



SAINT TIMOTHY CATHOLIC CHURCH



Telling Stories:

Meet Filmmaker and Parishioner Michael Campo



Michael Campo, his wife, Susana, and their three children look forward to becoming involved in the community at St. Timothy.

Before books, before scrolls, even before the written word, there were stories. For all of human history, people have listened to and passed on the stories of their families—the excitement, the challenges and the narrative of a culture. For Christians, this love of stories is rooted in the truth that we were meant to play a role in the greatest story of all time—the story of God’s love for humanity. And for artists who dedicate their lives to giving people a platform to share their stories, there are few things more sacred.

New parishioner Michael Campo grew up in New York City. Born and raised Catholic, Michael didn’t embrace the faith in a deep and personal way until his early 20s. At that time, he was living with his father, who ran the St. Francis House in Brooklyn; a group home founded in 1967 by Fr. Benedict Groeschel for young men working for redemption and freedom from a life of poverty, addiction and other struggles.

continued on page 2

September 2020

In this Issue

- 3 “Coincidental”
Stewardship
- 4 *It’s All About the Journey: Meet Deacon Marc Garofani*
- 6 Alex Sikoryak
Experiences a Conversion of the Heart and a Call to Serve

17512 Lakeshore Rd.
Lutz, FL 33558
www.sainttims.org



Telling Stories:

Meet Filmmaker and Parishioner Michael Campo

continued from front cover

“My whole life, I’ve always wanted to be a writer,” Michael says. “I believe that stories are a very important part of our history as human beings. But I wasn’t really sure how I wanted to pursue that in my life. And when I came to the St. Francis House, I had the freedom to explore different options. It opened my eyes to a different world.”

As Michael grew to embrace the revelation of God’s love in his own life, he found within himself a desire to share the story, in a way that was a true reflection of its beauty. His career in storytelling began in 2000 with a group of friends, a Eucharistic procession through Manhattan, and a camera.

“We filmed that procession and we turned it into a film called *God in the Streets of New York*,” says Michael, of their first production. “We wanted to make something that was going to be really beautiful and reflect this Eucharistic procession, Jesus in the streets of New York City.”

That short film was just the beginning. From there, the new Grassroots Films would go on to create *Fishers of Men*, a film about the priesthood, for the USCCB. Next, they went on to share the stories of those homeless in New York City, of children in orphanages in Lima, Peru, those suffering with AIDS and leprosy in Ghana, and many more.

“We knew we wanted to tell the stories authentically,” Michael says. “We wanted to gain the wisdom from people who were suffering and share that with the world.”

Michael’s role as a filmmaker has taught him many significant lessons, from the value of suffering, to the

importance of listening to those willing to share their stories.

“

“As a filmmaker, as an artist, my job is to introduce the idea, to plant the seeds. But, because of my faith, I believe it’s Christ and the Holy Spirit who really make transformation, not me. If somebody sees any of my work and they’re somehow inspired, it’s really the Holy Spirit.”

— Michael Campo

“People want to tell their story, they want to be heard,” he says. “There’s an understanding that we gain from one another, when we engage in these conversations, and when we’re willing to take the time to listen. If we would just sit down and listen to people, I think the world could change.”

Despite his many accomplishments and the beautiful projects he has created over the years, Michael seeks to live with humility, aware that it’s not truly his work, but rather, God working through his gifts.

“As a filmmaker, as an artist, my job is to introduce the idea, to plant the seeds,” he says. “But, because of my faith, I believe it’s Christ and the Holy Spirit who really make transformation possible; not me. If somebody sees any of my work and they’re somehow inspired, it’s really the Holy Spirit.”

Today, Michael serves in an advisory role with Grassroots Films, while focusing his efforts on spending time with his wife and three children, running his CampCampo marketing and filmography business, and using his work as an artist to share individuals’ stories through his new nonprofit, the iChoose Foundation.

“I believe in my heart that I’m still doing God’s work in my vocation, as a married man with children, and as an artist,” Michael says. “I believe God will open the doors to allow me use my skill set and talent to tell beautiful stories about people who have found Him.”

The heart of the iChoose Foundation is creating short films, to give people a voice, to share the importance of our

continued on back cover

SAINT TIMOTHY

CATHOLIC CHURCH

A Letter From Our Pastor

"Coincidental" Stewardship

Dear Friends in Christ,

The famous author G.K. Chesterton once said, "Coincidences are God's way of staying anonymous." Since fully embracing the stewardship way of life, coincidences have become cherished experiences for which I thank God — and rightly so! While God stays anonymous, coincidences are His way of interacting with the world He created. Importantly, as we have been continually impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and with many of our circumstances changing day to day, we can be grateful for His "coincidental" intervention.

