



A Reflection Guide for International Health Activities



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide reflects the collective wisdom from many in Catholic ministry. CHA would like to acknowledge several people without whose assistance this resource would not be as fruitful. Stephen Nicholson, SJ, who drafted the reflection guide using his experiences as a Jesuit and teacher to make it relevant for those reflecting on their international mission experiences. Martin Schreiber, Ed.D., of Mercy Hospital Fort Smith, and Aimee Khuu of Providence Health International, who provided key insights for changes as well as additions. Members of CHA's International Outreach Advisory Committee: Charles Evans, FACHE; Joel Gilbertson of Providence Health & Services; Dougal G. Hewitt of Presence Health; Susan Huber of Ascension; Diane S. Jones of Catholic Health Initiatives; Sr. Mary Jo McGinley, RSM, of Global Health Ministry, part of Trinity Health; Georgia Winson of Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach. Also, CHA thanks those who received a draft copy of the guide at the 2016 Global Summit and who provided feedback and additional resources.

“ ... and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.”

|| **Isaiah 58:10**

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INTRODUCTION

International health activities such as medical mission trips and immersion experiences have the potential to be transformative. Removed from their daily routines, participants have the opportunity to take a step back from the demands of home and work to more deeply reflect on their personal call to and vocation in the health care ministry. Witnessing life in a foreign culture — and more dramatically, encountering conditions of poverty and lack of health care — often are life-changing experiences with long-lasting effects.

Prayer and reflection are important elements to include in such experiences since they call forth an awareness of God's presence in the people, cultures, sights and sounds of these trips.

This reflection guide was developed for individuals who express interest in participating in a mission trip as well as those who are selected to go. Each of its six parts includes questions for reflection, spiritual exercises, sources for additional information and inspirational poems and quotes. The content comes from Catholic social teaching, various faith traditions, current global realities and the *Guiding Principles for Conducting International Health Activities*. Developed by CHA with ministry leader input, the *Guiding Principles* were articulated to inform the activities being undertaken by Catholic health care organizations in low- and middle-income countries around the globe with the goal of increasing the health of communities through appropriate, partner-based programs.

This resource can be used individually, or by groups. Feel free to use it in whole, or borrow from its content to augment your own organization's reflection resources for international programs.

Highlighted sections illustrate key concepts:



QUESTIONS

This guide contains numerous reflection questions, noted by this symbol.



EXERCISES

Each part of this guide includes exercises to help you discern aspects of an international activity, noted by this symbol.



RESOURCES AND INSPIRATION

This guide offers many quotes, articles and sources of information and inspiration, noted by this symbol.

For more International Outreach Resources, see pages
86 – 88 of this book, or go online:

WWW.CHAUSA.ORG/INTERNATIONAL

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CONDUCTING INTERNATIONAL HEALTH ACTIVITIES

CHA and its members have named six Guiding Principles for Conducting International Health Activities. These principles bring to life the richness of Catholic social teaching and tradition. Based loosely on the “Oath for Compassionate Service” in the book *Toxic Charity* by Robert Lupton, and insights from a special workgroup CHA convened to examine current international health program practice in light of our ministry’s commitments, they are offered to help Catholic health care most appropriately conduct international programs. They include:



PRUDENCE

Don't just do it

Good judgment requires controlling our enthusiasm to do good so that we also do it well, even in times of emergency. Technical expertise is necessary but not sufficient for action. International activity requires many things, including assessment, planning and evaluation.



AUTHENTICITY

Know thyself, know thy partner

There are many motivations for U.S. and international organizations to engage in international health activities. An invitation from a true partner who is part of the local community and its health system, knowledge and understanding of our respective motives and full transparency regarding our goals are all necessary if we are to do our best work.



HONESTY

Trust is earned and learned

Meaningful partnership requires a high level of trust and multiple lines of communication. Both U.S. and international partners must recognize that the other likely perceives risks in being totally honest. Both must listen for things said and unsaid, which takes both time and practice.

Access the Guiding Principles materials at:
**CHAUSA.ORG/INTERNATIONALOUTREACH/
GUIDING-PRINCIPLES**

**PATIENCE***Build capacity, not dependency*

We should neither conduct activities that a local community can do for itself nor participate in one-way financial giving. The process of getting to know your partner — in order to build capacity — often takes longer than expected and requires patience.

**EXCELLENCE***Best intentions do not equal best practices*

Something is not always better than nothing. Low-resource settings do not permit lower standards. The high standards we follow in the U.S. — in delivering health care and developing partnerships — should not be set aside when working abroad. The laws of the country must be followed, the men and women providing services must be competent in their roles, and outcomes must be measured by quality, not simply quantity.

**HUMILITY***We all have something to learn*

Partnerships marked by mutuality and respect build relationships where both the U.S. and international partners benefit and take away relevant lessons. True cultural competence is necessary for a two-way learning process in any development activity.

The *Guiding Principles for Conducting International Health Activities* include the six principles, a “Modern Day Parable” (which has an accompanying animated video) and questions for consideration for each of the principles. The questions for consideration included below are taken from the *Guiding Principles* document, but with some nuancing for personal rather than organizational reflection.



PRUDENCE

Don't just do it

Do you know the main motivation of the sponsoring organization for conducting the international activity? Is it in line with your personal motivation to participate?



AUTHENTICITY

Know thyself, know thy partner

What is the goal of the local community in partnering to host an international team? What outcomes do they most desire from this activity?



HONESTY

Trust is earned and learned

What is considered a “successful” trip? How would you define success? How would the host community define success?



PATIENCE

Build capacity, not dependency

How is follow-up care coordinated? Will you feel comfortable leaving the country, not knowing the long-term outcomes for individual patients?



EXCELLENCE

Best intentions do not equal best practices

Do you know the local language? How many will be on the trip or available to assist volunteers in communication with patients, families and local health workers?



HUMILITY

We all have something to learn

Can you access past trip evaluations? Do they measure the number of patients seen or the outcomes of those patients? How does this make you feel when compared to U.S. processes of evaluation?

PART I

Discerning Participation

“ ... The poor are also privileged teachers of our knowledge of God; their fragility and simplicity will unmask our egoisms, our false securities, our pretenses of self-sufficiency, and guide us to the experience of the closeness and tenderness of God, ...”

|| Pope Francis, speaking at the Rome headquarters of the Jesuit Refugee Service, September 2013

Part I — Discerning participation

Discernment is a prayerful way to make a decision of some import in one's life; by asking for help and insight from God and from others. When considering participation in any international health activity, reflecting upon personal motivations and expectations, as well as those of the sponsoring organization the host community and its health workers, is important. Utilizing a process of discernment is a meaningful way to delve into those motivations and expectations.

This opening part of the reflection guide will focus on internal questions such as:

Am I being called to participate in an international health outreach activity?

How should I respond?

Deciding if Participation in an International Outreach Activity is Right for You

There are many ways of making decisions in our lives: formulating a list of pros and cons, going with a gut instinct, asking good friends for advice, turning to prayer for insight from a higher power. In all of these approaches, we're faced with a decision, and we're looking for some reliable way of making it. We're looking for the *right* decision — a decision that will lead to our good and the good of others, a decision that we believe is in keeping with values we hold deeply.

If you are reading this, you've already begun a process of decision-making regarding participation in an international health activity. Something has piqued your interest: a prior experience, a positive comment from a friend or colleague, a recent tragedy or natural disaster, or perhaps a nagging feeling that you'd like to do more.

The units in this section provide a holistic and spiritual context for the decision-making process known as discernment; and specifically, about making a decision whether or not to participate in an international activity. As persons of faith, we believe that God leads us, and that when we seek to know the will of God in our lives, the Holy Spirit helps us to find it. The following exercises may be helpful in beginning to discern your involvement in an activity in a low- or middle-income country.



