

Mission to Slovakia and the Czech Republic

By Mary Shaw

“While I was walking out, I saw a young woman weeping. I asked her if I could help. She said that she did not even know about this meeting, but came and that ‘my whole life has changed because of this night.’”

OUR TEAM FOR THIS OUTREACH to Slovakia and the Czech Republic included six members from the U.S. as well as six others from Slovakia and the Czech Republic who joined us for portions of our mission. We were particularly challenged by the absence of Tom Edwards, our country coordinator, due to his wife’s illness. I led the team at Tom’s request. In the Czech Republic we were short of translators due to illness. As we offered our loaves and fishes, the Holy Spirit multiplied them into countless blessings.

Our first event began at a suburban parish in Presov with the 5:00 Mass and our program. This was the official kick-off program for the city-wide mission and our first time working in this parish. The Dean of the area did not believe many would attend since there seemed to be a lack of interest in the parish and not much happening there. He seemed very pleased with our program which consisted of a presentation on the New Evangelization and personal prayer ministry by our team. There were more than 300 in attendance.

The next morning we departed for Velky Slavkov in the High Tetra mountains where the MAJAK community from Kosice was holding a retreat for approximately 80 young adults. The group was young and vibrant and at various stages in their walk in the Spirit. The morning session included talks on the New Evangelization, the Year of Faith, and the Call to Holiness, team testimonies, and a beautiful charismatic Mass. There were three

simultaneous workshops that afternoon: Growing as a Woman of God; Growing as a Man of God; and Called by Name. The evening session consisted of anointed praise and worship, intercession, healing, and empowerment prayer. The team prayed for hours with people.

We departed at noon for Orava where we were hosted by Fr. Branislav Kozuch and housed at the youth center. That evening we presented at a local parish event to many who had just received Confirmation. Personal prayer followed, many having requests for growth in holiness and the courage to evangelize.

We kept very busy in Orava with a variety of programs, some of them quite challenging. These included two programs with social work students at a Catholic university. Not all of these students were believers. The first program for about 55 students included a presentation on the importance of Jesus in our lives, the choices we make and the role and assistance of the Holy Spirit in healthcare. On the second day we met at the Kool Klub coffee house with about 30 social work students. Various team members shared testimonies followed by small group time. Some groups were fruitful in that students asked questions about Jesus and Christianity.

One evening we had an open meeting in a nearby parish and about 150 people came. John Mathe shared his testimony of conversion and I spoke briefly on Faith and Holiness. Praise and worship followed with a strong anointing of the Holy Spirit. Prayer ministry was deep and powerful. While I was walking out, I saw a young woman weeping. I asked her if I could help. She said that she did not even know about this meeting, but came and that “my whole life has changed because of this night.”

Additional activities in Orava included a meeting with seven priests and one religious sister who are working in the area of evangelization, a meeting with parents of children with addictions, the kickoff meeting for a mandatory retreat for teens from the Catholic school, and a workshop for middle-aged mothers.

We headed to Bratislava for a youth Mass celebrated by Fr. Jan Buc, an old friend of Renewal Ministries. We shared the Gospel message and spent considerable time in prayer ministry for the many youth there. The pastor of the church was present and he was first in line for personal prayer. On Thursday we presented a day of healing for the leaders of the NAIM Community.



The team and friends: Front (l. to r.): Cecelia Ritchey, Pegi Mathe, Mary George. Back (l. to r.): Gloria Gray, Vasek Cap, John Mathe, Jana, Martin, Mary Shaw, Fr. Brano, Zuzana Ovcarikova, Helka Slivkova

There were many tears as the Lord ministered to this community. One leader said his life was changed through the ministry of the team.

We had the opportunity to present to two groups (about 65 students in each) of Catholic high school students. The principal of the school was a convert. His love for the Church and his students was very evident. We had the opportunity to talk about sexuality, temptation, pornography, and purity and the students were attentive. We led them in a prayer to choose Christ. The principal’s daughter attended one of the sessions and told her father it was “incredible.”

On Saturday we drove to the Moravian Region of the Czech Republic to begin simultaneous parish missions in Fulnek and Bilovec, two villages located about ten miles apart. We divided the team and at one location we taught on Theology of the Body to the youth, and at another we spoke to an Alpha group. After the presentations and dinner with participants, we moved to the main church to pray for baptism in the Spirit for the Alpha Group. Almost all came forward for prayer and seemed to be very open.

Monday began three nights of simultaneous missions in the parishes in Fulnek and Bilovec. We began with Mass and ended with prayer for healing and empowerment. Attendance increased with each night and people were attentive and open for prayer. One man, separated from his wife for years, was convicted by the Lord to forgive and reconcile with her. He came up for prayer the next night holding hands with his wife. Prior to our arrival, the new priests at Fulnek were unsure about the effect the mission might have on their parish. In the end they were very pleased and invited us to return. On the last night of the mission we offered to pray for the priests. Kneeling at the altar we prayed over them and they were deeply touched by the Lord and brought to tears.

One of the most interesting meetings was at a Senior Club in Fulnek with a group of socially and politically active elders. Some are believers, but many are communists. When we explained that we were there on mission, the atmosphere became tense. Gloria Gray shared a testimony and the leaders became restless. One started to thank us for coming and invited us to come and eat. My translator said they were trying to shut the meeting down.

Then a woman asked a question about conditions of the elderly in the U.S. The Holy Spirit quickly provided the opportunity to talk about basic conditions common to elderly, which quickly turned to a presentation of the gospel message and prayer to offer lives to Jesus. Seeds were planted that day! The mayor graciously thanked us saying that she “read somewhere that God is love so we should love each other.”

We then headed to Brno where we held two programs for students at the finest Catholic high school there. I spoke about choices we make and eternal consequences. Mary George spoke about choosing to live for Jesus. All the team members participated and we were well received.

That evening in a 13th century Franciscan monastery, we held a three hour program with praise and worship, a testimony and a teaching on evangelization. The large church was almost full. Nearly all asked for prayer ministry. In the presence of the exposed Blessed Sacrament we prayed for hours for grace for deeper relationship with Christ, courage to evangelize, healing of depression, living God’s will, purity, healing of family issues/marriages and much more. The priest who invited us was amazed at the healing presence of God during the program. He asked if we would return and do a parish mission.

Many seeds of faith were planted on this mission. Many were presented with the basic Gospel message and encouraged to evangelize. Many were touched through prayer ministry. Priests were blessed by the team and grateful for our service.

Cecelia Ritchey, a first time missionary wrote: “I really had no expectations in joining the team; I only hoped that I would be a help to others during the mission. Some of my spiritual gifts were stretched farther than I could have imagined and I saw God repeatedly give me what I needed and make up for the rest. No vacation was ever better. I offered myself and learned many things in return.”



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The young adult group with pastor, Fr. Pawel Prujzynski and Fr. Slavo in Fulnek