As I continue to witness the grace-filled effects of the stewardship way of life on our parish, and in my own life, it is definitely God's hand at work in our lives of faith. If some identify a coincidence as a "surprise blessing" that lifts the spirits and draws one closer to gratefulness to God, we cannot deny that in those circumstances that God is giving us the grace to live and celebrate our faith. So, let's celebrate the coincidences!

We should also celebrate the coincidence that Chesterton himself converted to Catholicism late in his life, yet wrote book after book affirming and defending the Catholic faith long before his conversion. Four years after Chesterton joined the Catholic Church, he wrote a phenomenal book called *The Catholic Church and Conversion*. It is one of the best works on conversion to Catholicism, as well as a wonderful description of conversion to the stewardship way of life. The same experiences, or "coincidences," apply when we find ourselves drawn into the understanding, practice and expression of discipleship, known to us as "stewardship."

Chesterton describes conversion in three steps.



"The convert takes his first step rather unwittingly when he decides he's going to be fair to the Catholic Church," he wrote. The convert to stewardship must also dispel the "myths of stewardship" and give it a chance.

This first step of conversion then leads to a long and enjoyable second step, which is the utter fascination of learning what the Catholic Church really does teach. Chesterton says, "It is like discovering a new continent full of strange flowers and fantastic animals, which is at once wild and hospitable." For the stewardship convert, it

is recognizing that stewardship is a practical way of living the Gospel. It makes sense, and others are doing it with joy and passion. What they have, the convert also wants.

Then, the convert to Catholicism suddenly realizes with a shock that he can no longer be detached and impartial about the Catholic Church. The convert to the stewardship way of life realizes this is the way he or she wants to live — and makes the commitment to do so.

If this were not true of what Christ has called us to be, I would not be writing this today. If this were not true of our commitment to stewardship, you may not be reading this today. And, if this were not true of a stewardship parish such as ours, we would not be the faithful stewards we are today. May God richly bless you for your faithful stewardship to our faith community.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Fr. John Blum". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Fr. John Blum
Pastor



IT'S ALL ABOUT THE JOURNEY MEET DEACON



Deacon Marc Garofani with his wife, Ana, and their two children, Alex (10) and Eliana (11)

If you had told Deacon Marc Garofani 20 years ago that he would someday be ordained a deacon in the Catholic Church, he scarcely would have believed you! Yet, having followed the winding path that brought him to a vocation in the Church, he knows without a doubt that this was the Lord's plan for him all along. Today, Deacon Marc finds abundant blessings in the opportunity to serve God's people

here at St. Timothy, sharing in their joys and sorrows and accompanying them on their faith journeys.

With a Sicilian mother and a father from northern Italy, it is no surprise that Deacon Marc was baptized and received his Sacraments of Initiation in the Catholic Church. However, his father passed away when Deacon Marc was a young child, and when he was 12, his mother and stepfather began attending a Protestant church. Faith has always been important to Deacon Marc — he attended a Christian school and was actively involved in church activities throughout his teenage years.

One day, while Deacon Marc was a student at the University of South Florida, his mother told him something that would lead him to his first vocation in life — marriage.

"I was 19 at the time, and my mom came home and told me she had this young lady's number for me," says Deacon Marc. "She said, 'Why don't give her a call?' So I called her, and we met up one day and spent a couple of hours chit-chatting and getting to know each other. When we left, I asked if I could call her again — and the rest is history. Mom always knows best!"

Deacon Marc and Ana were married about four years later, in 2003. Ana's faith background was similar

continued on page 5

"We are all created in the likeness of God. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ, and we are all called to share in these moments and accompany each other in the journey. This is a unique call for all of us as Catholic Christians and should be our motivation in terms of living out our faith. It's a Christian life of looking to the needs of others and accompanying them on their journey."

— DEACON MARC GAROFANI

KEY:

DEACON MARC GAROFANI

to Deacon Marc's — she had been raised in a Catholic home, but after her family came to the United States from Colombia when she was 15, she began attending Protestant services. Following their marriage, Deacon Marc and Ana began looking for a church that they could call home. Their search would eventually lead them back to where they had both started.

