

Endorsements of Gerry Straub's Presentation on Poverty and Prayer

"I attended Gerry Straub's keynote presentation at our annual diocesan Catechetics and Ministry Conference and was most impressed. The presentation was powerful and conscience-stirring. It seemed that everyone present was deeply moved."

Bishop David E. Fellhauer Diocese of Victoria in Texas

Gerry Straub offered a compelling presentation, "Prayer and Poverty", to 700+ Catholic school educators that moved them to silence, to reflection, and hopefully, to action. The combination of his life story and video of his ministry deepened their understanding about St. Francis of Assisi and raised their consciousness about the meaning of poverty.

Inspired by his presentation and his craft, the educators returned to their schools with a clear definition of the call to mercy, compassion, and love.

Louis P. De Angelo, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools Diocese of Wilmington

"In our day, it's not uncommon to find issues of justice treated as separate from spirituality, dogma, and liturgy. In his powerful "Poverty & Prayer" presentation at our church, Gerry was able to help us to understand that these are all intimately related. Indeed, take justice out of the picture and we become poor shadows of what God means for us to be. Touched by scenes of poverty, though, the questions that so often haunt us all become clear - we understand why our worship, belief, and prayer are so very important. Thank you Gerry for helping us to see and to know God's love and God's will for our lives. May God bless you in your continued efforts to bring the face of Jesus to we who long for his life."

Fr. Jim Brokman

Pastor

Holy Name Catholic Church West Union, Iowa

Poverty and Prayer, presented by Gerard Thomas Straub, offers an honest and raw look at poverty, homelessness and hunger in the world today. What made Gerry's presentation so powerful was that he connected us to real human beings and shared with us their lives and stories through film. He then helped us to see these individuals within the bigger, systemic context of poverty, both at home and around the world, and showed us the efforts of organizations to provide care to the impoverished and marginalized. Gerry deepened this experience further by interweaving his personal faith journey throughout the presentation. He shared from his heart his experience of following the calling of Christ and the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi into welcoming the outcasts with compassion and finding refreshment and renewal for his difficult work in prayer, silence and contemplation. This is a unique, thought-provoking, compassion-deepening presentation that will stick with anyone who has the opportunity to experience it.

Sarah Widener

Business/Program Office Coordinator

River's Edge

(A retreat center operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph)

"Pax et Bonum Communications made the Paschal Mystery come to life for me. I am grateful for Gerry Straub's presentation to the Faith Formation Leaders and Catholic School Administrators that took place on October 14, 2013. Through his videos and very candid presentation, Gerry brought a very uncomfortable topic to our hearts. It was a difficult day. The images of poverty and illness from throughout the world haunt me still, as I'm sure they will haunt Gerry forever. Yet, he did not shy away from the reality

of these issues. And, just as important, he did not use this issue to sell a product or raise money for his own benefit; instead, he used the issue to challenge his audience into a closer relationship with Jesus. Gerry Straub's presentation on Christian prayer in the light of suffering called me to a deeper awareness of suffering in the world and in my own life. More importantly, it helped me to connect with the suffering of Jesus. The conversation was not candy-coated or superficial. It went straight to the hearts of us all. It was a refreshingly mature conversation about a topic that cannot immediately be solved. It was difficult, sickening, painful, and sorrowful, but it was genuine and the obvious truth. But, as the Paschal Mystery teaches us, suffering brings life. Gerry's presentation was also a glimmer of hope, the hope of Jesus and the hope of Christians who will respond to His call to love 'the least of these.' His presentation broke my heart and filled it at the same time."

-Kevin Feyen

Director of Adolescent Faith Formation Archdiocese of Dubuque

"Mr. Straub's presentation was the best that I have seen in my twenty-eight years at Aquinas. Heart-wrenching and hopeful, his film clips and stories commanded the full attention of everyone in the auditorium. What we witnessed was a clear example of what it means to live the gospel. His life and his work raise our awareness of the plight of the poor and remind us of our Christian responsibility to respond. Mr. Straub changes lives-the lives of the poor he serves and the lives of audiences inspired to do the same."

