



NEWS ARCHIVE:

## Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

Editor: Kiply Lukan Yaworski, Communications  
Phone: 306-242-1500; Toll Free: 1-877-661-5005  
communications@saskatoonrcdiocese.com

*Impact 2009 summer mission*

# Fr. Tom Rosica reflects on unique evangelizing potential of CCO



**Fr. Tom Rosica, CSB**  
CEO of Salt and Light Television

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO) missionaries, friends and supporters recently gathered for a joyful celebration in the midst of Impact 2009, a national summer mission being held in the city where the campus evangelization movement was founded 20 years ago.

Movements like CCO contain a unique evangelizing potential much needed by the Church today, Fr. Tom Rosica, CSB, said at the July 8 event at St. Paul's Cathedral. "Yet your richness has not yet been fully recognized, valued or appreciated," he said.

Rosica, CEO of Salt and Light television and the national director of World Youth Day in Toronto in 2002, was in Saskatoon to facilitate sessions on scripture for CCO staff from across the country attending a week-long retreat and training session.

Today's world is dominated by a secular culture that proposes "models of life without God," Rosica said, stressing the need for the kind of witness, evangelization and personal testimony undertaken by CCO.

"We must no longer presume that we are living in a Christian culture. There may be some Christian appendages and decorations from the past, but presume nothing and go tell everything about the beauty of Christianity," he said.

CCO is all about the "initial act of evangelization" described by Pope Paul VI in his 1975 apostolic letter *On Evangelization in The Modern World*, Rosica said. "In a world that has put a damper and a pall over the good news of the gospel, CCO is living proof that the gospel is meant to be shared and proclaimed with joy."

**CONTINUED ....**



Rosica also cited John Paul II's call for a new evangelization at the beginning of the third millennium. Renewing the zeal of the original missionary impulse of Christianity in a "new Pentecost," is what the late beloved pontiff was calling for, he said. "CCO is trusted with the message of teaching the gospel, of making disciples," he said.

**Members of the CCO Impact mission team lead praise and worship during a gathering July 8 at St. Paul's Cathedral in Saskatoon.**

"At the beginning of this conversion process there is always a personal encounter with Jesus Christ which radically transforms life; an encounter made possible by credible witnesses," Rosica said, noting the need for the strong personal testimony that characterizes CCO.

He expressed his delight at hearing so many passionate young adults expressing their faith, referring to "before my conversion" or "after my conversion", speaking about discernment, or describing an experience of the Lord. "This is the Biblical vocabulary of the apostles being introduced in a new generation."

The good news that God loves us and has given us his son Jesus Christ can change the world, Rosica said. "The deepest poverty is the inability of joy, the tediousness of a life considered absurd and contradictory. This poverty is widespread today. It is a massive desert that strikes in our culture and our world."

Movements like CCO can also break through the routine and the habit that are so often obstacles to the work of evangelization, he added.

"Together we must confront with courage the major barriers in modern evangelization, including cultural resistance to the proclamation of Christ as the unique savior of the world. No one in his or her right mind will be interested in a faith about which its exponents seem too embarrassed to communicate forthrightly," Rosica said. "CCO does not exist to apologize for Christianity."

The truth and beauty of the message about Jesus Christ is powerful and attractive when it is communicated clearly and without compromise, he added. "If the Church wants to reach young people today, it must avoid the temptation to fudge on core beliefs in an effort to make them more

**CONTINUED ....**

agreeable to contemporary tastes.”

Turning to scripture, Rosica turned to the image of two boats to address a temptation that faces all ecclesial movements in the Church: the image of Noah’s Ark in Genesis as opposed to the image of the much smaller boat of Peter in the New Testament.



**Participants in the CCO Impact 2009 summer mission from across Canada gathered with CCO staff, friends and supporters July 8 at St. Paul’s Cathedral.**



**CCO national president Jeff Lockert announced plans this fall for the campus evangelization movement to begin at Laval University in Quebec City**

“We are not traveling on Noah’s Ark, fleeing the devastation and evils around us,” he stressed.

“We don’t form these ecclesial movements to flee the mess, we form these ecclesial movements precisely to enter into the mess and to proclaim there is another way,” Rosica said. “We don’t flee society and point the finger at those poor people who didn’t make the boat.”

On the other hand, the image of Peter’s boat on the sea of Galilee presents an image of outreach to emulate – an image of Jesus getting into the boat in order to teach to the crowds, of Jesus waking to calm the storm and the fears of the disciples, of Jesus inviting Peter to step out onto the water, of Jesus telling the apostles to put out into the deep and once again let down their nets. “If we have faith in Him, in His care for us, there is no storm that will overturn the boat in which we sail, and no water will open to swallow us up in darkness,” Rosica said.

“CCO is not sailing on Noah’s Ark. We are on the waters with Jesus,” he said. “We must be humble, for only then can we remain united to one another in Christian love. Only then can we be together in that bark which sails across the sea of life. Only then, can we be saved together by His strong arm – from hunger, from blindness, from the storm, from the abyss. For the Lord never abandons those who come to him seeking mercy and forgiveness.”



**Catholic Christian Outreach staff and Impact mission volunteers join CCO founder André Regnier (holding microphone) at the front of St. Paul's Cathedral during a celebration July 8 in Saskatoon.**

Rosica concluded by quoting the 1994 inaugural speech of Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa, in which he said that “playing small doesn’t serve the world.” Rosica urged his listeners to “never be afraid to open your hearts to Jesus and to proclaim him to those around us. Your playing small in your parishes, neighbourhoods, families, universities or colleges across this vast country doesn’t serve the world or the Church. Remember: you exist here in Canada to manifest the glory of God, and that glory is nothing small.”

CCO founders Angèle and André Regnier also spoke during the July 8 event. Angèle thanked Rosica for his love and support and paid tribute to the spiritual “fathers and mothers” of CCO, including Rosica, Bishop James Mahoney, Fr. Clair Watrin, CSB, the Basilian fathers at St. Thomas More College, present spiritual director Marc Mireau, and the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary, as well as Pope John Paul II.

“There’s 20 years of history in this room,” she added, acknowledging the sister and brotherhood of all those involved with CCO since its formation. It is by the grace of God that CCO is here today, she stressed, thanking supporters for their prayers and contributions.

André said he is filled with hope to see CCO after 20 years. “From sea to sea, we see a generation of young people with a missionary heart rising up and taking their place” as labourers in the harvest, he said.

During the gathering, CCO national president Jeff Lockert announced plans this fall for the campus evangelization movement to begin at Laval University in Quebec City. He noted that it is the group’s first Francophone expansion and is happening “in the diocese where Catholicism was birthed in North America, where the original missionaries arrived.”

The evening celebration in Saskatoon also included a potluck meal, testimonials about the work of CCO and its impact, and praise and worship music.

Some 60 young adults from across Canada have been participating in the four-month summer Impact mission in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon. CCO Impact missionaries are leading faith studies, evangelization events and outreach gatherings in a number of local parishes and in the larger community, including weekly Cornerstone young adult evenings held every Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at Holy Spirit parish in Saskatoon.