"It was a process, a journey," Deacon Marc says. "After I graduated high school, I really started exploring faith on my own. I started reading about the early Church fathers and learning once again about the Catholic faith. I was slowly taking this journey back to the Church. After Ana and I got married, we were going to this wonderful non-denominational church but, at the same time, I was taking her to visit other churches as well. One day we were having this discussion and she just looked at me and said, 'I want to find a church home to settle in and build a community, so can you just pick a church?' At that moment, I knew it was going to be the Catholic Church."

During his search for truth in college, Deacon Marc had picked up a book on the role and charisms of deacons in the Church. He had been so fascinated by the topic that it stuck with him for years. After returning to the Catholic faith, Deacon Marc continued to learn more about the permanent diaconate. Although he and Ana had two small children — Eliana and Alex — they eventually discerned that it was indeed the right time for Deacon Marc to pursue God's call to a vocation in the Church.

"We talk about the Holy Spirit just working in our lives, and we can look back and see the hand of God just moving us towards certain decisions and down certain paths," Deacon Marc says. "In my mind, there was this need to see younger deacons involved in the Church that could accompany young families on their journey. So that need, coupled with a happiness and a desire to continue

moving with the Spirit, is what moved me to say 'yes' to the diaconate."

Deacon Marc thoroughly enjoyed the formation program. In order to juggle his day job as CFO of a small manufacturer with family life *and* the diaconate program, he would wake up early in the morning to complete his studies without sacrificing precious family time.

"Ana has supported me with her love and her unending sacrifices, especially during formation, when we had young kids and I was going to class or formation activities," Deacon Marc says. "So she sacrificed and continues to sacrifice every day. She is always that support, and she grounds me. She is my sanity check."

For the Garofani family, Deacon Marc's ministry truly is a shared mission.

"I help with the sick and homebound ministry, and I take my kids with me on some of those visits," Deacon Marc says. "They get to see that the gift of the diaconate is to minister to people where they are, to people who are sick, who are marginalized, who are poor or may be homeless. These are all the services that we're called to do, not only as deacons, but as Catholic Christians. I think my kids, in a special way, have been able to see this call to minister to those in need."

Next month, Deacon Marc will celebrate his one-year anniversary in the permanent diaconate, looking back with gratitude for the path that brought him here and looking forward with the peace and joy that comes with serving God's people.

"We are all created in the likeness of God," he says. "We are all brothers and sisters in Christ, and we are all called to share in these moments and accompany each other in the journey. This is a unique call for all of us as Catholic Christians and should be our motivation in terms of living out our faith. It's a Christian life of looking to the needs of others and accompanying them on their journey."



Alex Sikoryak Experiences a Conversion of the Heart and a Call to Serve

“I think I’m good at being aware of when people seem to be excluded and inviting them in. Even beyond FOCUS, just being a missionary in the local world has been really beautiful and, over the past year and a half or so, I feel like He’s been refining my gifts and making them even better than before.” — ALEX SIKORYAK



Alex Sikoryak following her college graduation

You might say that parishioner Alex Sikoryak was born into stewardship. Raised in a Byzantine Catholic household, the Sikoryak family made the switch to St. Timothy Parish when Alex was in the sixth grade so that she could be part of its dynamic youth programs. Alex spent her middle and high school years actively involved in the parish, serving as a student leader, attending the annual Life Teen Camp, and even serving as the teen representative on Parish Council her senior year.

“Just being around people who were very involved, active and faithful to the Church really set the tone for me,” Alex says. “It inspired in me a desire to do the same and I felt very comfortable within the faith. My family did a lot together and was always very involved, so it became normal for me to be part of the church community.”

Yet, despite her outward involvement, Alex admits that something was lacking. Her life was filled with

continued on page 7

Alex Sikoryak

continued from page 6

activity and good works, yet she had little to no actual relationship with the Lord. Consequently, her spiritual life was limited.

“In middle school and high school, church was just what we did,” Alex says. “I was involved, but didn’t really pray or have a relationship with Christ. It took college for me to really come to know the Person of Jesus Christ and have a relationship with Him. And that has really changed everything.”

Fortunately, Alex was blessed with faith-filled roommates. She also joined a sorority that was filled with devout Catholics. Their example, as well as the witness and ongoing formation provided by her campus’ Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) missionaries, helped lead Alex on a journey of conversion, drawing her into a true relationship with the Lord.

