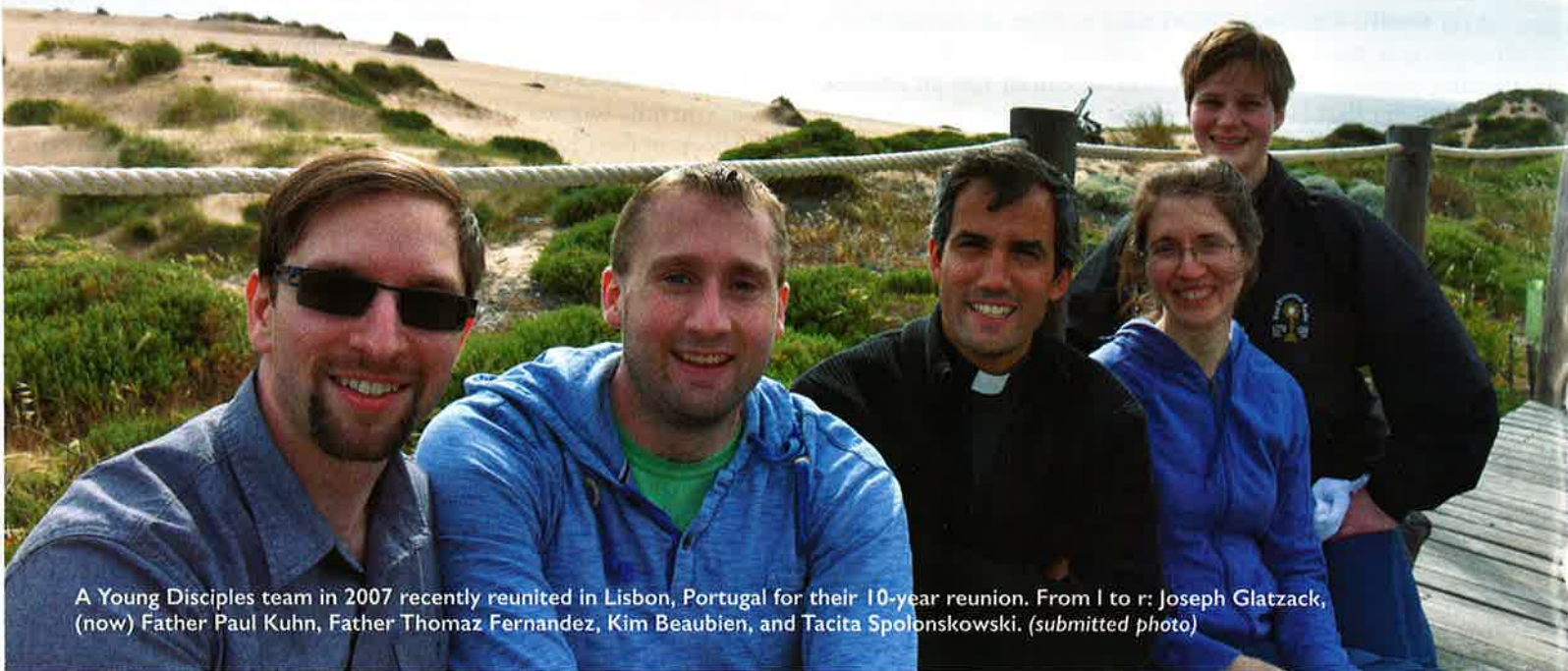


“Old” Young Disciple reflects on graces then and now

By Tacita Splonskowski



A Young Disciples team in 2007 recently reunited in Lisbon, Portugal for their 10-year reunion. From l to r: Joseph Glatzack, (now) Father Paul Kuhn, Father Thomaz Fernandez, Kim Beaubien, and Tacita Splonskowski. (submitted photo)

Four non-denominational Pentecostals rang my doorbell the other day. Alone at home, and needing to be some place in 20 minutes, I groaned inwardly as I decided whether or not to answer.

I did, and I am glad, because they were so sincere in their desire to proclaim the Gospel to me. After all, “How can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach?” (Romans 10:14).

I admire their courage to go door-to-door, peddling what they believe. You see, I too had the joy of proclaiming the Gospel to others ten years ago when, right out of high school, I joined the Fargo Diocese’s Young Disciples Team.

For two weeks, nearly 20 of us underwent a quick course in catechesis, pedagogy, evangelization, teamwork, and more at the Pastoral Center in Fargo. Stella Jeffrey, Mary Hanbury, and their crew watched us interact and prayerfully selected teams. When they did, they ended up with five odd ducks: Thomaz Fernandez, from Lisbon, Portugal; Kim Beaubien, from Michigan; Joseph Glatzack, from Wisconsin; Paul Kuhn, from Harvey, N.D.; and myself, from Minnesota.

We were sent out to various parishes, leading camps for K-6th graders during the day, and teen missions in the evening. Though we were “odd” together, we soon discovered that our differences were many and varied. Thomaz, with his love for physical exercise, discipline, and Our Lady of Fatima was our team leader. Kim, quiet and prayerful, but insistent, nervous, and at times stubborn, was our prayer leader. Joe, an ardent lover

of all things Wisconsin, an avid photographer, and admirer of modern ecclesiastical art, was our drama leader. I, the youngest, came well equipped with my memorized Baltimore Catechism and a guitar to be our music leader. Paul, the tall, gentle giant among us, was our community outreach coordinator – otherwise affectionately known as the “flunky” position.

