Why do these missionaries come to my church every summer?

Every year between March and September, parishes across the country host a speaker from a mission congregation, organization or diocese. This is the **Missionary Cooperative Plan (MCP)** of the U.S. Catholic Church. Every (Arch) diocese in the U.S. is required through the Pontifical Mission Societies to welcome the appeals. The purpose of the MCP is two-fold. First, the many mission congregations, organizations and dioceses get a chance to personally appeal for prayer and financial support from the parishioners in the U.S. Second, we the parishioners, get the opportunity to be educated about what is happening in the mission world today both at home and abroad.

Each January it is the job of the Mission Office staff and Board to choose who will be invited to come to our diocese. Over 250 religious congregations, dioceses and lay mission organizations apply in the fall for approximately 30 spots, as our parishes are expected to commit and schedule every other year. Many parishes also choose to do voluntary appeals yearly, opening their doors in hospitality and support. The applications are reviewed and considered based on our Bishop’s requests, home missions, local organizations and congregations, international relationships, local diocesan missioners home from their ministry,… As you may have guessed, the task for assigning and scheduling these appeals is very time consuming as we work very intentionally on filling requests, finding just the right organization for the parish community/ies and making sure that the organization and individuals are legitimate and canonically sound in their evangelization of mission. The selected candidates are then notified as are the hosting parishes at the end of January or early February and the two parties then make the necessary connections for scheduling within the parish/es.

Why are we telling you this? The Mission Office believes that it is very important for Catholics to understand why these folks come to your parishes through our office on a voluntary commitment or every other year as is scheduled. It is not just another collection or request for funding for people you might not know. It is an opportunity to open our hearts and our minds to the call we all have as missioners. We ask you to please welcome them wholeheartedly on behalf of the diocese of St. Cloud and rejoice in the opportunity to learn and to grow in your faith in Christ through the knowledge and the experiences they share with you. This is a wonderful way that we are able to be in solidarity with our brothers and sisters right next door or half way around the world. It is a wonderful opportunity to make connections with people whom you might have a desire to develop a lasting relationship with.

Thank you for the support and solidarity you have given to the MCP program in the past and will continue to give in the future. We very much appreciate all that you do to share in our call to living and sharing in a life of ‘mission’.

Blessings,

Elizabeth Neville Brown

Director