

## **“Ready for Revelation” – What’s changed in 2020, and how has it affected you spiritually?**

Last year was a year unlike any other. As 2020 drew to a close, many looked to 2021 as an opportunity to turn the page. So what changed in 2020, and how did it affect you spiritually?

This and more was the focus of the BELIEVES session titled “Ready for Revelation” featuring Rick Medina, Executive Director of Catholic World Mission, and Deacon at All Saints Catholic Church, on Tuesday, January 12, 2021.



Medina, whose professional background is diverse having been a consultant and business founder/owner in the energy industry for decades, before then serving as Director of G.R.A.C.E. Scholars from June 2010 to Sept. 2011, and then leading Catholic World Mission as its Executive Director ever since, began his remarks by focusing on responding to a single question ...

*The theme for the first three BELIEVES sessions of 2021 is “Hope in Our New Reality.” In 2020, how did you find hope, and what moments, if any, do you recall where that hope felt like it was challenged or perhaps lacking or in doubt? Now that we are on the other side of 2020 in 2021, how/would your answer on how you find hope differ going forward?*

“I will launch the talk from this question,” Medina said after briefly stating the question that was shared with him for his consideration in preparation for the Jan. 12<sup>th</sup> BELIEVES session.

He then went on to say, “2020 started out great. Our two oldest daughters live in NY, and we’re originally from NY/NJ so we like all the attractions.”

So, in January 2020, Rick and his wife, Christy, who have been married for over 30 years, went to visit their daughters in NY, one of whom had recently been asked to lead the division of a new firm.

One night while visiting, Rick found himself in a conversation with their Uber driver who was from Asia.

“I asked him, ‘Where are you from?’ and he responded, ‘Wuhan, I think the virus is overblown.’”

Then right after January, Medina, who was ordained a deacon in 2013, said his sister-in-law called and said his oldest brother was in the hospital.

“This was the oldest of my four brothers,” said Medina. “When we learned of the news, we FaceTimed him.”

Several days later Medina’s oldest brother went into a coma.

“Over the next two months, every major organ in his body failed, and he flatlined four times – but he survived through numerous operations.”

Shortly thereafter, Medina’s daughter who had been invited to lead the division of the new start-up firm was furloughed. On top of that, Catholic World Mission’s donations decreased significantly, and the Board asked him if the organization would survive. Then his wife’s parents in New Jersey got COVID, and his father-in-law passed away.

“If I were to end my talk right now, a lot might say 2020 was a bad year – but I’d say it was a good year. Through faith, on a lot of things I was able to pivot. I had a lot of time to do a lot of reflecting – more than before. From this I came to appreciate more the gift of time, and the gift of intentionality.”

Medina went on to mention that he and his team at Catholic World Mission have come to realize ‘we are in a new normal and we’ll never go back.’

He told everyone, “There’s a book called, *The Plateau Effect* that speaks to how when people are successful, they do what they did before, but it’s not the right thing to do. We need to embrace each thing anew.”

One area of his life that Medina was pleased to see flourish over the last year was his relationship with their kids.

“My relationship with our children has gotten deeper, even more so than it already was,” he commented thinking back on the last year. “We started doing Friday night game nights – some board games were good, some were not; we would work out together online with exercise bands; we would do Spotify dancing; and more.”

At work leading Catholic World Mission, he said he found in 2020 that he wrote more handwritten postcards. They also reached out in different ways to their supporters. Technology was also used in new and creative ways.

“We wound up having the best year in 10 years by the end of the year.”

He also commented that in the new environment, he and the Catholic World Mission team had to reaffirm their commitment to the expectation they would respond back to one another in 5 minutes, and they had to align on some boundaries too.

“It was important that we settled into doing work during the day, not on weekends and late at night.”

Medina believes that ultimately the way he and the Catholic World Mission team communicate matches that of how St. Paul did it when he established churches in various communities.

“Saint Paul was in prison a lot, but that’s where he did the most of his writings,” said Medina. “He was at the height of his ministry and he could have given up when he was thrown in prison. Instead, Saint Paul embraced his new reality and continued on with his mission of spreading the message of Christ through his writings. We looked at the example of Saint Paul for inspiration in continuing Catholic World Mission’s mission of empowering the poor and spreading the Gospel within our “new reality.”

In closing, Medina said, “In 2020, there are all these seeds, seeds born out of suffering. Will we allow these seeds to blossom? There were a lot of challenges, but a lot of blessings.”