work will be getting a boost from St. Mark Parish.

*play in the activity center for the students to show them what we saw and experienced. I know it will have a deep impact on them. Deacon Byron Jacobson helps follow the blog and other news coming from Espwa and keeps us up to date as well. We also run announcements in the bulletin to keep the parish informed.*

### How did the parish respond to your recent visit – were they encouraged?

Fr. Boyer: *I spoke at all the masses last*



*weekend sharing my experiences there in Haiti, and specifically with Fr. Marc at the orphanage. It was powerful, and the people really felt personally connected through this sharing. They are always anxious to learn more about what is going on with the children there and love knowing that they are helping. As I mentioned in my homily there is an extreme sense of gratitude and thankfulness on the part of every child who live at Espwa Orphanage. That came through in every situation and in every moment we were there. It was very edifying to have that level of gratitude and it touched all of us.*

### What most impacted you on your recent visit to Haiti?

Fr. Boyer: *The poverty is very extreme, of course, and the conditions are desperate, to say the least. But there was such a sense of joy in the faces of the boys living at the orphanage. There is hope, which is what the name of the orphanage means (Espwa is "hope" in Creole). Fr. Marc is teaching the boys trades and skills so that when they leave, they will have a marketable skill. They have a wood working shop, metal shop, and even teach dance. They are also producing incredible products with craftsmanship and so the training shows in their work. Fr. Marc brings that hope to each boy and there is a sense of happiness there, in spite of the tough conditions. There is also a deep sense of responsibility to each other and the children live and work together as a big family. They pray together, eat together, and work together, sharing everything they have with one another. It is an image much like we read in the Acts of the Apostles, where the community shared everything they had with each other.*

### Has your experience touched any other churches in your area?

Fr. Boyer: *Actually, one of our neighboring parishes, St. Thomas Moore, which is a University Parish, is very interested in our project and would like to do something themselves. They recently had an OP visit their parish and the pastor has asked to work with us and Cross in doing something similar to us. It is a great witness to what we, as a Catholic Family can do if we work together and give witness to the gospel message of bringing the Good News to the poor.*

Cross International Catholic Outreach works with parishes throughout the country,



helping adopt tangible, specific projects as St. Mark the Evangelist has done. The organization's goal is to create a more vibrant and effective link between parishes in America and Catholic outreaches helping the poor overseas.

"By encouraging parishes to work together in this way, we hope to foster a communal sense of commitment and ownership of this Gospel. We want to inspire a relationship with the poor worldwide – the kind of relationship that transcends cold, hard statistics and instead becomes spiritual and deeply personal," explains Jim Cavnar, president of Cross International Catholic Outreach.

Cross is also committed to helping the partnering parishes through the entire process, from the selection of a project, through fund-raising activities, to the distribution of final reports on the successful completion of the program. This makes the program less work and more enjoyable for the parish members who participate.

"We understand the value of our parish partners and we want to help them in every way possible. Ultimately, it would be impossible for Cross to bless the lives of the poor without the generosity, love, and commitment of parishes with a keen sense of Gospel values," Cavnar said. "We understand that and we're deeply grateful for the support. We also see the importance of having the entire parish family behind the

work. That collective prayer and financial power has a huge impact on the lives of the poor."

If your parish would be interested in doing what St. Mark's has done, call Cross and learn more about the list of specific projects that are currently available for sponsorship.

**Want to involve in your parish in a project to benefit the poor?  
Call 1-800-914-2420**



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