



FATHER GREG BOYLE

Father Greg Boyle has learned that you work with gang members and not with gangs, otherwise you enforce the cohesion of gangs and supply them oxygen. In his 30 years of ministry to gang members in Los Angeles, Father Boyle has learned you cannot “save” young men and women trapped in gang life. Wanting a gang member to have a different life would never be the same as that gang member wanting to have one. He discovered that you do not go to the margins to rescue anyone. But if we go there, everyone finds rescue.

Fr. Gregory Boyle — best known as Fr. Greg by all who meet him -- was born in Los Angeles, one of eight children. His father, a third-generation Irish-American, worked in the family-owned dairy in Los Angeles County and his mother worked to keep track of her large family. As a youth, Fr. Greg and several of his siblings worked side by side with their father in the dairy. After graduating from Loyola High School in Los Angeles in 1972, he entered the order of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and was ordained a priest in 1984.

Prior to 1986, Fr. Greg taught at Loyola High School and worked with Christian Base Communities in Cochabamba, Bolivia. A Jesuit priest, from 1986 to 1992 Fr. Greg served as pastor of Dolores Mission Church, then the poorest Catholic parish in Los Angeles that also had the highest concentration of gang activity in the city.

Fr. Greg witnessed the devastating impact of gang violence on his community during the so-called “decade of death” that began in Los Angeles in the late 1980s and peaked at 1,000 gang-related killings in 1992. In the face of law enforcement tactics and criminal justice policies of suppression and mass incarceration as the means to end gang violence, Fr. Greg and parish and community members adopted what was a radical approach at the time: treat gang members as human beings.

In 1988 Fr. Greg started what would eventually become Homeboy Industries. In an effort to address the escalating problems and unmet needs of gang-involved youth, Fr. Greg and the community developed positive alternatives, including establishing an elementary school, a day care program and finding legitimate employment for young people, as well as providing critical services to thousands of men and women who walk through its doors every year seeking a better life. Most importantly, it provided the opportunity for rival gang members to work side by side.

The success of the Bakery created the groundwork for additional businesses, thus prompting the creation of Homeboy Industries, in 2001. Today Homeboy Industries’ nonprofit economic development enterprises include Homeboy Bakery, Homeboy Silkscreen, Homeboy Maintenance, Homeboy/Homegirl Merchandise, and HomegirlCafé.

As Executive Director of Homeboy Industries and an acknowledged expert on gangs and intervention approaches, Fr. Greg is a nationally renowned speaker. Fr. Greg and several “homies” were featured speakers at the White House Conference on Youth in 2005 at the personal invitation of Mrs. George Bush. In 1998 he was a member of the 10-person California delegation to President Clinton’s Summit on Children in Philadelphia. Fr. Greg is also a consultant to youth service and governmental agencies, policy-makers and employers.



Fr. Greg is a member of the National Youth Gang Center Advisory Board (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention). He is currently a member of the National Leadership Council of the Iris Alliance Fund and serves on the Advisory Board for the Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy. Previously, he was a member of the State Commission on Juvenile Justice, Crime and Delinquency Prevention.

He has received numerous honorary degrees, awards and recognitions including the Civic Medal of Honor, the California Peace Prize, Humanitarian of the Year from Bon Appetit Magazine, and in 2011 was inducted into the California Hall of Fame. In 2014, the White House named Father Boyle a Champion of Change. He received the University of Notre Dame's 2017 Laetare Medal, the oldest honor given to American Catholics.

Fr. Greg is the author of the 2010 New York Times-bestseller *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*. His 2017 book is the Los Angeles Times-bestseller *Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship*.

The year, 2018, marked the 30th Anniversary of the work Fr. Greg began. Homeboy Industries, now located in downtown Los Angeles, is recognized as the largest gang intervention and re-entry program in the county and has become a national model.