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Glen Argan



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Exploring the
Catholic Catechism



Compendium
of the
Social Doctrine
of the Church

June 7, 2010

Come to Jesus just as you are Evangelist encourages youth, saying God chose them

**DEBORAH GYAPONG
CANADIAN CATHOLIC NEWS**

OTTAWA - Whether you have a past and despite your weaknesses, God has chosen you and called you to holiness.

"God has a plan for each of us, for a specific mission," said Caroline Gambale-Dirkes, one of the keynote speakers at the Youth Summit/Montée Jeunesse in Ottawa.

The charismatic Catholic evangelist said she meets far too many young people "who think they need to be perfect" before they approach God.

She urges them to entrust their messiness to God.

"We don't have to be all together," she said. That includes young people engaged in pre-marital sex or other activities they know are wrong. God chose broken people because he saw in them the potential for greatness.

"If you're feeling weak, you're in good company," she said.

Gambale-Dirkes, who has spent 16 years in youth ministry, including a stint as eastern regional director for Life Teen, speaks from experience.

She grew up in New York City in a Catholic home. She attended church weekly, but by the time she reached her first year of college, she was "leading a double life" - partying on the weekends but still showing up for Mass.

At the age of 19, she questioned whether God is real. "How do I know if Hinduism is not the true faith?"

SPIRITUAL HUNGER

Aware of a spiritual hunger and feeling "hungry for something," she started to cry. "God, if you're real, show me that you love me and I will give you my whole life. "God heard that prayer," she said.

The answers came gradually, through people God sent into her life. She attended a parish mission, where she availed herself of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

"I made a really good Confession," she said, feeling something had changed in her life, that areas that had been "in bondage to sin" had been freed.

Her next step in spiritual growth came through an invitation to a charismatic Catholic prayer group. She met people who talked about Jesus as though he was real. "This was attractive to me," she said. "I wanted that relationship."

A prayer team prayed she would be filled with the Holy Spirit and with God's love.



**Caroline
Gambale-Dirkes**

"After that moment I was so filled with peace and joy," she said. Nothing she had ever done previously compared.

LIFE CHANGES

"When I knew how much God loved me, I made serious changes in my life," she said.

She gave up the fake ID she used for underage drinking; she broke up with a boyfriend who did not share her desire to now lead a chaste life. She began attending Mass daily and found Scripture speaking to her. God was answering her prayers and she saw the world in a new way.

Her spiritual journey took her to Franciscan University in Steubenville and then a year of evangelization through NET Ministries. NET gave her the tools to evangelize and equipped her for later addressing large audiences in her role with Life Teen.

All this happened, "because one day I asked God to reveal who he is," she said. "I had no idea God had such a big plan for my life."

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