



Mission Report

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Left: Families in Peru are constantly under threat by those keen on imposing their pro-abortion and anti-family views on the population.

Dear Pro-Life Friend in Christ,

In this issue of *Mission Report*, Raymond de Souza reports from Cuzco, Peru, high in the Andes Mountains, where HLI attended the II International Conference for Truth and Life, sponsored by HLI's Affiliate in Peru. The Conference touched on many great topics, including a beautiful talk on Rachel's Vineyard. Raymond tells us there was an impressive number of young people in attendance, which is surely good news for the future of the pro-life movement in Peru.

Also in this issue, Fr. Francesco Giordano reports on his mission trip to Belarus, where he gave a pro-life retreat to priests from the Diocese of Vitebsk. Abortion has been pushed on the people of Belarus since the Bolsheviks took over the country nearly 100 years ago. However, the situation is far from hopeless, especially with good bishops like His Excellency Aleh Butkevich. Belarus desperately needs well-trained priests spreading the pro-life message to guide the hearts of the people back to Life, and that is why HLI sent Fr. Giordano to lead this special training.

My dear friends, our efforts in standing for Life and defending the family would not be possible without your dedicated support. On behalf of the HLI family, I thank you and wish you every blessing of Almighty God.



Fr. Shenan J. Boquet
President

Yours in Christ and in Our Lady,

Fr. Shenan J. Boquet
President, Human Life International

MISSIONARY TRIP TO PERU

By Raymond de Souza, HLI Delegate for International Missions, August 2016

The II International Conference for Truth and Life was held in Cuzco, Peru, sponsored by HLI's Affiliate in Peru, CEPROFARENA, on August 4-6. It counted on the participation of speakers from various countries, including Ecuador, Venezuela, Argentina, and the United States, along with local speakers from Peru.

The city of Cuzco is the ancient capital of the Inca Empire and known as the archeological capital of the Americas. It is located atop the Andes range of mountains, about 12,000 feet above sea level, and one feels the thin air as soon as one leaves the airplane.

I was warned by friends to walk slowly, especially if I climb stairs, eat little and rest much during the first day, in order to acclimate my system to the new altitude. And they were not joking. The air is so thin that tourists often buy oxygen bottles to carry with them around town, especially if they go to visit the ancient ruins of Machu Pichu, which is even higher in altitude than Cuzco.

The Conference was held in a Catholic school auditorium, and the



Ordinary of Cuzco, Archbishop Richard Alarcón, opened the proceedings with a powerful address regarding the seriousness of the



Attendees from the II International Conference for Truth and Life held in Cuzco, Peru.

situation in Peru, where the Culture of Life is constantly under threat by political minorities keen to impose their pro-abortion and anti-family views on the population.

Among the speakers was Rev. Fr. Victor Salomon from Venezuela, whom we had already met in Caracas a few months before in the course of the first pro-life conference held in that city. Fr. Salomon gave a very concrete, down-to-earth address about how a parish can organize itself to promote the Gospel of Life. It was very much appreciated by everyone, as he pointed out precisely what to do and what not to do to maximize efforts and resources. In fact, since all the presentations were recorded, I suggested

that they be made available to HLI Hispanic division, to promote among its various affiliates in Latin America and eventually also in Spain.

Mrs. Amparo Medina from Ecuador, well known to HLI from previous conferences, is a powerful speaker gifted with an impressive ability to motivate people to commit themselves to the pro-life cause. **Her two addresses inspired about 12 priests to go up on stage and commit themselves to organize in their parishes a pro-life committee that would work to motivate the people in general to learn more about and serve the Gospel of Life.**

Dr. Rafael del Busto from Lima, a gifted Catholic psychologist, gave an impressive presentation titled “Replies to the Hedonistic Sex Education” and provided substantial insights into the dangers of hedonism in the moral formation of the young.

