



Luke Stocking: Canadian Witness to Faith

Luke Stocking, Central Ontario Animator with the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP). For the past five years I have worked here helping Catholics in schools and parishes to understand and participate in the call of our Faith to promote international solidarity. Through the provision of emergency relief, sustainable long term development, and education and action in Canada, CCODP works for a world that more closely reflects the Kingdom of God.

I am married with two children and our family is an active member of our parish community, St. Cecilia's in Toronto. I finished my formal education with a masters degree in theology from the University of St. Michael's College.

What kind of difference do you hope to make in living a life based on Jesus' teachings?

One of my earliest memories of being a witness to our faith is as a young elementary school student at St. Joseph's in Uxbridge. Several of us had our picture taken for the local paper, holding up cans of food that our school had collected for the local food bank. My mother raised us according to the famous maxim that, "They'll know we are Christians by our Love." In our parish, Sacred Heart, I became involved in both our youth choir and as a youth lector. The opportunity to sing and share the Word of God was an important part of my developing call to be a witness. As I grew I became more aware of the connection between our faith and the promotion of Justice and Peace. In high school I participated in a Habitat for Humanity Trip to Hartford, Connecticut with a group of fellow students from my high school, St. Mary in Pickering. It was then that I learned the most powerful witness we can offer to the world is the one that is made side by side with others. In a culture that promotes the worship of individual heroes, I came to see that true strength lies in our witness as community. During the Habitat trip, a man named Christopher Doucot introduced me to the Catholic Worker Movement. I found this community to be a witness in that it took the radical elements of the Gospel seriously. In the Catholic Worker we learned to open our very homes to those who are most in need, the most marginalized in society. The works of mercy - feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick - became the basis to judge the quality of my Witness. In university we formed our own Catholic Worker community for several years. I also made time during my studies to spend each Tuesday night during the winters as an overnight volunteer at the local out of the cold shelter for the homeless. Eventually I started a family of my own. Each day I pray that my first witness as a Catholic will be to my children, that I might show them the same path to God my parents have showed me. Fortunately, I have been blessed for the last five years to work for the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. In this wonderful movement for International Solidarity, I have been giving the opportunity to witness to thousands of Catholics, from the very young to the very old, the call to participate in the mission of Jesus, the mission he proclaimed in Luke 4:18, "He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor." In my work I have been blessed to spend time in the slums of the Philippines, the rural villages of Zambia and the asentamiento's of Paraguayan campesinos. The courage of my brothers and sisters who struggle for justice in the hope of the coming of God's Kingdom is what gives me strength to continue my own witness to the faith.

What advice do you have for a young Catholic finding ways to express their faith?

I truly believe our first call, as Mother Teresa said, is to be faithful. Whether or not I make a difference in doing that is up to God. Peter Maurin from the Catholic Worker said, "They used to say of the Christians, see how they love one another. Now they say, see how they pass the buck." If my witness can join to the witness of others, perhaps we as Christians may be known once more for the Love that God so wishes for the whole world to know.

Find a community of people you can share your faith with. God doesn't want us to have to go it alone. In community, we can find ways to make our faith show the goodness of God to the rest of the world, especially through the search for justice and compassion.