“When you are in high school, you go to youth group on Sunday, get a lot of information, but then you are on your own the rest of the week,” Alex says. “FOCUS is great because it sends full-time missionaries who really form these relationships and walk the journey with the students. We weren’t limited to one day a week. I was able to see and talk to them all of the time, and I think that was really transformative for me. It just shows you how faith can become an ordinary part of your life — it doesn’t have to be something that is separate. It was great to be invited into relationship with people who wanted me to know God and made it the foundational aspect of our friendship.”

Even still, Alex says she continued to view God in a more distant way until her junior year in college. Finally, through a grace-filled moment, she was able to unite cognitively what she knew about God with her experience — forming a true, intimate relationship with the Lord.

“Prior to my junior year, I just really didn’t pray that much,” Alex says. “I went through a lot of the motions. Having always grown up in a Catholic world, I had all of these things in my head that I knew about Him, but it took until my junior year for that to truly penetrate my

heart and for me to truly believe. Through the grace of God, He allowed me to understand His love in a way I never had before.”

Transformed by this encounter with the Lord, Alex began hungering to use her gifts and talents in some way for His glory. Whereas before she viewed humility almost as putting oneself down, Alex began to see herself truly — a mixture of strengths and weaknesses.

“I began to feel called to be a missionary specifically with FOCUS, and part of that came through Him revealing to me some of the gifts He’s given me,” Alex says. “I’m pretty outgoing and loud and I just talk to a lot of people. I think I’m good at being aware of when people seem to be excluded and inviting them in. Even beyond FOCUS, just being a missionary in the local world has been really beautiful and, over the past year and a half or so, I feel like He’s been refining my gifts and making them even better than before. Whereas before, I was kind of self-conscious about my volume and such.”

Having successfully completed her FOCUS missionary training, Alex has been sent to Georgia Southern University for the 2020-2021 school year. She is excited to experience FOCUS from this side and to walk with young people on their faith journey. You can partner with Alex in this mission by uplifting her in prayer and by financially supporting her.

“Part of being a FOCUS missionary means I have to fundraise my salary for the next year,” Alex says. “That means having people become my mission partners and joining me in the mission by supporting me financially.

To learn more about Alex Sikoryak’s mission and how to support her, please contact 813-597-3562 or alexandra.sikoryak@focus.org.



SAINT TIMOTHY

CATHOLIC CHURCH

17512 Lakeshore Road
Lutz, FL 33558
813-968-1077
www.sainttims.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Tampa, FL
Permit No. 3311

Meet Filmmaker and Parishioner Michael Campo *continued from page 2*

decisions, and to give hope to those who may be struggling in similar situations.

"The iChoose foundation is about reminding people that they are the lead in their life's story and no matter what's happening in our lives, we're always one choice away from changing our lives forever," Michael says. "We tell amazing stories, and hopefully, through these projects, we plant the seeds to enable the Holy Spirit to do what He does."

Michael and his wife, Susana, and their three children moved to the area last year and, after visiting a number of different parishes, found a home at St. Timothy.

"I believe in following what the Lord is calling me to do and where He's calling me to go," Michael says. "I felt something in my heart and in my gut that I needed to get out of New York, and my wife and I explored a lot of options, and

said, 'God, wherever you want us to go, we will go.' This was just a good fit for what we wanted for our family and our life."

Although their initial plans for getting involved in the parish came to an abrupt halt due to COVID-19, the Campo family looks forward to getting to know and be a part of the St. Timothy family in the coming months, building friendships, and hearing people's stories. According to Michael, there is something powerful that happens when we take the time to listen and allow ourselves to be impacted by the journeys and experiences of others, whether friends or strangers.

"People are really struggling," Michael says. "And if you really listen, then the Holy Spirit can use you."

"There are so many stories that need to be told," he adds. "This could be a really beautiful thing."

If you would like to learn more about and support Michael Campo's work of sharing stories through the iChoose Foundation, please visit www.ichoose.one or follow them on Facebook and Instagram @iChoose. You can view the pilot short film, #iChooseHope at www.vimeo.com/290758726 and listen to his podcast, iChoose The Podcast on Apple Podcasts.

Mass Schedule

Saturday Vigil: 5:30 p.m. • Sunday: 7:30, 9, 11 a.m. & 5:30 p.m. • Daily: Mon-Sat 9 a.m., • Holy Days: 9 a.m. & 7 p.m. Vigil: 7 p.m.