Pat Connelly

Teacher

Aquinas Institute (high school) Rochester, New York

Everyone was moved from tears to action by Gerry Straub's "Poverty and Prayer" presentation at our diocesan catechetical conference. Absolutely engaging. Gerry presents the gospel message to "love our neighbor" as only few are doing. After seeing this presentation, you will be forever changed. An absolutely critical social justice message for our youth today. If your high school students only see one presentation this year, it must be this one.

Deacon Chuck Glynn, Ed.D. Diocese of Victoria in Texas

In the fall of 2007, we invited Gerry Straub to speak at our school. Gerry showed our students clips from the film, *Patients of a Saint*, a documentary about the inspiring work of Dr. Tony Lazzara in Chaclacayo, Peru. The presentation was fortuitous because at that time we were planning our second-ever trip to Peru. After the presentation, students asked if they could make a documentary film “like Gerry Straub did” about our upcoming trip. Others asked if we could also go and see “Dr. Tony” while in Peru. We followed-up with Gerry and Dr. Tony and included the clinic in our itinerary. In

addition, two of our students, Kevin Tobin and Graham Madden, created the video, “Far From Home.”

Our trip to Peru was a huge success! The visit to the clinic and the documentary film helped galvanize a movement in our school towards immersion experiences. It helped us create a program called “BERSI” (The Brother Edmund Rice Solidarity Initiative) that is now our largest student activity. We are running over a dozen immersion trips each year to such places as Haiti, the Dominican Republic, China, Peru, Nicaragua, the Arizona-Mexican border, rural Appalachia, and a migrant farm camp in Florida.

With regard to Peru, the student video made the rounds at other Christian Brother schools and they started running student trips as well. This year, fourteen groups of students from Christian Brother schools across North America will visit Peru and volunteer with Dr. Tony and at other missionary sites that work with the poorest of the poor. Significantly, several of our graduates have maintained contact with the people and projects they encountered in Peru even after graduation.

The spark that started all this? Gerry Straub.

*James P. Keane, B.A., M.Div., M.Ed., Ph.D. Vice Principal
Catholic Memorial School
West Roxbury, MA*

“We are very appreciative of the time Gerry Straub spent with us at our school. He effectively engaged over 100 of our senior high students for over two hours essentially impressing upon our hearts the call to live the Gospel. Our young people live in a very visual culture spending many hours each week on the internet, watching television and movies. Gerry Straub met our young people where they were at with a highly visual and captivating message. His use of images, sound, and video held the attention our students and helped them to understand the stories of real people all over the world suffering in a way that is shocking, painful, and often unseen. Gerry Straub also seamlessly tied in his own powerful conversion story from atheism to a man of profound faith. Gerry’s presentation challenges his listeners to turn to God in prayer and seek out what God personally want them do. The presentation is a powerful reminder of the call of Jesus to exercise mercy: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.” I

would recommend young people see the presentation because our world needs more compassionate leaders in the future.”

Desmond Sanesh

Dean of Students - Boys Clear Water Academy Calgary, Alberta, Canada

“I found the presentation of Gerry Straub's conversion and subsequent work riveting. His words and photos were ‘mind-blowing’ in the sense that my attention and my inner spirit were tremendously moved. It reminded me of my work in Mexico and Bolivia and

how those experiences changed me and challenged me to always take the part of the powerless. And finally, his person renewed my hope!”

Fr. Gregg Petri, OFM

Associate Pastor

St. Mary's Church

Bloomington, Illinois

“Gerry's presentation speaks to the enormity of human pain and suffering that is experienced around the world. But more importantly, it speaks to the God-gifted human compassion that we are called to express as followers of St. Francis and as Christians.”

Kent Ferris, OFS

Director of Social Action and Catholic Charities

Diocese of Davenport, Iowa

And Chair of the Justice, Peace & the Integrity of Creation Committee of the National Fraternity of Secular Franciscan Order - USA

“‘Thank you’ is inadequate to express my appreciation and gratitude to you. Your presentations exceeded my hopes and expectations for your visit. I continue to hear - both from students and others present - how the images you shared are imprinted on their minds and hearts and how meeting the people whose stories you have recorded makes all the difference in grasping what poverty really means. Like the Hebrew prophets, you tell it as it is! Hard to hear and impossible to forget!”