Our good friend Dr. Jorge Scala from Argentina, an expert on the issue of gender ideology, outdid himself speaking on the meaning of the gender ideology, its purposes, and its methods of infiltration in education systems.

Dr. Teresa Burke from the United States addressed the conference in English, and was competently translated into Spanish through an interpreter. She gave a beautiful presentation on the work of Rachel’s Vineyard to assist post-abortive women in need of help. Her ministry today reaches a great many countries of the world in all continents and continues to go on from strength to strength.

My address at the Conference dealt with the fundamental issue



Above and below: Raymond de Souza, HLI Delegate for International Missions, speaking at the II International Conference for Truth and Life .



that permeates the Culture of Death and the gender ideology; namely, relativism. Taking from Cardinal Ratzinger’s homily at the Mass of the Conclave that elected him Pope, my talk developed the concept of the “Dictatorship of Relativism” when he said that “A dictatorship of relativism is being constituted that recognizes nothing as absolute and which only leaves the ‘I’ and its whims as the ultimate measure. Every day new sects are born. We should not remain as children in the faith, in the state of minors, to be ‘tossed to and from and carried about with every wind of doctrine’” (Ephesians 4:14). To have a clear faith, according to the creed of the Church, is necessary, in order to discern between what is true and what is false, between deceit and truth.

My purpose was to show, by means of a variety of examples and logical reasoning, that truth is objective and not subjective, that is, the human mind does not create the truth, but learns it from outside of itself. This concept is applicable to all fields of human knowledge, especially science.



Raymond de Souza (right), with Rev. Fr. Victor Salomon from Venezuela.

I received very positive feedback from the audience, many of whom came to see me after the talk to ask questions and to record radio interviews.

Dr. Jorge Scala and I were also taken to the local Catholic TV station for interviews on our individual presentations.

The trip to Cuzco ended with a visit to the historical center of the city, where we admired the incredible beauty of the Cathedral, unique in the whole of Latin America.

One aspect that impressed me very much during the conference was the presence of a vast number of young people. I would estimate that nearly 40% of the people present were aged below 25 years old, which undoubtedly constitutes a great promise for Peru, having so many young people committed to the Gospel of Life.

Invite Father Boquet
or another HLI expert
to speak at your parish!

Call 540-635-7884 or
email us at hli@hli.org
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Host a weekend mission on how to rebuild
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Congress passed the legislation, and the president signed into law, making permanent the Qualified Distribution from IRA accounts. Why not take advantage of the Federal tax law and make gifts from your retirement plan's assets to help HLI spread the Gospel of Life around the world!

Individuals 70 ½ or older, who must take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), can transfer up to \$100,000 per year from a traditional IRA or Roth IRA to HLI. Under this law those assets are excluded from income provided the distribution is made directly to HLI.

IS A CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTION FROM AN IRA RIGHT FOR YOU?

Donating IRA assets can be a financially rewarding strategy for both you and HLI. As always, it is advisable to contact your personal tax advisor or financial representative before making a decision that alters your tax situation. Here are some scenarios that may make sense for you.

- Generally, in order to claim a charitable deduction, you must itemize your tax return. For retirees who no longer pay mortgage interest, the deductions may be too small to itemize. The provision offers the tax benefits of a charitable contribution without your having to itemize your deductions.
- Charitable deductions can be limited by your income. By directing all, or a portion, of your IRA distribution to HLI you can avoid this restriction.
- If reporting additional income on your form 1040 increases your Medicare Part B premiums or negatively affects the taxability of your Social Security benefits, then making a charitable contribution from your IRA may be appropriate.
- Some states do not allow residents to deduct a charitable contribution. Making a donation directly from an IRA may provide a way to effectively claim a state tax deduction. Consult your tax advisor for state-specific guidance.

HOW DO YOU GET STARTED?

Easy! Contact your financial advisor, or IRA administrator, and request a distribution to be sent directly to Human Life International.