As you complete Part I, be mindful of these specific Guiding Principles:



PRUDENCE



AUTHENTICITY



PATIENCE



Exercise 2: Being Honest with Myself

Find a place where you can sit quietly for 10 to 15 minutes. Settle down into your chair with your feet flat on the floor and your hands resting loosely in your lap. Take a deep breath in, hold it and slowly let it out. If you feel any tension in your brow, your neck or your shoulders, begin to release it as you continue to breathe deeply. Slow yourself down.

With the decision you need to make about participating in a mission trip, begin to ponder important questions:

Looking inward at participation in a mission trip:

What do I desire?

What are my motivations?

What are my hopes?

What are my fears?

Looking outward, ask these questions:

Do I know the primary motivation and goal of the group I will join? Are my goals and motivations in line with the group?

Do I know the primary motivations and goals of the host community and its health care workers?

Take time with each question, allowing thoughts, feelings and ideas to bubble up within you. There is no judgment or evaluation in this stage of reflection: the gifts being sought are freedom and honesty. It may help to remember that God meets us as we are and calls us as we are, right here and now.

After you've spent a few moments with each question, conclude the time of reflection by offering a word of thanks to God for the time you have spent and for whatever insight you may have gained. In particular, notice any surprises, both "good" and "bad," and express gratitude for those insights.

Using What I've Learned to Make a Prayerful Decision

The context for discernment is always a desire to do the will of God. Put more plainly, we want to make a good decision in the broadest possible sense of the term “good.” Making good decisions can be harder than we think, precisely because we’re not automatically inclined to the attentiveness, honesty and freedom that exercises like this one engage. So, we practice!

After one or more attempts at the first part of this exercise, try to respond to what you’ve discovered. It may be that your motivations surprised you, or confused you. Maybe you can’t quite explain why you want to go on a trip of this nature. Or, perhaps you’re more afraid than you realized: of illness, injury or a lack of language or cultural skills. Maybe there was a deep excitement, though, at the possibility of going someplace new, connecting with people you’ve never met and of trying to bring healing to those in pain.

Discernment recognizes that all of the feelings that we have are real; there’s no sense in wondering about whether we *should* be feeling as we do, we just *feel* as we feel. What discernment asks, though, is how God might be leading us forward from wherever we are into wherever we’re going. God always wants to lead us into greater freedom, love and fullness of life. Discernment allows us to identify which feelings or *movements* are from God, and thus, worth acting upon. Similarly, we identify which feelings or movements we’d be better acknowledging, naming and leaving behind.

A basic rule of thumb is that we choose to act in response to whatever thoughts and feelings:

- ✦ Make us feel closer to God.
- ✦ Make us feel more like our truest selves.
- ✦ Lead to an increase in faith, hope and love in our lives.
- ✦ Lead us into a responsible relationship with and service to others.

Another basic rule of thumb is that fear is not of God. Countless times in the Gospels Jesus meets his disciples and says to them “do not be afraid.” There is nowhere we can go where God will not be with us. God never appeals to us through fear, for “there is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18).

In addition to understanding broad spiritual movements more deeply, the *Guiding Principles* (see pg. 4–5 of this booklet) will also be crucial to this particular discernment. They include:



PRUDENCE

Don't just do it



AUTHENTICITY

Know thyself, know thy partner



HONESTY

Trust is earned and learned



PATIENCE

Build capacity, not dependency



EXCELLENCE

Best intentions do not equal best practices



HUMILITY

We all have something to learn.



Questions for Reflection

How does what I've learned about myself affect my initial interest in participation?

Whether or not I decide to participate, how is God leading me into greater fullness of life through this discernment?

Are my hopes, fears, desires and motivations in alignment with the Guiding Principles?

Will my participation help meet the goals and deliver the proposed impact of the trip desired by my organization? The host community and its health care workers?



“We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. In this is love brought to perfection among us, that we have confidence on the day of judgment because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.”

1 John 4:16-19

The Oath for Compassionate Service

BY ROBERT LUPTON

Robert Lupton's book, *Toxic Charity*, can provide us with significant insights regarding the types of charitable service in which we might want to participate. One component of the book focuses on what Lupton refers to as *The Oath for Compassionate Service*. The components of that oath include:

- ✦ Never do for the poor what they have (or could have) the capacity to do for themselves.
- ✦ Limit one-way giving to emergency situations.
- ✦ Strive to empower the poor through employment, lending and investing, using grants sparingly to reinforce achievements.
- ✦ Subordinate self-interests to the needs of those being served.
- ✦ Listen closely to those you seek to help, especially to what is not being said — unspoken feelings may contain essential clues to effective service.
- ✦ Above all, do no harm.



Excerpts from *How to Discover Your Vocation*

BY FR. STEPHEN WANG

Created to share God's love — The fundamental vocation of every human being is to love. This is not obvious to everyone today. Many people believe that human life is just an accident, a chance product of evolution, a meaningless event in a vast mechanical universe. It is certainly true that our lives have been shaped by many different forces, but there is a much deeper truth that we can discover through faith: Every single human being has been created by God out of love. He made us so that we could know his love, and share that love with others, and delight in that love forever in the glory of heaven. So whatever you feel about your own worth — never doubt that your life has a meaning. God loves you and cares for you. You are precious to him and he has a purpose for your life, even if that does not seem very clear to you.

Living well in the present — This call to live well in the present is the Little Way recommended by St. Thérèse of Lisieux — the importance of simply doing your duty, saying your prayers, loving your neighbour, bearing your sufferings; and doing all this with a generous and loving heart. It is not very dramatic, but it is the secret of holiness, and it reminds us that your first and fundamental vocation is not something to be discovered in the future — it is living the Christian life in the here and now. Perhaps this is all God wants of you for the moment. You must avoid the temptation of thinking that your Christian life can only properly begin in the future, when everything is crystal clear. And if you do not discover a more concrete vocation, or if you are to die young, then you should not feel that you have wasted your life, or that your life is unfinished or unfulfilled.

This is your 'personal' vocation — the call to be the person you are meant to be. The more you discover who you are, and the more you discover what lies deepest in your heart, the more you will be able to discern what God's will is for you and what direction he wants you to take in life. Your lifelong vocational commitments and the particular path of holiness that you are called to follow will inevitably grow out of the person God created you to be.

PART II

Preparing for the Experience

“ ... True mercy, which God gives and teaches us, calls for justice, for a way in which the poor can find a way out of poverty. It calls for ... a situation in which no one is in need of a soup kitchen, of a homeless shelter, of legal assistance, to have his right to live and to work recognized, to be a whole person.”

|| Pope Francis, speaking at the Rome headquarters of the Jesuit Refugee Service, September 2013

Part II — Preparing for the Experience

Once a decision has been made to participate in an international program, it moves to a time of research and learning — the “interior work” of preparation through prayer, self-reflection and logistical research. Catholic social tradition can help you delve into this work.

This second part of the reflection guide invites you to answer the following questions:

What is the goal of the overall mission trip, and what is my personal goal?

Am I anxious about any aspects of the experience? What potential aspects excite me?

What are the goals of the local health care workers I will meet? Are they different from the trip goals and my personal goals?

Outside of local terrain, temperature and diet, what is it that I need to understand in order to be in service to the community? What about their culture should guide my activities?

How to Prepare for the Experience

After committing to participate in a mission trip, there are a number of ways to prepare. It might be helpful to think of this as a time of “tilling the soil” in preparation for a respectful, formative and meaningful experience. This preparation might be divided into three parts: self-reflection, learning about the country context and gaining an understanding of Church tradition that should guide all trip activities. This tradition, which includes Catholic social teaching, has much to offer to all members of the human family, whether we are officially members of the Catholic Church, collaborators in its mission or simply people of good will.

As you complete Part II, be mindful of these specific Guiding Principles:



AUTHENTICITY



HONESTY



HUMILITY





Exercise 1: From Where Do I Come?

