A LIGHT FOR OUR PATH
Celebrating a blessed journey

unbound® SPIRIT
Volume 8

Walking with the poor and marginalized
UNBOUND is an international nonprofit founded by lay Catholics and grounded in the Gospel call to put the needs of the marginalized and vulnerable first. We build relationships of mutual respect and support that bridge cultural, religious and economic divides. We invite all people of goodwill to join us.
Mileposts are good. They give travelers a sense of direction and progress. They tell us not only how far we have to go but how far we’ve come.

Once in a while, it’s nice to look back at the road behind us. Unbound is doing that now as we celebrate two important occasions in our history.

In November, we commemorated 40 years since our five founders, moved by their deep love and Catholic faith, founded the organization.

We’re also celebrating 30 years since we began sending priests to parishes to invite the faithful to sponsor a child, youth or elder in another part of the world. It was that outreach that made it possible for more than 700,000 people to lift themselves out of crushing poverty.

There’s great joy in the mutually beneficial relationships built over the years between parishioners across the United States who’ve answered the Gospel call to serve the poor and the hard-working, resilient families and individuals they help through partnering with Unbound.

As we look at the needs of the moment and what we hope for the future, we face some challenging realities. The pandemic has made life more difficult for families in the Unbound program and created obstacles for our ability to reach out to parishes. But if we’ve learned anything from those we serve, it’s how to be resilient.

With God’s grace and the support of the Unbound community, struggling families will keep moving forward. We hope you’ll be their companions on that journey.

On the cover: Unbound staff member Jake Hentzen enjoys the sunrise as he makes his way across Kansas from the Colorado border to Kansas City. Jake, the son of Unbound co-founder Bob Hentzen, undertook his solidarity walk as a way to call attention to the needs of the poor and marginalized and lift spirits during the pandemic.
“A lot of [sponsors] are in their own search pattern. They are looking for an understanding of the world situation. ... They want to understand the world problem and what they can do. And when they find this instrument, possibilities begin to expand. ... What I’m hoping and praying will happen is that more and more people will help us get the word out. Not because we desire to be big. It’s not that. **We desire to be good at what we do. We desire to be personal.**”

— Bob Hentzen, Unbound co-founder
Resilient families are getting through the pandemic with the help of sponsors

Living in material poverty is difficult in the best of times. But since March 2020, when life everywhere suddenly changed because of COVID-19, the challenges have grown immensely.

Families in the Unbound sponsorship program have managed as best they can during the crisis. With the help of our generous community of sponsors, Unbound was able to keep assistance flowing. In the face of so many unknowns, that support is more important than ever.

As with most catastrophic events, those on the margins of society have been the most seriously affected by the pandemic. Restrictions on public gatherings and commerce were devastating for the 61% of the people in the world who, according to the United Nations, earn their living in the informal economy.

Families participating in the Unbound program live with the same risks as others in poverty, but they have resources that help them stay resilient. Finding a way to keep those resources flowing in the pandemic was the first hurdle for local Unbound program staff, and it began with maintaining communication between staff and families in the program.

Using whatever means available (cell phones, video conferencing, radio, text messaging and various social media platforms) local staff kept in touch with families to pass along important health and program information.

Technology also allowed staff to make direct cash transfers into the bank accounts of 94% of sponsored children and youth, which meant their families could purchase much-needed provisions and, in some cases, pay for health insurance and medical expenses.

"We had to make sure that each of our colleagues who have the responsibility of making transfers had safe equipment and internet access from their homes, so that the benefits to the families didn't stop." Francisco Chavajay, coordinator of the Unbound program in Guatemala, said.

New challenges for students

The transition to distance learning around the world was another major obstacle. While some families allocate part of their sponsorship funds for equipment and internet...
access, these expenses can be overwhelming. Staff and parent groups are doing what they can to help students avoid falling behind because of inadequate access to technology.

With the rapid growth — and expense — of distance learning, the Unbound Scholarship Program was modified to specifically include technology devices, data plans and internet access as approved expenses. The scholarship program provides financial support for students who otherwise wouldn’t be able to continue their studies.

With the help of supporters

Unbound has been able to weather the storm because of its loyal community of sponsors and donors, and because it was founded on the principle of subsidiarity, as expressed in Catholic social teaching. The Unbound sponsorship program is designed so that families have the freedom to decide for themselves how to best utilize their benefit funds.

That belief in decentralized decision-making has always distinguished Unbound. But in the pandemic, it also provided an invaluable lifeline.

“Unbound is resilient,” Scott Wasserman, the organization’s president/CEO, said. “Together, we have overcome difficult times in the past and will continue to do so. ... Unbound will move forward as a strong and caring community.”

Bob Hentzen, Unbound’s late co-founder, believed strongly that many people of goodwill are seeking exactly what Unbound offers, which is a practical, proven way to help others and live out the call of the Gospel.

“They want to understand the world problem and what they can do,” he said. “And when they find this instrument, possibilities begin to expand. ... What I’m hoping and praying will happen is that more and more people will help us get the word out. Not because we desire to be big. It’s not that. We desire to be good at what we do. We desire to be personal.”

Today, in a changing and uncertain world, spreading that word of hope is more urgent than ever.
Seenu, 21, is sponsored and an Unbound scholarship recipient. She’s enrolled in a pharmaceutical studies program at a university in India. Seenu said she would not have been able to continue her studies if not for the support of Unbound.
In November, Unbound celebrated 40 years of walking with the poor and marginalized of the world. We also celebrated 30 years of sending priests to parishes to invite the Catholic faithful to sponsor a child, youth or elder living in poverty.