WHY MAKE A GIFT TO HLI FROM YOUR IRA?

At 70 ½, you must begin receiving the Required Minimum Distributions from your IRA regardless of whether you actually need the income. Contributing your distribution to HLI can cover or count toward your Required Minimum Distribution and help HLI to Give Glory to God and Defend Life & Family Around the World. If you have any questions, please contact HLI at 540-635-7884, ext. 225.



MISSIONARY TRIP TO BELARUS

By Fr. Francesco Giordano, Director of HLI's Rome Office, August 2016

After a long trip from the United States, I was met at the airport in Minsk, Belarus by a kind and welcoming gentleman by the name of Dr. Vladislav Volokhovich of Open Hearts Foundation. After spending the night in Minsk, we traveled to Braslaw, a small town between Minsk and Vitebsk. Along the way we took in the beautiful countryside filled with thick, towering pine forests. Each small village we encountered had its own neo-gothic Catholic church and Byzantine Orthodox church.

As we drove, Dr. Vladislav shared a great deal with me about Belarus and his life. It dawned on me when he said that he was my age that we had grown up in entirely different contexts. I remembered how we viewed Russia and the USSR in the 1980s. The exchanges with Russian students I had when my family lived in San



Diego, California, came back vividly to mind, especially learning how to make Fabergé eggs. I had made a beautiful imitation egg after having visited a museum and saw the “real thing” there.

Here I was in Belarus with someone who had grown up in Communism and lived through the change thereafter, someone who is now a Scripture Professor at one of the two national seminaries, someone who has five children and is deeply committed to what I am also committed: pro-life, pro-family, the priesthood, and the Faith.

This was going to be a good mission, I thought.

At one point during the trip, we stopped to pick up an icon for Valdislav. I could not help but purchase some icons and incense for friends and family. The cost was indeed quite reasonable.

When we finally arrived in Braslaw, I celebrated Mass and was very happy to meet the young and cheerful Bishop of Vitebsk, His Excellency Aleh Butkevich. Two of the bishop’s sisters are religious sisters at the Convent where I was staying, which happened to be in the town where the bishop was raised. 85% of the residents there are Catholic.

Generally speaking, western Belarus has more Catholics than Orthodox because of how it borders with Poland and Lithuania, while in the east there are logically more Orthodox because of the border with Russia. These less obvious facts and cultural nuances are good to learn in nations we visit. **In terms of the pro-life situation, the country unfortunately has a mentality quite open to abortion since the Bolsheviks imposed it in 1920.**

Unlike in the West, the issue of contraception was not used as a means to bring about abortion, even though abortion itself is certainly part of the contraceptive “ge-



Dr. Vladislav Volokhovich, Bishop Aleh Butkevich, and Father Giordano.

nus.” Since abortion is now part of three generations in each Belarusian family, to change the mentality is not an easy task.

Notwithstanding, attempts are made, and there are some fruits already showing. **The government is giving young families initiatives to have children by offering everything from three-year maternity leave to more inexpensive housing.** If a couple has three children they get upgraded to a larger apartment; if they have five children, they can even get a house with a yard.

After spending a pleasant weekend speaking with the bishop through the excellent translation of Dr. Vladislav, we began the pro-life priest “retreat” on Monday with two 45-minute conferences per day, in addition to an instructive homily at each daily Mass. I was pleased that between 30 and 40 priests were able to be present. The numbers were not always consistent due to the different obligations each priest had, and the distances they had to travel within the diocese were certainly prohibitive.