In order to lay a foundation for a two-way encounter with local staff and patients, it can be helpful to take a closer look at where we are now. This can be a difficult exercise for those of us who live in the United States, because it involves recognizing that the economic and political systems from which we benefit are the same ones often negatively impact and constrain that the lives of those we meet. Still, unless we venture into this honest place, we will not be able to meet our host community in the graced humility that God invites us to, and our work will be limited to a kind of charity that might make us feel better for a short time, but that doesn't have the community's best interests in mind and is not the kind of charity called for in our social teaching and tradition.

Begin this exercise by finding a quiet space where you can be at peace for 10 to 15 minutes. Take a few deep breaths. Imagine God sitting near you enjoying this time with you. Imagine God's look of great love as you begin this time of prayer.

When you feel relaxed and ready, consider the following. Take as much time as you need.

My identity — my unique experiences and personality — is made up of many parts. It includes my personal history, my memories and experiences, my deeply held values and beliefs and my membership in certain groups. It includes physical features such as my height and my hair and eye color, and more personal features such as my gender, race, sexual orientation, age and religion. It includes the opportunities and experiences I have had, such as education and work. Now take a moment and wonder:

What are the various parts of my identity?

What are the things that make up my personality and journey?

Each of our identities has many aspects. Some aspects of our identity make it easier for us to move through life, while some make it more difficult. This all depends on the culture and time in history in which we find ourselves. We may also speak about this reality by saying that certain aspects of our identity confer privilege, while others confer disadvantage. Within our own country, for example, we might recognize that being white and male are identities that



CIA World Fact Book

This book provides information on the history, people, government, economy, energy, geography, communications, transportation, military and transnational issues for 267 world entities.

Access it at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/>



Exercise 2: Where Am I Going?

Before traveling to another country and culture, it is helpful to do some basic research about where you'll be going. Guiding questions in this exercise of research might include:

What research do I need to complete to arrive there responsibly informed and ready to work in partnership?

What do I need to know about the community members with whom I will be working? Whom I will be serving with from the local community?

Does the sponsoring congregation of my organization have ministries in the area and do they provide information that might aid my learning?

What would I want someone to know about me?

This would be a great exercise to conduct as a team, when possible, dividing up research tasks and coming together to share what each member of the team has learned. Some possible resources for this exercise include:

- ✦ United Nations Human Development Reports:
<http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries>
- ✦ BBC Country Profiles:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country_profiles/default.stm
- ✦ Cultural Dimensions by Geert Hofstede:
<https://www.geert-hofstede.com/cultural-dimensions.html>
- ✦ The website of the host country's own Ministry of Health, Culture, Education, etc.
- ✦ The website of the partner organization with which the team will collaborate

It might also be interesting and fruitful to find a documentary about the country to which you'll travel, or a specific health or cultural issue that will play a prominent role in your outreach activity. You may want to find a prominent artist or author from the country you will visit and explore his or her work in the weeks leading up to your trip.

Exercise 3: Catholic Social Teaching



In his life, preaching and ministry, Jesus was always concerned with the well-being of the people he encountered. In his Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew chapters 5-7 and Luke 6:20-49) Jesus laid the foundations of Christian discipleship, including ways of acting morally and living socially. In our own time, the Catholic Church has articulated a body of teaching which refers specifically to our social life as human beings. This body of teaching, known as **Catholic Social Teaching** (CST), draws on the whole Judeo-Christian tradition, but explicitly began in 1891 with the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. Issued by Pope Leo XIII in response to the miserable conditions of the working class at that time, *Rerum Novarum* is a foundational text in the history of Catholic social thought. It establishing the position of the Church on issues pertaining to the proper relationship between capital and labor. The vision expounded by the encyclical emphasizes the duties and obligations that bind owners of capital and workers to each other. Throughout the encyclical, Pope Leo XIII articulates the inherent dignity of both labor and laborer.

In preparation for your international health activity, it may be helpful to peruse the resources provided by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on Catholic Social Teaching and those developed by CHA. Allow yourself to become engaged in the various resources as you familiarize yourself with the way the Catholic Church thinks about social rights and responsibilities. This may be a helpful exercise to complete as a group, meeting to discuss new insights, or ask questions together about what it means to be a socially engaged person of faith in the 21st century.

- ✦ USCCB: An Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching, which can be found at:
<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm>.
- ✦ USCCB: Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, which can be found at:
<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm>

Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret

BY PETER HENRIOT, EDWARD DEBERRI AND MICHAEL SCHULTHEIS, PP. 20-22

**Twelve major lessons that appear in the body of social teaching:**

1. The documents stress that the social reality is not separated from the religious dimension of life; rather, it must be transformed in light of the Gospel.
2. The dignity of the human person is a constant theme in all the documents.
3. All human persons have inalienable rights, which must be respected and protected by the institutions of society.
4. An emerging recognition of the growing gap between the rich and the poor leads to an insistence on a preferential option for the poor.
5. Love of neighbor, a demand of the Gospel, implies action for justice.
6. Promotion of the common good is of primary importance.
7. The principle of subsidiarity (responsibility and decision making at the level closest to local communities and institutions) should be respected.
8. The teachings encourage participation in the political processes of one's country as a means of achieving the common good.
9. Economic justice is vital, since the economy exists for the people's betterment.
10. The writings stress that the world's goods belong to all of the world's people, all must share the earth's resources.
11. The documents call for a global solidarity.
12. Social teachings also call for just peace among men and women.



*Food for the Journey: Theological Foundations
of the Catholic Healthcare Ministry*

BY SR. JULIANA CASEY, IMH, PH.D.

**Excerpted from the chapter:
“Catholic Social Teaching and Healthcare of the Poor”**

In the late 1960s, inspired by the Church’s social teachings, a group of women religious moved to an inner-city neighborhood to serve the poor. After they had been there nine months, the city erupted in riots. The women were in the middle of it. They stayed with the people until peace was restored. They continued to work with the people in the area for two more years. All who knew these women recognized their dedication and their commitment to justice. Some even envied them. They were clearly doing the Gospel. At the end of three years, however, these women left the inner city for new work. When asked why, they gave the following account.

“We went to the inner city to help the poor and the oppressed. We were committed to doing justice. Our education and our skills were excellent. We knew we could help. We did everything we knew to help the people. We held classes, we taught Scripture, we went to city hall and to police stations, we visited homes. At one point — after about two years — we began to feel that we weren’t really getting anywhere. We started to notice that people didn’t really seem to trust us.

One day we asked one of the few friends we had made why we weren’t really making things better. ‘You want to make things better your way,’ he said, ‘and your way isn’t our way.’ He continued: ‘You came down here to help us poor people. You had enthusiasm and dedication and lots of bright ideas. You knew what needed to be done and you went ahead and did it. Only problem was, you never asked us. You talked and talked to us and at us. But you never listened. You never heard what we said, you never asked our opinion. You made us feel poorer and stupider than we already felt. You want to help us? Then listen to us!’

We recognized the truth of his words. We decided to call a halt to our work — temporarily. We felt that we needed to learn how to listen, how to hear the words and the meanings behind the words before we could truly do justice. So, we’re serving in other areas for a while — and trying to learn how to hear.”



We have seen that one of the most poignant phenomena of suffering is that it renders one mute. This is also true of poverty and oppression. The voices of the poor are muffled; they are not often heard in boardrooms, in strategic planning sessions, or in values workshops. Mostly, the poor and the vulnerable go unheard until their voices rise in rage.

To hear the cries of the poor, however, is at the heart of the Judaic-Christian tradition. The liberation of slaves in Egypt came about, we are told, because “the people of Israel groaned under their bondage, and cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God. And God heard their groaning and God remembered the covenant” (Ex 2:23-24). God heard the cry and acted to save. Jesus heard cries and acted to heal. ... Recent social teachings have also stressed the importance of listening to the poor and the marginalized.

