

# The Cross Ministry

By Gary Fusco

We saw each other from a distance at church but never officially met. Then one day he opened the door for me as I was leaving and said “Hey, don’t I know you? My name is Deacon Mike.” He was around seventy years old, bubbly, and cheerful. After he realized that we were both from Chicago and both Italian we were instantly bonded. As I shared that I was in the woodworking business his eyes lit up. He excitedly told me of the vision and passion God had given him to place a crucifix in *every* Christian home in the world *at no charge*. Wow. There was a noble task! I smiled, but he didn’t. I said to myself “Buckle up, he’s serious!” I actually thought it was a terrific idea and wondered how much I would be able to help.

He asked if we would be willing to make fifty crosses and he would provide the corpuses, the cast bodies of Jesus. We agreed. The corpuses were of very good quality and detail, which encouraged us, and also were a nice size, over 8” tall. We designed a very simple, yet striking design which was 18” high x 10” wide, a size larger than most available today. We set to work and soon realized that although simple, the steps involved from start to finish were many and detailed. They proved to be very labor intensive and that first batch took us many more hours than anticipated.

After hours and hours of work we completed the final assembly and carefully packaged up the crosses for Deacon Mike to distribute. Fifty seemed like a huge amount and we felt that would hold him for a long while. To our amazement and touch of dismay, he returned two days later with empty boxes! “They loved them!” he exclaimed. “Everyone said they were the most beautiful crucifixes they had ever seen. Would you be willing to make another fifty?”

We were thrilled that they were so well received yet uncertain how much we could realistically afford to donate. As we tried to discern what to do, I became aware of one thing. We had just donated materials and many hours of labor which should have set us back, but financially it didn’t seem to affect us at all. We decided to try it again, only this time we would step it up to 150. Either God was going to be in this or he wasn’t.

We set out with enthusiasm and attempted to streamline the steps, focusing more on production. It was working. We produced the 150 in just a little

more time than the first fifty. We proudly packaged them up for Deacon Mike to pass out. Again we were shocked when he returned in less than a week with empty boxes! This time he had story after story of people being deeply touched and moved by the beauty of the cross and also by the fact that it was a *free* gift. Many were overwhelmed.

About this time we began to notice that something wonderfully unusual was happening in the shop. Our cash flow was better than usual and at a time when shops around us were finding it tougher and tougher to find work, work was coming to us in abundance. We felt that God was pleased and we were being blessed. We then decided to increase production to 300 to try and meet the growing demand, as word was spreading quickly. The same day we committed to do this and ordered the lumber we received a large job and with it a large deposit. We instantly realized what was happening. God was PRE-PAYING for the crosses and blessing us at the same time. He continued to answer our question of whether we could afford all this expense by paying us *up front* with jobs more profitable than we had ever experienced. He showed us clearly that we were to continue and that we could afford it, because he was financing it!

We made another batch of 300 and then followed that with a step up to 500. As fast as we could complete them, they were going out the door and onto walls in Christian homes. Many letters of appreciation were coming in along with some profound testimonies of a number of individuals returning to God and their faith after being presented with a cross by a family member. It was becoming clear that the power and potential of this ministry was way beyond what we had initially imagined.

Watching all this take place, one thing was still not clear. The question was not should we continue, but at what volume? Should we proceed at the gradual increased production rate as we were going, or should we pull out all the stops and rent a bigger shop, buy production equipment, hire ten men, and go into mass production? I did not want to presume that God would automatically foot the bill for this size endeavor because of his past faithfulness. I had to know for sure and prayed hard for an answer.

What happened next was nothing short of a miracle and direct answer to my question. One evening soon after, it happened that I had to meet a photographer at one of our jobsites, which I never do in the evening. That's number one. As I got in the car I remember asking God again for an answer

to my question. As I started to drive I flicked on the radio, which I never do. That's number two. I stopped listening to the car radio two years ago so that I could use that driving time for catching up on much needed prayer time.

The radio was tuned to a Christian station and the first words I heard was a man saying: "Have you ever wondered how much to give? Have you ever started a project or ministry for the Lord and wondered at what rate should you grow it?" I was so stunned I almost went off the road. It was clear this minister was speaking directly to me. I listened with amazement and sheer delight as he proceeded to explain a biblical principle called *The Cycle of Blessings*. He taught that as God impresses it upon a person's heart to begin a ministry for him, he waits for a response. Once the person gives, God responds to that gift by increasing it back to him. This person, now encouraged by this blessing, takes this increased gift and re-invests it into his ministry. Once again, God responds to this increased gift and *multiplies it back to him again*.

Further motivated by God's favor upon his efforts, the person again re-invests this entire increased amount into his ministry. Faithfully, God will respond by doubling, tripling, or even ten-folding the person's gift. And thus, this cycle of blessings may continue as a steady, but gradual process for as long as God determines. It is imperative that the ministry remain focused and operating in his will. I had received my answer and relieved to learn that we were proceeding not as "big shots," but so far right on track.

It has been three years now and I am pleased to report that the cycle is still going strong. We are producing 1000 crosses at a time and have given away over 4500 to this date. God continues to pay *up front* and continues to bless us abundantly. During this past year of 2009 the economy crashed and we watched shops and businesses all around us disappear one by one. Not only were we not affected, but it has been the most profitable year since we started in 1979. We are truly working in God's economy. People would stop in and say "What's going on here? You've got ten guys working and seem to be busier than any shop around. How do you explain it?" I would respond the same each time: "All I know is that we all gather together each morning as Christian brothers. We read a chapter of Scripture and then ask God's protection over each man and his blessing over this, his business. And...we make these crosses to give away....that's all I know. Would you like one?"

Stay with me, the story gets better. I didn't mention that the corpuses, with their detailed antique brass finish, are also costly. Even in quantity they are 8.50 each. In the beginning, with our smaller production runs, Deacon Mike, combined with occasional donations he collected, was covering the expense. However, as production increased he was no longer able to keep up, and fell significantly behind. It appeared like we would have to step in and help pay for the corpuses, even though we had never considered it part of our responsibility. Weren't we doing enough as it was? Why wasn't God inspiring people to make donations and pay for these corpuses? One afternoon as my son Daniel and I sat discussing this dilemma, the Holy Spirit suddenly flashed a thought through my mind. "Daniel," I said, "let's say we're working on a job and we need an electrician, and it happens that we know two equally qualified ones, and the only difference between them is that one is a friend and the other is not. Why is it that we will always choose to give the job to our friend?" "Simple," he said, "because we would rather see *him* blessed by the work." "Exactly," I said. "What if God is saying 'I don't want to bless all these other people that I don't know, I want to bless YOU. I would rather *you* pay for the corpuses so that I can pour the blessings upon you, my friends.'" "Wow", he said, "we should give it a try. Let's give 1000.00 and see what happens," and immediately went to write the check. We were both familiar with Malachi 3:10 which states that we should go ahead and test God to see if he will not "*throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it,*" when we are faithful and bring the whole tithe into the storehouse.

8:00 AM the next morning I received an excited call from our salesman Eddie. "The most bizarre thing just happened," he enthusiastically said. "I just stopped by to check on the jobsite, and the project manager asked if we would take on the re-surfacing of all the wood floors in the house. If we just make a phone call and line up the floor finishers we can clear 10,000 profit!"

As I relayed this message to Daniel it instantly became clear what had just happened. In less than twenty four hours God had taken our 1000.00 gift and multiplied it ten times over!

To be continued....