When the summer of 2007 ended, none of us could have put into words the effects of the personal graces each of us had received. We went back to our lives that autumn outwardly unaltered, except with perhaps a few odd habits like fun grace before meals, impromptu meditations on the mysteries of the Rosary with family, or phrases like, “Praised be Jesus Christ!” to which we then had to teach the response, “Now and forever!” to whoever was willing to indulge our whim.

The next 10 years saw many changes in our lives. Thomaz entered the seminary for his home diocese of Lisbon and was ordained a priest. Kim entered the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, discerned her call to marriage, and returned home, finding employment with an aviation insurance company. Joe finished his business degree and volunteered with the youth program in his parish, eventually taking a job with Fleet Farm. Paul entered the seminary, studying for the Diocese of Fargo, and was ordained to the priesthood this past June. I entered the Franciscan Sisters of Dillingen in Hankinson, discerned Jesus calling me elsewhere, and am now living in Fargo running a business sewing, altering, and repairing vestments, altar cloths, etc for priests and parishes.

In the autumn of 2015, I suggested we four Americans converge

on Father Thomaz in Lisbon and go on pilgrimage together to Fatima for the centennial celebration, as well as for our 10-year anniversary in 2017. Our Lady arranged the details beautifully, and we reunited for the first time in a decade on April 25, at the home of Father Thomaz' parents in Lisbon. Father Thomaz, as pastor of his parish in Queluz, was only able to take a limited time away from his duties to spend with us. We were glad to meet his parishioners, friends, and parents, and go with Father on a few excursions into the beautiful Portuguese landscape. Father arranged for the four of us to have a guided tour of Lisbon with Joana Matela, as well as accommodations for three days with the Community of the Servants of Mary from the Heart of Jesus in Fatima. Here we rediscovered the beauty of praying together, our enjoyment of praising God with unabashed simplicity, and the mystery of the love of God at work in our lives as individuals united in Christ.

In preparation to write this article, I visited with the members of my team for feedback on the graces of our pilgrimage. The reverential silence with which my inquiries were met, and my own experience of being so small in the face of such great blessings is the same as I experienced at the end of Young Disciples in 2007. Only time has revealed the ways God has chosen to use that experience to draw us into intimacy with him. So, I expect this pilgrimage will have long-lasting effects, which will only be discovered in eternity.

The joy, or at least the desire of proclaiming the Gospel, is something that still motivates us in our daily lives. We learn from each other and have grown through encounter together with Christ. We won't be ringing your doorbell any time soon, but a Young Disciple only becomes an "old" Young Disciple, and the Gospel we proclaim is as fresh as the first day Jesus proclaimed, "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15).

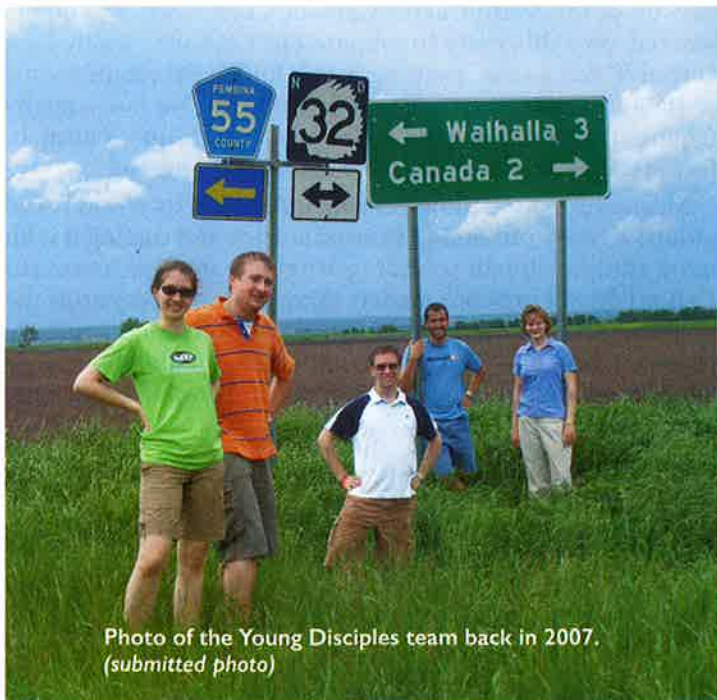


Photo of the Young Disciples team back in 2007. (submitted photo)



Prayer Intention of Pope Francis

July / August

Lapsed Christians:

That our brothers and sisters who have strayed from the faith, through our prayer and witness to the Gospel, may rediscover the merciful closeness of the Lord and the beauty of the Christian life.

Artists:

That artists of our time, through their ingenuity, may help everyone discover the beauty of creation.

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5202 25th St. S.
Fargo, ND 58104



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Please RSVP to dinner@catholiccharitiesnd.org
call 701-235-4457 or visit CatholicCharitiesND.org