In 1979, the Latin American bishops urged the Church to make a “preferential option for the poor.” The term, and the commitment it implies, has become basic in the Church’s teachings since then. Two elements are included in this option: public witness of solidarity with the poor’s struggle for justice and a commitment to view social reality from the perspective of the poor, the marginalized, and the powerless. “To view social reality from the perspective of the poor, it is necessary to enable the poor to speak. This aspect of preferential option calls the Church to listen, to be in solidarity with those who are often voiceless, and then to analyze society in terms of the forces that continue to victimize the poor. This implies that the poor have something to say, that they can teach us the Gospel.” Listening is an art; listening to the poor is both a Gospel demand and a call to conversion.



Customs, Culture and Etiquette

The resources below can assist you with country specific customs, culture and etiquette. It is important to understand the similarities and differences in communication styles, language and the important aspects of customs, culture and etiquette that are relevant in the country (or countries) you will be visiting. As these customs will affect your experience, it is important to be aware of them and the feelings they might cause in you.

Guides from Kwintessential

<http://www.commisceo-global.com/country-guides>

Guides from e-Diplomat

http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/cultural_etiquette.htm

Understanding Latin American Culture article

http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/0605/study_abroad_understanding_latin_american_cultures.shtml

Countries and their Cultures website

<http://www.everyculture.com/>

Geert Hofstede — National Cultural Dimensions Theory

<https://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html>

A Blessing of Hands for Global Missions



Leader: We come together today to offer prayers for these persons who are traveling to offer a healing ministry in another part of the world. Let us reflect on a reading from St. Paul to the Ephesians.

Reading: “I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” Eph. 3:16–21

Leader: Will you carry out this ministry with humility and grace, to be attentive to the needs of the local community?

Travelers: We will serve this community faithfully and with humility.

Leader: Will you pray for those whom you are serving?

Travelers: We will remember those we serve in prayer before, during and after our travels.

Leader: Will you pray for those who are supporting you from afar?

Travelers: We welcome the prayers and support and we will keep you in our prayers.

Leader: Will you remember those you are serving and continue to address the issues you encounter both here and abroad even when you return home?

Travelers: We commit ourselves to continuing our involvement with the people and issues we encounter.

ANOINTING OF THE HANDS

Leader: Oil is a sacramental substance in the Judeo-Christian healing tradition. By anointing your hands, we call upon the healing power of the Holy Spirit to bless your hands and the work they will perform in service to those in another part of the world.

(over)



Leader anoints or touches the hands of the travelers.

Leader: Good and Gracious God, bless the hands of those who travel to serve others in our world. Make their hands strong but their touch light when they embrace those in need. Make their spirit joyful and gracious when they face hardship. Shine Your face upon them to give them strength. Grant them safe travels and peaceful arrivals and departures. We ask this in Your Name. Amen.

“Go in peace. The mission you are on is under the eye of the Lord.”
Jud. 18:6



Prayer for Travelers

God of All, I ask You to watch over my friends as they journey these days.

Grant them the *humility* they need to be open to this new experience.

Let them seek *honesty* in these days, both embracing their many gifts and admitting their struggles.

May *excellence* characterize all they do today in their service to others.

Give them *patience*, with themselves and those they encounter, trusting that the goodness of tomorrow is for tomorrow.

Bring out their most *authentic* selves, having faith that who they are is exactly enough for this task.

Provide them a double portion of *prudence*, that they may be wise in all they do.

May they seek and find good companionship in the communities where they work.

And when the time has come, return them safely home, filled with the joy that comes from doing Your will, and renewed by the Grace of these days.

I ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PART III

Arriving

“When God comes, he always calls us out of our house. We are visited so that we can visit others; we are encountered so as to encounter others; we receive love in order to give love.”

|| **Quote from Pope Francis
during His Papal Visit to Cuba**

Part III — Arriving

People usually experience many emotions when being introduced to a foreign culture. They can range from excitement and interest to fear and anxiety. Trips can include treacherous terrain and security measures that may spark uncertainty. Sights out of vehicle windows might be overwhelming just as smiles from people you drive by can be humbling. At the end of your trek to the site of your mission trip it can be useful to “check in” with God, with yourself and with others.

This third part of the reflection guide offers processes for assessing what your day of arrival has created; what it has surfaced, both expected and unexpected, and God’s presence in your experiences

Exercise 1: Introducing the Examen

The *Examen* is a simple, practical prayer that surfaces God’s activity in the course of our ordinary lives.

International travel can be both exciting and unsettling. On your day of transition, it might be helpful to use a prayer popularized by Saint Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century called the *Examen*. The *Examen* is a simple, practical prayer that surfaces God’s activity in the course of our ordinary lives. It provides an opportunity to give thanks for the gifts God has given and to ask for help in the ways we wish to respond more generously in the future. The basic questions of this particular *Examen* upon arrival in a new place are:

Where did I wake up today?

Where am I now?

What have been the movements of this day?

Steps for the *Examen*

STEP ONE: Find a comfortable position. Breathe deeply. Come home to yourself in this new place, after a day of travel and transition. Let gratitude well up inside of you.

STEP TWO: Ask for insight to review your day without judgment, growing instead in honesty and clarity. Ask to walk through this day again with God.



As you complete Part III, be mindful of these specific Guiding Principles:



HONESTY



PATIENCE



HUMILITY



Exercise 2: A Different Take on the Examen

The following poem may be another helpful approach to reviewing the movements of the day, or may be used as an alternative closing prayer.

The Guest House

by Rumi

Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, known as Rumi, was a 13th-century Persian poet, jurist, Islamic scholar, theologian and Sufi mystic.

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.



Excerpt from Letter #4 in *Letters to a Young Poet*

BY RAINER MARIA RILKE

Here, where I am surrounded by an enormous landscape, which the winds move across as they come from the seas, here I feel that there is no one anywhere who can answer for you those questions and feelings which, in their depths, have a life of their own; for even the most articulate people are unable to help, since what words point to is so very delicate, is almost unsayable. But even so, I think that you will not have to remain without a solution if you trust in Things that are like the ones my eyes are now resting upon. If you trust in Nature, in what is simple in Nature, in the small Things that hardly anyone sees and that can so suddenly become huge, immeasurable; if you have this love for what is humble and try very simply, as someone who serves, to win the confidence of what seems poor: then everything will become easier for you, more coherent and somehow more reconciling, not in your conscious mind perhaps, which stays behind, astonished, but in your innermost awareness, awakens, and knowledge. You are so young, so much before all beginning, and I would like to beg you, dear Sir, as well as I can, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.

Excerpt from *The Mission of My Life*

BY JOHN HENRY CARDINAL NEWMAN (1801-1890)

God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments. Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me. Still, He knows what He is about.





Prayer, “In Times of Transition”

BY JOSEPH P. SHADLE AS POSTED ON JESUITRESOURCE.ORG

God of Love,
You are with us in every transition and change.
As we enter into this new era with excitement
and even some anxiety,
we recall your deep compassion, presence, and abounding love.
We thank you for the gifts, talents and skills with which
you have blessed us.
We thank you for the experiences that have brought
us to this moment.
We thank you for the work of others that gives breadth
and depth to our own work.
Be with us as we move forward, rejoicing with you and
supporting one another.
We ask this in your Holy Name.
Amen.

PART IV

Living the Experience

“Love of neighbor, a demand
of the Gospel, implies
action for justice.”

||| Excerpt from *Catholic Social Teaching:
Our Best Kept Secret*
By Peter Henriot

Part IV — Living The Experience

It can be hard to put words to the rich, new and varied experiences that come with international outreach. Are you putting in longer hours that you would in your job in the U.S.? Have your sleep and diet routines been out of whack? Are you able to interact with community members and local health care workers as you envisioned? Praying and sifting through one's experiences can help to deepen the invitation of God. They can also help process the good and hard parts of any given day of your trip.

In this fourth section of the reflection guide you will be guided through exercises that can be used throughout your journey.