Christine Bochen, Ph.D.

Professor of Religious Studies

and the William H. Shannon Chair in Catholic Studies Nazareth College

Rochester, New York,

“Gerry's films and his presentation enthralled our 1100 high school boys, kept them riveted for 90 minutes, and then galvanized them into action. Our service program has been transformed by the experience. It's the best assembly I have witnessed in 33 years at this high school.”

Stephen P. Crawford
Campus Minister
Bishop Hendricken High School Warwick, Rhode Island

“The faculty and the students were extremely moved by your beautiful and humbling presentation on Poverty and Prayer. As a result of your visit, there has been excitement in the air to participate in charity work for our local poor. We hope to eventually reach out to more corners of the world as we continue to join you in our mission of taking care of those in greatest need. We thank you for working with high schools in this profound way. You are a true inspiration. May God continue to bless you and your good work.”

Jennifer Winnewisser
Director of Spiritual Life & Campus Ministry Bishop Garcia Diego High School
Santa Barbara, California

“Mr. Straub’s presentation brought a human face to the word poverty to me several times. He brought to my mind the degradation of the earth caused by earthquakes, climate change and human greed. Yes, we need a new human and evolutionary consciousness that there is ENOUGH in our world for all to LIVE and it starts with me!”

Marlene Schemmel
“The Well” Retreat Center LeGrange Park, Illinois

“Gerry, we are so grateful for the incredible presentation you gave us here at Adelphi University last week. Several students have contacted me and told me how moved they were by your stories and films. 20 students joined us in doing an outreach to the homeless in Manhattan this Sunday and many of them said that they were convicted to get involved after listening to you on Wednesday. Thank you for using your gifts and talents to create awareness and inspire compassion in the hearts of others! It truly was a gift to have you out here on Long Island!”

Matthew Rudolph
Campus Minister
Adelphi University Interfaith Center

“While Gerry Straub’s presentation was not “fun”, it was most appropriate and revealing for our understanding of the poverty surrounding us. Our awareness of this reality is so vital to our human call as Christians and keepers of our brothers. Gerry made us realize how easy it is to live in our shells and not be in tune with how some people live.

One teacher said that her students commented on how greatly affected they felt by Gerry’s talk and viewing, especially students participating in fasting for a day during Holy Week while raising money for a local soup kitchen. Another teacher said, “Students were moved by the presentation and wanted to help the poor.”

I think the films provided a true picture of poverty around the world our students and teachers felt the horror for them seeing just how difficult life is for others. The photos and descriptions tug at our hearts and make us want to help in some way. I believe now some of our students will be more likely to volunteer in and after college for service opportunities to make a difference for those less fortunate."

Joy Allen

Principal

Central Catholic High School Bloomington, Illinois

I was very touched by Mr. Straub's presentation. He made situations in far off countries much more real to me. Most of the time, it's hard to grasp that people live without the basic necessities of life such as food, water, shelter, and medicine. Afterwards, I encouraged my parents to go to Mr. Straub's evening presentation at Saint Mary's Catholic Church in Bloomington. They were equally as affected by his presentation and were thankful for the reminder of the presence of poverty in the world.

Mr. Straub's challenge and films inspire me to do what's in my power to assist the poor and needy. I certainly don't expect to eliminate poverty, but I can make small efforts such as participating in Central Catholic's annual 24 for 24 fast to benefit the Saint Mary's Catholic Church Soup Kitchen and contribute to their work with the poor in the Bloomington/Normal area. After Mr. Straub's presentation, I was doubly inspired to stay true to the fast if only to gain a little more understanding of what some people through on a daily basis. Furthermore, I was extremely pleased when Father Rick of Saint Mary's Catholic Church presented the idea of sharing half of the money we raised from the 24 for 24 fast to help Mr. Straub with his efforts to making the world more aware of its' poor. It was a cause certainly worth going hungry for.

