

Cumberland parishioner strengthens faith on mission trip



Faces of Faith

CUMBERLAND – In early July, on a mission trip to St. Marc, Haiti, recent high-school graduate Micah Buser saw a little boy happily playing soccer using a rock in place of a ball.

It made her realize the importance of gratitude.

“The children and the people there have a bigger effect on you than you could ever have on them,” said 18-year-old Buser.

Buser, a resident of Short Gap, W.Va., and a parishioner of Our Lady of the Mountains in Cumberland, was on a mission trip to Haiti sponsored by the Archdiocese of Baltimore July 1-7 that did not return until July 11 due to delays resulting from unrest in the country.

“She was very impressive in the way she handled everything,” said Rachel Barron Bowles, a program assistant with the archdiocesan Missions Office who led the trip. “Even from the very beginning (of the trip) she seemed very solid. ... She had such a wisdom beyond her years.”

GET TO KNOW

Micah Buser

What is your home parish?

*Our Lady of the Mountains,
Cumberland*

Who had the most influence on the development of your faith?

*My grandfather (Charles Fryer).
He was a devout Catholic his
whole life, but something about
him is he was just so giving, and
a caring and nurturing person.
He is the reason, 100 percent,
why I take my Catholic faith so
seriously and (why) I take helping
others so seriously and found a
passion in that.*

Who is your favorite saint and why?

*Mother Teresa. I know that's
so basic, but she inspires me
so much. I was watching a
docudrama on her – and I only
watched it for like 10 minutes
– but it made me laugh so hard
because she was trying to get
more rice for people, and she
was so feisty about it. I just
thought that was so cool because
everyone sees her as this sweet
and patient and kind person –
and she was – but when she was
fighting for something she was
passionate about, she wasn't
afraid to show her power and
might.*

What makes you proud to be Catholic?

*The Catholic faith is, honestly,
difficult to be a part of in the
sense that you have to go to
confession, and you have all
these sacraments you have to
complete. (In) a lot of faiths,
you can just get married, but in
our faith you have to go through
classes. It can be tedious at
times and, when looked at with
the wrong eye, it can be seen
as bad. I faced a lot of adversity
because of that. A lot of people
find out I'm Catholic and they
just attack me about it. But
every time I have been attacked,
I've always stood my ground. I'm
very timid, but I've just found
the strength to do that. I think
it's just great to say that I am
a Catholic, and I do follow our
faith's rules. It's not easy, but
with God, we can prove that it's
possible.*

Before her trip to Haiti, Buser had never been out of the country – or even on an airplane.

“I was really scared and afraid that I wasn’t going to fit in or really enjoy it as much as I knew I should have,” Buser said. “But once I got there, I had this overwhelming sense of home that I haven’t felt in a really long time. I felt like that was God telling me this is where I need to be.”

Buser and the other volunteers spent their week teaching English classes, making crafts and playing games with the students of the Good Samaritans School.

The happiness she felt strengthened her faith, which she said was in a “dry spell” prior to the trip.

“It wasn’t that I was doubting God’s existence, that never happened at all,” she said. “I felt really unworthy of even talking to him, so I just wouldn’t, and then I grew further apart from him.”

Her disconnect from her faith was one reason she was dreading the trip, she said.

“When I got there ... I just felt so comfortable and I could feel God’s presence more so than I had in two years,” Buser said. “I could remember him telling me in weird ways, ‘This is where you’re supposed to be, this is what you’re supposed to dedicate your life to.’”

Buser said she now sees everything in a positive light.

“I know it’s because I’ve felt God’s presence in a way that I had been lacking for so long,” she said.

Buser said she likes the sense of togetherness she feels in the Catholic faith.

“When I find out someone is a Christian, I automatically feel connected with them,” she said, “but you find out they are Catholic (and) you feel even more connected. You may have never met someone, but if you see them do the Sign of the Cross, you know there’s a connection between you and that other person.”

Buser loves music and shares her talents as a cantor at St. Patrick in Cumberland,

part of the Our Lady of the Mountains pastorate.

At the end of August, she followed in the footsteps of her sister, Carly, 25, and brother, Stefan, 21, and entered West Virginia University in Morgantown, where she will study music education.

“I would help people around me, and I realized teaching in general was my passion, and I love music,” said Buser, who started as a violinist, but now concentrates on the saxophone. “So I would love to teach music.”

After her confirmation, Buser gained valuable teaching experience through her parish’s religious education program, first as an aide to a second grade class, and then as a catechist to a seventh grade class.

“When I would teach those (difficult concepts) to them and they would actually understand them and they’d get all excited about them – I thought that was really cool,” Buser said, adding that many of the lessons she learned in her own catechesis sunk in as she matured. “I want them, as they get older, to realize what I was saying will apply to their life.”

At West Virginia University, Buser plans to get involved with campus ministry and inquire about mission trips. She also encourages young faithful to seek an experience like hers in Haiti.

“There’s always that fear of the unknown but they have to learn to turn that fear into excitement and motivation,” Buser said, when asked what she would say to her peers considering a mission trip. “I would tell them to pray about it and realize that God is always calling us to be his missionary disciples.

“What better way to fulfill that call than to go on a mission trip to Haiti?”

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Email Emily Rosenthal at erosenthal@CatholicReview.org