Finding God in My Experience

During the course of a short-term immersion into a new country and culture, there are bound to be many varied emotions and experiences. For those who work in Catholic health care, this normal intensity is coupled with medical work and its own particular intensity and intimacy with other people, in illness and pain, in joy, gratitude and relief.

The key attitude to maintain during the actual immersion experience will be like the non-judgmental attentiveness to one's own experience introduced in the previous sections of this reflection guide. There is no "should" in this type of reflection, as in "I should be feeling another way," or "I shouldn't be so overwhelmed or tired," or "I should be more grateful." There is only noticing and inviting God into that noticing, through prayer, petition and questioning. Dorothy Day was known to quote her favorite novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, frequently in her work with the urban poor of New York City: "Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams." The zeal and romance will wear off at some point during your trip. This is not a cause for guilt or judgment, but an invitation to renewed commitment and a deeper level of loving service.

As you complete Part IV, be mindful of these specific Guiding Principles:



AUTHENTICITY



EXCELLENCE



HUMILITY

You may also invite others into your noticing through shared reflection with colleagues or with your group as a whole. This type of reflection in a group setting can begin very simply with questions such as:



What was the day like for you?

In which moments and encounters did you experience something beautiful that stays with you?

In which moments did you feel sad, alone or afraid?

The following exercises form the perspective of Catholic social teaching that might help you reflect on this experience, on privilege and on identity.



Exercise 1: Solidarity and Making Common Cause

After a few days of working in the community you are visiting, you may begin to wonder: aside from my values and expectations, what do the people here and their community want for their lives? This is an insight into what it means to be in *solidarity* with others, especially as a person of some privilege. To be in solidarity with others requires first that we know them, and that in the context of a relationship, however modest, we join in their struggle for the things that they value. Sometimes this way of considering solidarity is referred to as “making common cause” with others.

As an exercise, you might make a list of some things you have learned that persons in this community value, and then indicate how you came to know that. Did someone you’ve met tell you explicitly, or is it something you inferred on your own?

In what ways is it possible for you and your group to listen to your local partners, and to make common cause with them? What barriers exist to this practice of solidarity? As you are able, share these reflections with your group.



Exercise 2: Practicing Resurrection

Some aspects of your daily work may challenge old value systems and ways of looking at the world. You find yourself in a place of questioning things you thought were obvious about “the ways things are.” This poem by American poet and activist Wendell Berry may be a helpful companion to you and your group. Consider reading it by yourself, or stanza by stanza with your group.

**“Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front” from
The Country of Marriage
by Wendell Berry, 1973**

1. Love the quick profit, the annual raise,
vacation with pay. Want more
of everything ready-made. Be afraid
to know your neighbors and to die.
And you will have a window in your head.
2. Not even your future will be a mystery
any more. Your mind will be punched in a card
and shut away in a little drawer.
When they want you to buy something
they will call you. When they want you
to die for profit they will let you know.
3. So, friends, every day do something
that won't compute. Love the Lord.
Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
4. Love someone who does not deserve it.
Denounce the government and embrace
the flag. Hope to live in that free
republic for which it stands.
5. Give your approval to all you cannot
understand. Praise ignorance, for what man
has not encountered he has not destroyed.
6. Ask the questions that have no answers.
Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.
Say that your main crop is the forest
that you did not plant,



that you will not live to harvest.
Say that the leaves are harvested
when they have rotted into the mold.
Call that profit. Prophecy such returns.

7. Put your faith in the two inches of humus
that will build under the trees
every thousand years.

Listen to carrion — put your ear
close, and hear the faint chattering
of the songs that are to come.

8. Expect the end of the world. Laugh.
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts.

9. So long as women do not go cheap
for power, please women more than men.
Ask yourself: Will this satisfy
a woman satisfied to bear a child?
Will this disturb the sleep
of a woman near to giving birth?

10. Go with your love to the fields.
Lie down in the shade. Rest your head
in her lap. Swear allegiance
to what is nighest your thoughts.

11. As soon as the generals and the politicians
can predict the motions of your mind,
lose it. Leave it as a sign
to mark the false trail, the way
you didn't go.

12. Be like the fox
who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection.

Morning Prayer

BY SR. PAT BERGEN, CSJ

Gracious God,
Thank you for the gift of today.
Refresh me. Invite me to discover your presence
In each person that I meet
And every event that I encounter.
Teach me when to speak and when to listen
When to ponder and when to share.
In moments of challenge and decision
Attune my heart to the whisperings of your Wisdom.
As I undertake ordinary and unnoticed tasks,
Gift me with simple joy.
When my day goes well, may I rejoice.
When it grows difficult, surprise me with
New possibilities.
When life is overwhelming, call me to
Sabbath moments
To restore your Peace and Harmony.
May my living today reveal your Goodness.
Amen.





Excerpt from, “Things No One Tells You About Going on Short-Term Mission Trips: A Few Ways to Make Sure Your Mission Trip is Effective.”

BY MICHELE ACKER PEREZ

Entire article available at

<http://www.relevantmagazine.com/reject-apathy/things-no-one-tells-you-about-going-short-term-mission-trips#Ylg2lw0ju4ZGzqdt.99>

We have both seen the good, the bad and the ugly of short-term missions. And we continue to feel this tension with the short-term mission teams that we host. Do they do more harm than good? Do they perpetuate the cycle of poverty? Do they contribute to feelings of superiority? Or inferiority? Our work with families and communities in Guatemala, as well as churches and schools from the U.S. has forced us to ask these questions daily.

We have learned that perhaps how we go might matter more than what we do. Here are a few things you may not have heard about being more effective on short-term mission trips:

YOU'RE NOT A HERO. First of all, before you go and when you get there, your team must commit to getting rid of the hero complex. Developing countries do not need short-term heroes. They need long-term partners. And if your group just wants to be a hero for a week, then you may be doing more harm than good. Developing countries do not need short-term heroes. They need long-term partners.

POVERTY CAN LOOK DIFFERENT THAN YOU EXPECT. If at the end of your trip you say, “I am so thankful for what I have, because they have so little.” You have missed the whole point. You're poor, too. But maybe you're hiding behind all your stuff. There is material poverty, physical poverty, spiritual poverty and systemic poverty. We all have to acknowledge our own brokenness and deep need for God before we can expect to serve others.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT MAY BE JUST AS IMPORTANT AS IMMEDIATE CONTEXT. Have you studied the history of the country or neighborhoods where you're going? Do you understand the role that the U.S. has played there? Do you know what the role of the Church and missions has been? Do you know the current needs and issues of the people? Having background knowledge of where you're going will help you know how you can best fit and help in your immediate context.



DON'T DO A JOB PEOPLE CAN DO FOR THEMSELVES. Last time I checked, people in developing countries can paint a wall, so why are you doing it for them? If painting a wall or school is really a need in the place where you're working then invite students from that school or people from the village to do it with you. Doing things with people, not for people, should be the motto. Always.

LEARNING TAKES PLACE IN THE CONTEXT OF RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS.

Be willing to share about your family, your pain and your needs. Sometimes people in developing countries think everyone in the U.S. is rich, white and happy. We know this is not true, and we have the chance to share honestly and vulnerably. Prioritize building relationships over completing projects.

YOU ARE AN AMBASSADOR FROM YOUR COUNTRY. Thanks to globalization, YouTube and Facebook, most developing countries will have certain ideas about the U.S. before you arrive. Be willing to ask questions and share about yourself and American culture, as well. Along the same lines, before you take a picture, ask yourself, "Would I mind if a foreigner took a picture of my daughter/son/sister/brother in this situation?" If the answer is yes, then don't take it. Come back with stories and names of people, not just an entire album of "cute" nameless kids.



Prayer — At the Beginning of the Day

BY J. VELTRI, SJ

O God,
I find myself at the beginning of another day.
I do not know what it will bring.
Please help me to be ready for whatever it may be.