Over the years, more than 130 priests have served on Unbound’s preacher team. Some have done this while also serving as pastors, teachers, chaplains or in other ministerial roles, but most have chosen to work with Unbound as a way to spend their retirement years in service to God’s poor.

Largely because of the ministry of the priests who preach for Unbound and the generous response of the U.S. Catholic community, more than 700,000 children, youth and elders have been sponsored over the past 30 years. With their own hard work and help from sponsors, hundreds of thousands of children have pursued education, elders have met needs for food, medical care and social activities, and families have created new livelihoods.

For more than a year our priests were, for the most
Meet Deacon Jim

In August, Unbound welcomed Deacon Jim Parrilli as diocesan engagement officer. In this role he’ll travel the country, visiting dioceses and building and strengthening Unbound’s relationships within the U.S. Catholic community.

Prior to joining Unbound, Deacon Jim operated a printing and marketing company in south Florida. He also has extensive experience working in nonprofit growth and development for international charities and foundations.

A graduate of Western Illinois University and Saint Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, Deacon Jim was ordained for the Diocese of Palm Beach in 2011. He lives in Florida with his wife, June. They have three adult daughters.

Deacon Jim’s faith journey, professional experience and commitment to servant leadership bring a unique perspective to Unbound’s mission.

“The experiences I have had with charitable work were focused on goods and services, he said. “They provided food and shelter, which are important. But Unbound offers something extraordinary, the chance to build a personal relationship and walk with a child or elder who is looking for a hand up, not out.”

part, grounded because of the pandemic, but now they’re returning to the ministry they love. Observing appropriate health and safety measures, the Unbound preachers are resuming their visits to Catholic communities and once again sharing the invitation to answer the Gospel call to serve the poor and marginalized by becoming sponsors.

Today’s preacher team includes 34 priests. Their commitment is beautifully summed up by Redemptorist Father Greg Schmitt, who said this after a pre-pandemic visit to Unbound program sites in Guatemala:

“My spirit has been touched and taught. It is clear to me why I want to preach to people here in the United States and invite them to be enriched by sponsoring a child or elderly adult in Guatemala or one of 18 other countries. We are all in this together.”
The special role of Catholic school teachers is to impart knowledge while helping to form children in their faith. Unbound can help them with that important job.

Global Classmates is Unbound’s new outreach to Catholic schools. It was developed to provide a way for students to learn about the realities of poverty and grow in compassion for others through sponsoring children in need.

By writing to their sponsored friend in another part of the world and receiving letters in return, students develop a relationship with the child they’re helping while learning about their friend’s country and culture. They also learn to participate in the Church’s social justice mission.

The sponsorships can be supported in a variety of ways. Students can each contribute a small amount, the class can conduct fundraisers, or an “angel donor” from within the parish can contribute the entire amount. To help a class get started, Unbound has generous benefactors willing to cover the first three to six months of the cost of sponsorship.

Jenna Shinaberry is a kindergarten teacher at St. Joan of Arc School in Toledo, Ohio. Her school was among the first to sponsor a Global Classmate.

“It was a way to make the world a smaller place for them,” she said. “Our understanding of poverty is minimal for a lot of our kids.”

To help support the students’ learning process, Unbound has developed resources that teachers can use with their classes. They are free and available to anyone at unbound.org/educationalresources. The resources include activities, puzzles, games, videos, prayers and suggestions for how to use them. New resources are continually being added.

For more information about Global Classmates, visit unbound.org/schools, email schools@unbound.org or call 800-466-7672.
AT THE SERVICE OF PASTORS AND PARISHES

When an Unbound preacher visits a parish, he's there to serve the needs of the pastor and his faith community.

Our visiting priest can give the pastor some needed time off, help with confessions and other pastoral duties, and preside at weekend Masses. Or he can simply preach at Masses and invite parishioners to help support children, young people and elders in need.

Either way, the people of the parish will be nourished with God's Word and offered a practical and trustworthy way to respond to the Gospel call to serve the poor.

Unbound preachers, most of whom have been pastors themselves, take seriously their role as guests of the parish and their responsibility to serve both parishioners and the children and elders waiting for sponsors.

Here are some of the things pastors and parish staff members have said about our visiting priests:

“Excellent! Fr. Pike is so joyful and affirming of our parish and parishioners loved him!”

“Thanks for your help and the wonderful job you're doing for the poor.”

“[The pastor] loved Fr. Ruff and his passion for the poor. He can't wait to have you back!”

For 30 years, Unbound preachers have been serving Catholic faith communities across the United States, meeting individuals and families, and experiencing the diversity of the Church. They are pleased to share stories of amazing people around the world who have created better lives for themselves with hard work and help from compassionate sponsors.

We thank God for the hospitality and generosity of the parishes Unbound has been privileged to visit over the past three decades, and we look forward to continuing to help build life-giving relationships between the Catholic faithful and families that can use their support to overcome poverty.
Unbound is ready to serve your faith community in 2022. Priests are now available for Lent, Advent, World Day of the Poor, or whenever the pastor just needs some time away.

Schedule your weekend today and give your parishioners the opportunity to answer the Gospel call to serve the poor by participating in our proven and trustworthy sponsorship program.