

Diocesan Mission Office video released in fall 2007

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

The Diocesan Mission Office recently completed a video focusing on the mission outreach lived out across the world by people from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

“And the Lord said, ‘Go’ ...” is the title of the 10-minute video presentation, which features insights and reflections on the call to mission, gleaned from interviews with more than 20 people with a wide variety of mission experience, said Mary Jacobi, chair of the Diocesan Mission Office (DMO).

“The purpose of the video is promote awareness and understanding of the many possibilities there are for mission work,” she said. Increasing awareness about the role of the Diocesan Mission Office was another reason for undertaking the project, she added.

“The DMO wanted to create a video that would celebrate the work that people from our diocese have done in mission fields around the world over many years,” explained Lawrence Thoner, who helped to coordinate the project.

“As we began our research, we were astonished by the number of people from the diocese who have been missionaries,” he noted. Many are members of religious orders, others are lay people who have gone abroad with organizations such as the Scarborough Mission Society and Volunteer International Christian Service (VICS).

“Through photographs and interviews, we tried to give a representative sample of people from every corner of the diocese who have helped spread the Good News in places as diverse as the South Pacific, Canada’s north, South America and Africa,” Thoner said.

The video provides a sense of what being a missionary means today, with profound insights provided by those who were interviewed, he said. “One of the predominant themes was that missionary work today means ‘walking with’ and ‘sharing,’ while being open to learn and receive as much as one gives.”

Informing people that the Diocesan Mission Office is willing to help others in the diocese explore the possibility of mission work was another goal, Thoner said.

“One exciting part of making the video was talking to Holy Cross students about their experiences visiting the diocesan mission in Brazil and to Humboldt-area students who spent time among the poor in Mexico last winter,” he pointed out. “The DMO gave some financial support for both trips and is highly impressed with the enthusiasm the returning students have shown for their life-changing experience and their determination to make a difference.”

Another impressive missionary undertaking is the outreach undertaken by the people of Our Lady of Guadalupe parish in Saskatoon, “as they travel outside our diocese to bring healing and inspiration to First Nations communities in the rest of the province,” he said.

The project has also served an historical purpose, archiving the thoughts and insights of local missionaries at a particular moment in time, Thoner added.

“For example, we were able to interview Fr. Murray Chatlain while he was still in the diocese, prior to becoming bishop of Mackenzie-Fort Smith. We talked to Al Gerwing, long-time missionary enthusiast and patron, before he became critically ill. And we talked extensively with some of the people involved in the diocese’s mission in Brazil, capturing valuable stories about the past for the record.”

Bishop Albert LeGatt invited parishes to show the video on Sunday, Nov. 18, the week before the Diocesan Mission Works collection, said Jacobi. “Besides supporting opportunities for people from our diocese to be involved in mission, the money from this collection goes to Missions Canada, which supports missionary activity in Northern Canada and among our aboriginal peoples,” she said.

“Through the Diocesan Mission Office, support is available in terms of people and organizations prepared to speak about their mission experiences and opportunities, potential funding opportunities for mission work, and resources to learn more about what mission means,” she said.

A study guide was produced in conjunction with the video and “extra features” were added to the DVD, using more of the extensive footage gathered in the production of the project, noted Thoner. “We highly encourage parishes to make use of this supplementary material at meetings of their youth groups, parish councils, social justice committees, CWL or Knights of Columbus.”

A brochure explaining the role of the Diocesan Mission Office is also available. For more information contact the Catholic Pastoral Centre at 242-1500 or toll free: 1-877-661-5005.