If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely.
If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly.
If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently.
If I am to do nothing, let me do it gallantly.

I pray just for today, for these twenty-four
hours, for the ability to cooperate with others
according to the way Jesus taught us to live.
“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.”
May these words that he taught us become
more than words.

Please free my thinking and feelings and the
thinking and feelings of others,
from all forms of self-will, self-centeredness,
dishonesty, and deception.
Along with my brothers and sisters,
I need this freedom to make my choices
today according to your desires.
Send your Spirit to inspire me in time of
doubt and indecision so that, together, we
can walk along your path. Amen.

Attributed to St. Thérèse of Lisieux and St. Theresa of Avila

Peace Within
May today there be peace within.
May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.
May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.
May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the
love that has been given to you.
May you be confident knowing you are a child of God.
Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the
freedom to sing, dance, praise and love.
It is there for each and every one of us.



Reflection on the “Who” of Our International Work

But the fact remained, he always reminded me, no matter what people’s preferences, that we are our brother’s keeper, and the unit of society is the family; that we must have a sense of personal responsibility to take care of our own, and our neighbor, at a personal sacrifice ... ‘That is a first principle ... Charity is personal. Charity is love.’

— DOROTHY DAY, RECOUNTING PETER MAURIN IN *THE LONG LONELINESS*

Throughout its history, the Judeo-Christian tradition has held a special concern for the poor and vulnerable. The *anawim* — the unloved, the unlovable. The materially poor, the exploited, the abused. To do our work well, we must challenge the subtle temptation to put our wants, our needs or our goals ahead of those we are called to serve.

Let us reflect on the following questions:

Who are the modern day *anawim*?

How do we enter into solidarity with those who have been left at the margins? How do we share in their experiences of mistrust, helplessness, of being left behind our global progress?

Do we seek out solutions that bring the poor, the underserved, the *anawim*, to the forefront of our personal and our institutional consciences?

What do those who are on the margins have to teach us?
What lessons can we learn from their lives?

A reading:

Pope John Paul II has described this special obligation to the poor as “a call to have a special openness with the small and the weak, those that suffer and weep, those that are humiliated and left on the margin of society, so as to help them win their dignity as human persons and children of God.”

The prime purpose of this special commitment to the poor is to enable them to become active participants in the life of society. It is to enable all persons to share in and contribute to the common good. The “option for the poor,” therefore, is not an adversarial slogan that pits one group or class against another. Rather, it states



that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community. The extent of their suffering is a measure of how far we are from being a true community of persons. These wounds will be healed only by greater solidarity with the poor and among the poor themselves.

— *ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR ALL: PASTORAL LETTER ON CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND THE U.S. ECONOMY*, UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, 1986

Let us pray ...

Good and Gracious God, help us to always see the poor among us. May we always recognize that the person in front of us is Christ-himself. Give us courage to name injustice, to speak on behalf of the voiceless, and to do Your work to bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth. We ask all of this in Your Name. Amen

PART V

Leaving the Community

Part V — Leaving the Community

You're all packed up and headed to the airport. You know something has changed in you — you have a new lens with which to view your world. But what will you use it for when you return home? Exiting the community in which you served can be difficult. You can question if you feel the work was completed. You don't know what long-term outcomes will be for those whom you served. It can feel as though there are so many unfinished things. At this time, it is helpful to consider what impact this experience has had and will have on your life moving forward.

This fifth part of the reflection guide will lead you through reflections on what you've experienced and how you might respond. It will be helpful to do this in relationship with others on your team when possible.

Exercise 1: Take Lord, Receive — Leaving with Gratitude and Self-Gift

Adapted from *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, Nos. 230-237

Even in a short time, people and places can become very important to us. This is part of a beautiful human capacity to love and be loved, which itself is a gift from God. Still, with love comes the possibility of pain and of loss, especially at moments of parting. These moments can be disorienting, especially following a meaningful experience such as many international health activities provide.

One “rudder” amid the disorientation of departure is gratitude. We cannot take anything in life with us, really, but in a mysterious way we can rest deeply in gratitude. What's more, gratitude directs us out of ourselves toward loving service of God and others. This was a central insight of St. Ignatius Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*. He suggested that we ask to know just what it is we have been given: that is, that we ask not to overlook one gift in our lives. He wrote: “Here I will ask for what I desire: an interior knowledge of all the great good I have received, in order that, stirred to profound gratitude, I may become able to love and serve God in all things.”



As you complete Part V, be mindful of these specific Guiding Principles:



PRUDENCE



EXCELLENCE



HUMILITY



PATIENCE



Exercise 2: Truly the Lord Is in This Place and I Did Not Know It! Leaving with Wonder and Reverence

Another way to approach your departure may be with wonder at all that has happened; discovering God in a place that you did not know. Jacob, one of the fathers of the Jewish people, had just this kind of experience during his own life's journey. The following passage from the book of Genesis may be helpful in prompting your reflection.

Jacob's Dream at Bethel

Jacob departed from Beersheba and proceeded toward Haran. When he came upon a certain place, he stopped there for the night, since the sun had already set. Taking one of the stones at the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. Then he had a dream: a stairway rested on the ground, with its top reaching to the heavens; and God's angels were going up and down on it. And there was the LORD standing beside him and saying: I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you are lying I will give to you and your descendants. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and through them you will spread to the west and the east, to the north and the south. In you and your descendants all the families of the earth will find blessing. I am with you and will protect you wherever you go, and bring you back to this land. I will never leave you until I have done what I promised you.

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he said, "Truly, the LORD is in this place and I did not know it!" He was afraid and said: "How awesome this place is! This is nothing else but the house of God, the gateway to heaven!" Early the next morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head, set it up as a sacred pillar, and poured oil on top of it. He named that place Bethel [House of God], whereas the former name of the town had been Luz.

Jacob then made this vow: "If God will be with me and protect me on this journey I am making and give me food to eat and clothes to wear, and I come back safely to my father's house, the LORD will be my God. This stone that I have set up as a sacred pillar will be the house of God. Of everything you give me, I will return a tenth part to you without fail." (Genesis 28:10-22, from the *New American Bible, Revised Edition*)



Exercise 3: Prophets of a Future Not Our Own — Leaving in Faith and Trust

You may also be connecting with a feeling of incompleteness or unresolved urgency as you leave. Perhaps it feels like there is so much work left to be done that you are tempted to despair over the future. This awareness is a good and holy one, and it can lead to engagement of the *Guiding Principles* like Prudence, Excellence and Honesty — all of which point to creating sustainable partnerships for long-term success. Still, any work that we accomplish in this lifetime will be by its nature limited, and this fact can be an invitation to trust in God and in our fellow laborers in God's vineyard. Reflect on the following prayer and see what it stirs in you. Write in your journal or share with your group your reflections on the tensions the prayer presents and the faith in God that it invites.

Archbishop Oscar Romero Prayer: A Step Along the Way

by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the Church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.



Excerpt from “Ethics — ‘A Heart Which Sees’: On Being Neighbor”

BY RON HAMEL, PH.D.

From Health Progress, September-October 2013

Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, answers the question this way: “The Christian programme — the programme of the Good Samaritan, the programme of Jesus — is ‘a heart which sees.’ This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly.”⁵

“A heart which sees” says something about character, about what is required to be neighbor to others. In the parable, three individuals view the battered stranger on the road, but only one truly sees.

What enables the Samaritan to see a neighbor in need? First and foremost, as we are told in the parable, it is compassion, the ability to “feel with,” to experience deep sympathy for the misfortune of another. As [theologian Allen] Verhey observes:

The Samaritan saw a neighbor in need, and he felt the pain in his own being. He was moved by compassion to care. It didn’t matter that the wounded man was an enemy of his people. It didn’t matter that he worshipped in the wrong place or in the wrong way, it didn’t matter that their ancestors had nursed some ancient grudges. What mattered was the hurt, the pain, the need of one who was, after all, like him, the object of God’s unbounded love. And that unbounded love conferred upon the wounded man a sanctity that in turn evoked the limitless care of the Samaritan.⁶

Compassion, as moral theologian William Spohn noted, “is the optic nerve of Christian vision.”⁷ It enables the heart to truly see. And Gospel compassion is a compassion without boundaries. Through the parable, Jesus stretches the limits of vision and compassion. There is no one who is not a neighbor.