Providentially, I was able to express the urgency of the pro-life message as I laid out in four conferences the magisterial history on the topic from Pope Leo XIII’s *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae* in 1880 to Pope John Paul II’s *Evangelium Vitae* in 1995 (with Pope Pius XI’s *Casti Connubii* in 1930 and Pope Paul VI’s *Humanae Vitae* in 1968). I was aiming to discuss NFP, but when I got to it, Dr. Vladislav took over since he is an expert in the field. It was very good to work with someone who is on the same wavelength. In the course of the conferences, I tried to demonstrate the link between contraception, abortion, divorce, IVF, so-called homosexual “marriage,” and transhumanism. The last three themes are not yet major issues in Belarus, but by showing the link between them and the others, I was hoping to alert my audience to the possibilities. **All it would take is a different sort of government, and in a country with a bureaucratic mentality as strong as the one found in Belarus, such programs could easily be implemented.**



Fr. Francesco Giordano, Director of HLI’s Rome Office, speaking at a pro-life priests retreat in Belarus.

It is for this reason that we need to focus on changing the hearts of people. Priests are naturally good instruments to help us reach such an objective, and such retreats help bring back awareness of crucial issues for the common good of the Church and the societies in which she finds herself.

For this reason also, i.e. that of the priest's role in the Culture of Life, the bishop asked me to focus on the liturgy and priestly spirituality in my last conference on the third day. I started with the theology of St. John Chrysostom to develop an argument for the sanctity of the priesthood tied to the liturgical care and observance required by such a mission. It struck me as obvious that care for the liturgy and prayer of the priest is key to his sanctity and his mission in reordering society according to the dictates of the Word of God.

Yet this is also true: Care for prayer and the liturgy is intimately tied to forming holier families that are open to life. The last day was the feast of St. Bartholomew, and the Gospel stressed the conversion of Nathaniel to become St. Bartholomew. He was a good man who was attentive to the Scripture but was willing to set aside his preconceptions to listen to the Word of God rather than the words of the world. Let us pray that this may be the case for all of the priests of the Diocese of Vitebsk, and let us pray that many fruits may come from Bishop Butkevich's efforts to rekindle the Gospel of Life that Pope St. John Paul II so tirelessly sought throughout his pontificate.

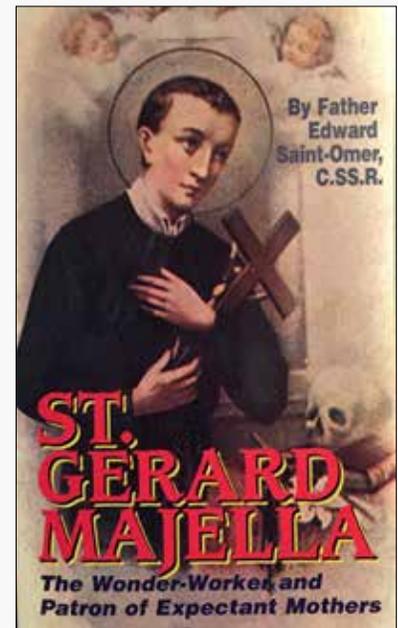
DONATE \$53 OR MORE TO HLI THIS MONTH AND GET OUR LATEST PRO-LIFE RESOURCE!

This month, when you donate \$53 or more to support HLI's life-saving mission, you'll receive the book, *Saint Gerard Majella: The Wonder-Worker and Patron of Expectant Mothers*, by Edward Saint-Omer.

St. Gerard Majella is the patron of expectant mothers. A tailor by profession, he entered the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the Redemptorists, at age 26. He became famous for his miracles, cures, charities, prayer life, obedience and love for others. One miracle attributed to him was when he was visiting in a home with a young pregnant woman about to lose her baby. His white handkerchief fell out of his coat, and the woman picked it up and was healed. She delivered a healthy baby.

St. Gerard is a major Saint of the Catholic Church. Though he died of tuberculosis at only 29 and was only a lay brother, he achieved great sanctity - such that his superiors attested that he had not only not committed any mortal sins, but that they could not detect that he had ever been guilty of any sin at all!

Please send your gift of \$53 or more to HLI, and we'll ship this book out to you today!



Saint Gerard Majella: The Wonder-Worker and Patron of Expectant Mothers is this month's pro-life educational resource.