

FMC ROCHESTER #42 – PAUL TESAREK

When I was asked to lead this weekend back in the spring of this year I remember immediately thinking that I was not qualified. I thought back to the teams I had been a part of in the past, and the strong lay leadership of those teams and thought that I did not measure up to those leaders in any way. Of course, deep down I already knew that a person's ability to lead a weekend has nothing to do with "measuring up" in the way that we normally think of that term. Each weekend stands alone, and is driven by the power of the Holy Spirit. Each weekend is the same but different, with new people, new ideas, new testimonies, new laughter, new tears. As I prayed over the opportunity I realized that to accept the position I simply had to be me, I couldn't be those that had served before me. Once I accepted that fact, I could move forward and with God's help put this team and subsequently this weekend together.

God's hand was evident from the very beginning in all facets of putting this weekend together. From determining the meeting dates and meeting locations, to the recruitment of the leadership team, the SD's, and the remainder of the team. As spring and summer progressed it was always evident when my plan was different than God's plan, because my plan never quite worked out. At a point by mid-summer our team was finally filled, then we lost several team members due to various circumstances. Finally our final team meeting scheduled at FMC was "flooded out" when heavy rains came through southern Minnesota, we were unable to meet our inside team members. These were very trying times for me. But, through the moments of sadness, anxiety, worry, and frustration, God never left me. He found the new team members, he found the leadership we needed, and when the floods came he found us a place to meet for that final team meeting.

When the weekend finally arrived we had 9 tables and 43 new weekenders. None of the weekenders had participated in a charis weekend before so to watch each of them experience God's Grace and God's Love in a new and different way very special for all of us to see. A good portion of the weekenders were younger guys, several in the early 20's. The first evening as I saw their faces I remember thinking that the young guys especially had that look of doubt on their faces, that "non-smiling tough guy" look. Then, as the weekend progressed to see God take hold of the hearts of these guys, and to see the smiles and the laughter, was a huge blessing for all of us to witness. At the end of the weekend more than half of the weekenders got up and shared their thoughts about the weekend.

The weekend had many high points including the stations, the agape meal, and the chapel visits. Personally I had two favorites. The first was a moment the last day of the weekend when the Holy Spirit filled the community room, we had felt the presence of the Holy Spirit the whole weekend but this was something to see. We were singing a praise and worship song. As the song progressed, watching the guys singing from their hearts the song leaders were moved to tears, others just quit singing, and for me – I had goose bumps on my arms – one of those moments that you just had to be there to see it! The healing service is also a favorite of mine. First to see the guys go forward one by one and drop off their forgiveness lists to be burned; then to see many of them go forward to be prayed over by the Spiritual Directors was very powerful. Many of the men helped those in wheelchairs go forward before they went forward they themselves went forward.

The weekend would not have happened without the strong support of Chaplain Ricardo, Sister Emilie and Volunteer Coordinator Amy. Their support before and during the weekend was invaluable, their presence was a huge blessing to all of us.

The weekend verse was Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come to him and dine with him and he with Me". It was my prayer for the weekend that each of us, to include the weekenders, the inside team, and the outside team, would be touched by this verse in a new way. As I look back at the weekend I believe that prayer was answered. Praise God for all that He did and continues to do.