But being neighbor requires more than compassion. It also requires empathy, a feeling of identifying with and entering into the experience of the other, the problem or chaos of the situation.⁸ Empathy leads to effective action, responding appropriately to immediate need and

⁵Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, Dec. 25, 2005, par. 31b. www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html.

⁶Allen Verhey, “The Good Samaritan and Scarce Medical Resources,” in *Reading the Bible in the Strange World of Medicine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 363-64.

⁷William Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 87.

⁸Spohn, 90.



looking ahead to continuing need. John Paul II, in *Salvifici Doloris*, points to similar dispositions. He notes that sensitivity of heart or compassion makes possible “stopping” (in contrast to passing by on the other side indifferently), a stopping not out of curiosity, but rather of availability. This availability is an opening of oneself to the other and giving of one’s self. “A Good Samaritan is the person capable of ... a gift of self,” opening this “I” to the other person.⁹ This availability to the other, this gift of self, is in order to bring help: “[A] Good Samaritan is one who brings help in suffering, whatever its nature may be ... help which is effective.”¹⁰

To these dispositions, we might also add courage. The Samaritan put his own life at risk and also risked social and religious ostracization. There are many risks in being neighbor. We might also add hospitality. The Samaritan is an exemplar of extending hospitality. He offers assistance in a welcoming, respectful, nonjudgmental manner, giving of his own resources — oil, wine and money — in order to provide for the needs of the other.

Finally, being neighbor requires an openness to and a readiness for conversion — confronting our moral blind spots and our reluctance, as individuals and organizations, to engage certain types of people or situations or problems — those we choose not to see.¹¹ Developing a heart which sees requires rectifying the heart’s inadequate dispositions.

But are these virtues or dispositions sufficient? Is this all that is required to be neighbor, especially in a health care context, whether as an individual or as a Catholic health care organization? Verhey suggests it is not.

“The Good Samaritan,” he says, “no longer seems quite so apt an image for the care of those who hurt, and the reason is simple: The Samaritan did not face the issue health care is forced to face today, the issue of scarcity. The limitless compassion of the Samaritan makes his story more odd than exemplary; unlimited care seems not a real option. ... Can we still be Good Samaritans ... in the midst of tragic choices imposed by scarcity?”¹²

⁹John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, apostolic letter, Feb. 11, 1984, par. 28. www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/1984/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_11021984_salvifici-doloris_en.html.

¹⁰*Salvifici Doloris*, par. 28

¹¹Spohn, 98.

¹²Verhey, 361.



The late John Glaser, moral theologian, made a similar point, but did so by slightly altering the parable:

As the Samaritan traveled further, he came upon another man who had been beaten and needed care. He likewise ministered to him and set him on his mount. As he turned the next bend in the road, the Samaritan's heart sank for there were two more figures lying on the side of the road in the foreground and further, before the road turned in the distance, he made out one further traveler, struck to the ground and needing help. His heart was filled with pity and compassion — but with growing distress — for his resources would be exhausted long before he reached the last person in his view. And he could only guess at what lay around the next bend.¹³

Given the fact of limits, what other dispositions or virtues need to be part of the character of the Good Samaritan, the one who is neighbor to others? Compassion is not sufficient. Verhey suggests several:¹⁴

- ✦ A disposition that acknowledges scarcity and limits, that realizes that we simply do not have the resources to do all we can do or want to do for those who hurt
- ✦ A disposition that acknowledges tragedy, the tragedy of scarcity and limits and the tragic choices that will need to be made due to our finitude and finite resources
- ✦ Truthfulness, to acknowledge the tragic nature of the situation
- ✦ Humility, necessary to cope with our finitude and our limits, realizing that the final victory over illness and death, pain and suffering, is not ours but God's
- ✦ Gratitude for the opportunities we have to do good within limits
- ✦ Justice is essential to be “good” in the midst of scarcity and limits

¹³John W. Glaser, *Three Realms of Ethics* (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed & Ward, 1994), 2.

¹⁴Verhey, 363-76.

- ✦ An abiding concern for public policy that does justice. This arises from compassion for the many who hurt.
- ✦ Lifting a prophetic voice against injustice
- ✦ Avoidance of the conceit of philanthropy, that is, avoiding an attitude that we are the wonderful benefactors and they are the needy beneficiaries of our goodness and generosity. Rather, the Samaritan “sees the wounded man not only as the needy beneficiary, but as a neighbor; a member of a community that includes the sick”¹⁵

So, while we are called to go and do likewise — to be neighbor — to possess a “heart which sees” — this always occurs in a context. The current context of Catholic health care is, in part, one of human finitude and limited resources. We are unable to do all that we can do, and that love or compassion wants to do, because of limits. As individuals and as organizations, we need to develop those character traits that enable us to be neighbor in the midst of limits and tragic choices.



¹⁵Verhey, 376.



From *Thoughts in Solitude*

BY THOMAS MERTON

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following you will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”



From *The Way It Is: New and Selected Poems*

BY WILLIAM STAFFORD

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

PART VI

Re-Entering,
Remembering and
Remaining Rooted

“There is a kind of ‘service’ which truly ‘serves,’ yet we need to be careful not to be tempted by another kind of service, a ‘service’ which is ‘self-serving,””

|| Pope Francis, celebrating Mass in Havana’s Revolution Square,
September 2015

Part VI — Re-Entering, Remembering & Remaining Rooted

Returning home can be a mixed experience. You will realize that you have changed, although you may not be able to explain exactly how. With your return, you'll be asked by many about your experience — what it was like in the country, how the people live, what you ate, what work you completed, how you lived while there. Though it is natural for colleagues and loved ones to ask questions such as these, initially, you might want to sit with your experience in quiet and prayer, preparing what you will share. Then, after time has passed, continue to consider how the experience continues to affect you, how it changed your way of seeing the world and others in it and what God is calling you to do now.

This final part of the guide provides reflections and exercises to help you re-enter your life back in the U.S. and process the experience more fully down the road. It is a time to consider what it is you are called to do moving forward after your experience.

Exercise 1: Contemplative Walking

The contemplative dimension of walking comes through your being present to the world around you and to what you feel and think as you walk. Listen for the ways the divine is speaking to you through the world. Be attentive to your heart beating and listen when new ideas arise.

Start by taking a walk without destination or agenda. If you feel comfortable, leave behind your phone and anything else that might draw you away from an experience of contemplative solitude. Be sad if you are sad, and happy if you are happy. Contemplative walking is not a time to *do*, but a time to *be*.

As you complete Part VI, be mindful of these specific Guiding Principles:



PRUDENCE



HUMILITY





Exercise 6: Acting in Solidarity

We know from the Gospels that Christian discipleship is an active business. Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21).

How can you become more active as a result of your international health experience? You may never return to the place where you worked during your trip. Still, something may have been awakened in you: a desire and a capacity to help, to heal, to speak on behalf of others. To stand in solidarity alongside those whom the world calls poor, but to whom God promises the Kingdom of Heaven.

The corporal works of mercy, suggested in Matthew 25, may be helpful in prompting your imagination about ways to live an active life of faith that does justice.

- ✦ Feed the hungry
- ✦ Give drink to the thirsty
- ✦ Shelter the homeless
- ✦ Visit the sick
- ✦ Visit the prisoners
- ✦ Bury the dead
- ✦ Give alms to the poor

You may also consider opportunities to advocate for issues about which you are passionate. Living in a democratic society, we have the right and responsibilities to be active citizens who think critically and promote the Gospel and the tenets of Catholic social teaching in the processes of representative government. No one has to do everything, but everyone can do something



Lingering Over God from *The Discerning Heart*

BY MAUREEN CONROY

God's touch, though taking place in a moment of time, lives on within us forever. When we experience God's love, God's self-giving, we are never the same. We may return to some of our old ways of being and acting, but deep down within we are not the same.