Maureen Christensen

Bloomington Central Catholic High School Senior

"Gerry is a true Franciscan – his love of poverty and serving the poor is demonstrated throughout his work. The powerful video clips and his witness at the two presentations here in Bloomington, Illinois captivated the people at St. Mary's and the students at Central Catholic High School. Gerry connected Francis' love of poverty to his passion of Our Lord through prayer and action. Gerry challenges us all to do something to help the poor as we all have a deep human need to connect to God and each other. We wish him well and hope to see him again."

Fr. Ric Schneider, OFM Pastor

St. Mary's Church Bloomington, Illinois

"Gerry Straub's films twice captivated audiences at our college. They've lead students, staff, and faculty to volunteer for service trips to work with the poor. The films are a stunning witness to the need of outreach and compassion,"

William Mulcahey
Director of Campus Ministry Mount Mercy College
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

“These films move beyond intellectual understanding to a profound spiritual awakening. Viewers constantly respond with the question, ‘What can I do to help my brothers and sisters.’ The films motivated my students to an active response in Christian solidarity.”

Deacon Ted Pijacki
Religion Teacher
St. Joseph’s Collegiate School
Buffalo, New York

“Your parishioners will experience a new dimension of what it means to have so much in a world where so many have so little. I cannot recommend Gerry Straub’s presentation highly enough.”

Fr. Vaughn Winters Pastor
St. John Nuemann Church Santa Maria, California

“God bless all you do, and may you continue to inspire people with your films and presentations. We’ll never forget your touching our hearts.”

Br. Vincent Adams, OSF
St. Anthony’s High School South Huntington, New York

“Gerry Straub’s presentation on *Poverty and Prayer* is moving, compelling, and transformative. Gerry’s words, film clips, and heartfelt message had a profound impact on the 9th & 10th graders who were in attendance, as well as the adults who were there. I witnessed tears, stunned looks, and hugs. Many people who were there thanked me for bringing Gerry to our parish. This is truly evangelization in action, and if you want your people to be touched by the Gospel, bring this disciple of Christ to be with them.”

Paul Bloom
Director of Religious Education St. Gabriel’s Parish
Elma, New York

“While the secular media and attention of the world often seem desperate to shine a spotlight on the newest, most glamorous or outrageous celebrity phenomena, the films of Pax et Bonum Communications turn that light onto the realities of our world that call us to prayer and conversion. Jesus said we would always have to poor with us, and we can sometimes use that as an excuse to look away and hide in the make-believe escapism of entertainment or sports. Gerry Straub’s film work uses that artistic medium to enlighten our minds and hearts. Living

within the Lord's love of the poor is the extreme opposite of seeking our own fame or glory. It gives Glory where it's always been due...and always will be. To God alone, who gives us this precious, fragile life and redeems it in Christ's love and mercy."

Fr. Bill Quinlivan Pastor

Blessed Sacrament Church Tonawanda, New York

The following is a note Fr. Bill received from one of his parishioners:

Dear Fr. Bill,

Thank you for welcoming Gerard Straub to our parish for what was one of the most compelling presentations I ever attended. Many of us believe we know all about poverty; we do not.

Mr. Straub not only brings us the faces of poverty - he gives the face a name, a family, a circumstance, a history. We experience more fully the situation because we see it through his eye, his lens, his heart. The message is clear. It is difficult to see and hear, but one of the most necessary messages we can receive.

The compelling images he has witnessed and documented are unfortunately rarely seen by most. Knowledge plus action can and should equal change and it is the labor of love that Mr. Straub brings us that can effect this change. Our new Pope, Francis I, appears humble and compassionate, and can lead us in our efforts.

This presentation also strengthens our resolve to keep and share our faith and fortune with others.

Again, on behalf of my husband and myself, our sincere appreciation for bringing this incredible man to Blessed Sacrament.

Sincerely,

Annette Fabbiano

"You have chosen an incredibly difficult ministry – to make people aware of the magnitude and devastation of world poverty and to compel us to give at least part of our lives – not just pocket change. I'm only doing so much/little."

Grace Skalski

Editor of Imagine One

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