

Source of All Hope missionaries take Christ to the streets of Baltimore

For years, the city of Baltimore has faced terrible problems of violence, drug abuse and homelessness. At the heart of the city's downtown is America's first cathedral, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. From this place, one priest has founded a community of missionaries aiming to bring Jesus Christ to heal a hurting community.



Father Boric

On July 10, 2018, Father James Boric, the rector of the basilica, wrote a letter to the parish and to the wider community asking for help. His goal was to make the basilica the heart of a rejuvenation of Baltimore, bringing Christ to the people, to the streets, and to bring healing and vitality to a broken city. Father Boric had discerned a call to found a community of missionaries who would live together, pray together, break bread together and walk the streets of Baltimore to build relationships with the city's homeless and others in need in order to bring Christ to them however possible. He wrote that the city needs Christ in the Eucharist more than anything, so the Church must be the one to help

Baltimore heal. Father Boric's community would call itself Source of All Hope.

Following God's call

While Father Boric was writing this letter pleading for help, Colin Miller was discerning what God was calling him to do. After much prayer and discernment, he experienced a profound sense that he was called to Baltimore. Miller traveled to the city with no specific plan and no idea what form his work in the city should take. He had no job, nowhere to live, but he moved ahead with confidence in God's call.

"I simply began doing the only thing that was available to me: I walked the streets and befriended the men and women experiencing homelessness," Miller said.

After some time, and after developing a reputation for his outreach, a mutual friend put Miller in touch with Father Boric. Little did Miller know, Father Boric was already seeking assistance in bringing Christ to the streets of Baltimore through Eucharistic adoration and a community of missionaries doing exactly what Miller was already doing.

"When we met up, we immediately shared a vision," Miller said. Father Boric asked him to be the first missionary at Source of All Hope. On Dec. 12, 2018, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Miller agreed. A community was officially born when Miller was joined by another missionary on Aug. 15, 2019.

While the Source of All Hope apostolate is only a few years old, there have been some profound changes in the parish, on the streets of Baltimore, in the missionary community and in the archdiocese. The parish community of the basilica is thriving, and earlier this summer, as the church marked its 200th anniversary, it became the first parish in Baltimore to have perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, which is a potent symbol of the fervor and passion that is being

cultivated in the basilica.

There are now five young men and women serving as missionaries. “On the streets of a city where many fear to venture, beautiful relationships between the missionaries and our homeless friends have blossomed,” Miller said. “The work takes time and requires a willingness to invest in people the world has abandoned, but we hold fast to the belief that Christ-centered relationships are a catalyst for true growth.”

Missionary life

The missionaries live in community together, sharing meals, daily communal prayer, and engaging in regular spiritual, intellectual and human formation. Each day is structured around prayer: morning prayer and Mass, a Holy Hour, the Rosary and night prayer. This intentional community life is an important aspect of the missionaries’ work, as this is the sense of community they want to bring out to the city.



The goal of missionaries is to form relationships. Courtesy photo

The missionaries walk established routes throughout Baltimore so that they can encounter the same individuals regularly in order to build relationships with them and grow a real sense of community. They stick to public spaces and always stay in

groups for the sake of safety.

Abby Steele has been a full-time missionary with Source of All Hope since Aug. 15, 2020. Missionaries commit to at least a year of service, with the possibility of staying longer.

The work of a missionary in this program is full of blessings, but is not without its challenges. "Going out to the streets and living in community forces me to encounter many of my wounds and brokenness," Steele said. "At times, this can be painful, yet it is also one of the greatest blessings."

When Steele became a missionary, she did not know what to expect. Source of All Hope has faced many challenges, not the least of which was the COVID-19 pandemic, which has severely limited the missionaries' opportunities to personally connect with people in the community. They have done their best to continue in their work in spite of such obstacles.

"I feel blessed with both an intentional, Christian community of missionaries that I get to live, serve and pray with, especially when we often feel isolated within a pandemic," Steele said. And with the Eucharist as the heart of their work, no pandemic could shutter Source of All Hope.

Facing the deeper problems

Father Boric said that the main problem the Baltimore community faces "is not poverty, addiction or mental illness"; the real problem, he said, is that our world has forgotten God.



Missionaries and others hold hands in Baltimore. Courtesy photo

“Many of the problems of society stem from human beings doing things apart from God,” he said. “We have isolated ourselves, and seek comfort in many places that actually harm us. This is equally true for the rich as it is for the poor.”

Because of this, the Church can play a unique and critically important role in healing the city of Baltimore, as well as the rest of society. “We are putting human beings back in touch with the source of healing: God,” Father Boric said.

Source of All Hope brings people the divine. The missionaries radiate Christ because they are in constant contact with him – at Mass, in a daily Holy Hour, through common prayer in the morning, at night and in a daily Rosary. “They simply give what they themselves have received,” Father Boric said.

“My hope for the future is that this community becomes nothing more and nothing less than what our Blessed Mother desires it to be,” Miller said. “God willing, I’d love to see many, many young men and women dedicating themselves to Eucharistic adoration and loving the poor as missionaries. Christ’s love for us in the Eucharist would simply overflow, changing the city one relationship at a time.”

Paul Senz writes from Oklahoma.