We can continue to let an experience of God bear fruit within us by going back to it and lingering over it. Through this remembering, lingering, and reliving process, we open ourselves to God — we allow God to move within us, to touch our hearts again so that our own experiences of God ripple deep within us and can continue to make a difference in our lives.

The Meaning of Compassion

FROM SEVERAL SOURCES

Author Fredrick Buechner describes the meaning of compassion in these words: "Compassion is sometimes the fatal capacity for feeling what it is like to live inside somebody else's skin. It is the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you too."

U2 lead singer Bono explains that the meaning of compassion for Christians is to focus on those in need. "To me, a faith in Jesus Christ that is not aligned with the poor ... it's nothing."

The Bible defines the meaning of compassion in several ways. We are to "speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves ... defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Proverbs 31:8-9, NIV). We do this by taking action instead of just talking about helping others: "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18, NIV).

A Modern Day Parable

An Adaptation of Matthew 13:1–23, Mark 4:3–20, Luke 8:4–15, *The Parable of the Sowing*

BY MICHAEL ROZIER, SJ

We often imagine what it will take to build healthier communities in both the U.S. and abroad. But let us engage our imagination in the way that Jesus often challenged his disciples. A simple parable opens us up to both the promise and peril of the good work of international health projects.

When a great crowd gathered around, he said in a parable:

A group of volunteers traveled halfway around the world to restore a failing orchard. As they worked, they saw the trees grow in health and returned home with renewed spirit. They told many stories of their success and began gathering volunteers for the following year. But they did not see what became of the trees once they were gone.

Some of the trees that were watered by hand during their time and looked so strong had no source of continued water after they left, so the fruit never grew.

Some of the trees had low branches trimmed. The higher branches could not be reached by the local workers who were given no ladders of their own, so the fruit grew but withered and died on the tree.

Some of the trees were uprooted and replanted in another part of the field that looked better but that local workers knew often had terrible windstorms, so the fruit grew but was blown off before it ripened.

But some of the trees remained in the part of the field recommended by local workers, had an irrigation system built with local materials and were trimmed in a way that the workers could still access all the branches long after the volunteers returned home. These trees bore fruit a hundredfold and the community had more to eat than ever before.





And he said, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

Then those closest to him asked what this parable meant.

He said, “To you has been given the secret of curing the sick. The volunteers are well-intentioned medical professionals. The orchard is the community where they volunteer or send supplies.

“The trees that were watered for a while but were left to dry out are the patients who were given short-term fixes to long-term problems. It seems better to give them medication or donate whatever supplies are available, but sometimes, something is not better than nothing.

“The trees that had fruit wither and die on the high branches because the local workers had no ladders are the patients who had complications arise after the volunteers left. The volunteers get praise for the good and the local health workers get blamed for what goes wrong after they leave.

“The trees that were replanted in a seemingly promising but ultimately devastating part of the field suffer because the volunteers failed to recognize that the local workers know vital information about their own communities. Good intentions are not enough when people’s lives are at stake.

“But as for the trees that remained in place, were irrigated properly, and could be tended by local workers, these are the patients whose health improved and remained strong for years to come. The volunteers used their expertise to do great work, but they respected the unique knowledge of local workers, they donated supplies that were useful, they provided care with the long-term in mind, and they built capacity by ensuring local health workers were strengthened and not undermined by their work.

“A hundredfold bounty is just the beginning. There is good work to be done, and with God, all things are possible.”



The “Modern Day Parable” is part of the *Guiding Principles for Conducting International Health Activities*. The parable, which is also available as an animated video, can be accessed at www.chausa.org/guidingprinciples.

Conclusion and Additional Resources

Conclusion and Additional Resources

Participating in an international health activity can bring about changes. For some, it awakens a new passion, it may even call one to a new vocation. Others may see this as an opportunity to refocus their existing work and relationships in the context of the experience. Going to a new country and culture does bring change.

Did your experience ...

Bring you closer to God?

Make you feel more like your truest self?

Reignite your calling to the healing ministry?

Stir an increase in faith, hope and love in your life?

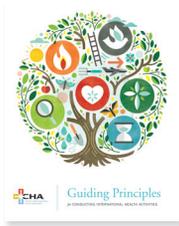
Lead you into a responsible relationship that is of service of others?



This reflection guide includes numerous sources and references to help you consider your participation in international health activities. To more deeply delve into some of the concepts as well as the various activities themselves, CHA has developed a suite of materials on medical surplus recovery, disaster response, short-term medical mission trips and more. They are highlighted in the pages that follow.

For additional information on international outreach, contact Bruce Compton, CHA senior director of International Outreach, at bcompton@chausa.org.

CHA International Outreach Resources



Guiding Principles for Conducting International Health Activities

This CHA resource offers Catholic health ministry leaders and others who participate in international projects with six Guiding Principles for Conducting International Health Activities.



A Modern Day Parable Video

This animated video brings to life “A Modern Day Parable,” as included in CHA’s Guiding Principles booklet.



Short-Term Medical Mission Trips: Recommendations for Practice

This CHA resource shares 20 Recommendations for Practice health care leaders should use to review current and to consider future short-term medical mission trip activities. They are based on the Phase I and Phase II short-term medical mission trip research project CHA conducted in 2014 and 2015.



Short-Term Medical Mission Trips Survey Results

This book contains the detailed question-by-question survey results from Phase I and Phase II of CHA’s 2014-2015 research project on short-term medical mission trips. This is a companion resource to the report of the full scope of the research, Short-Term Medical Mission Trips: Recommendations for Practice.



Disaster Response: Considerations for Catholic Health Care

Created with assistance from Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Charities USA, this booklet offers considerations for appropriately responding to domestic or international disasters.



Video Scenarios

This online tool includes three scenarios and expert video responses for each. Ideal for group discussions and formation.



The Case for International Outreach

This video makes the case for undertaking and expanding international outreach activities



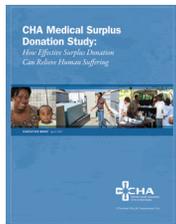
Called to Serve: Guided by Tradition

This video highlights the “call” to participate in the ministry of Catholic health care and, specifically, international outreach.



“The Heart Which Sees” — On Being Neighbor

This video explores the Biblical story of the Good Samaritan through a theological reflection that relates to today’s realities, particularly in international outreach.



CHA Medical Surplus Donation Study: How Effective Surplus Donation Can Relieve Human Suffering

This 18-page report presents findings from a 2010 study of medical surplus donation.



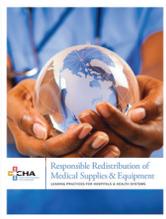
First Do No Harm — Assessing & Selecting High Quality Medical Surplus Recovery Organizations

(Includes an electronic assessment dashboard tool) This booklet is a guide for assessing the practices and effectiveness of Medical Surplus Recovery Organizations.



Medical Surplus Recovery, First Do No Harm

This video highlights the case for appropriate donations.



Responsible Redistribution of Medical Supplies & Equipment: Leading Practices for Hospitals & Health Systems

This resource shares high-impact leading practices every hospital and/or health system should adopt when starting or enhancing a medical surplus recovery program.

Journal

The hardcopy version of this guide
contains 50 journaling pages.



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CHA advances the Catholic health ministry of the United States in caring for people and communities. Comprised of more than 600 hospitals and 1,400 long-term care and other health facilities in all 50 states, the Catholic health ministry is the largest group of nonprofit health care providers in the nation. Every day, one in six patients in the U.S. is cared for in a Catholic hospital.

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Printed in the United States of America.