

Ex-Cop Walks God's Beat Now To Share Jesus

Mike DiSanza once patrolled New York's toughest boroughs, but today he tells fellow police officers about God's love

Relaxing poolside at a resort in Florida, two men question Mike DiSanza about the much-worn New York Police Department ball cap he's wearing.

Their curiosity doesn't faze DiSanza. In fact, he was hoping they'd ask. The NYPD crest on his hat has many times been an instant icebreaker of conversation. He's happy that this might become another one of those moments for an ex-cop-turned-evangelist.

With a knowing grin, the retired New York City police officer and Spirit-filled Christian quickly engrosses the two men with his colorful stories about his 22 years with "New York's finest" and his beat in the South Bronx and Harlem.

Before it's over DiSanza has told the men about how God changed his life. He's also explained that he's now the president of International Cops for Christ, an organization that ministers to both active and retired police officers worldwide. As has happened hundreds of times before, DiSanza is convincing—both men pray the prayer of salvation with him.

Person-to-person encounters like this happen all the time with DiSanza, an energetic white-haired Italian with an outgoing personality and a classic New York accent. When people realize

he is a retired cop from the Big Apple, they usually drop their guard.

“Having been a policeman, people usually look at you like you’re not whacked out totally,” DiSanza says.

Though he may not look or sound like your typical evangelist, DiSanza estimates that he personally has been involved with leading about 8,000 people to Christ. It doesn’t seem to matter if he is speaking at an international crusade with Cops for Christ or one-on-one at a resort—people listen and respond to his message.

Perhaps this is why Hodder, one of England’s largest publishers, is publishing DiSanza’s autobiography in March. Titled A Cop for Christ, it will tell DiSanza’s story from his childhood as a member of a gang to his beat on the dangerous back streets of New York and his miraculous conversion as a police officer.

DiSanza has seemingly countless stories of chance encounters with strangers that turned into evangelistic opportunities. Such was the case at a New York convenience store where he had stopped for a cup of coffee.

As DiSanza made conversation with a man while they got coffee, the stranger said to him: “You seem like an unusual fellow. You seem happy and free.”

DiSanza went on to share his testimony. It wasn’t until the stranger left the store that some-one told DiSanza he had just been sharing Jesus with Anton LaVey, the late founder of the First Church of Satan.

DiSanza's testimony has opened other kinds of doors, as well. While evangelizing in England in June 1999, he says God directed him to take supplies into Kosovo, where at the time NATO bombs were falling in an effort to cripple Slobodan Milosevich's military. Attempting to enter the besieged region, DiSanza and his three companions from Wales were denied entrance because DiSanza didn't have a visa to enter Macedonia.

"I told the guy, 'Hey, I'm a policeman, too,'" DiSanza said. "He said, 'Oh yeah, where?' When I said NYPD, he just went crazy and said, 'NYPD Blue!'"

A tall blonde woman came out and introduced herself as the lieutenant.

"She said to me, 'I've always wanted to hug a New York cop.' So I said, 'Give me a hug!'" DiSanza said.

The lieutenant approved a visa for DiSanza, authorized the boxes of supplies and provided his group with police escorts through Macedonia to the border of Kosovo.

"It was really a miracle," DiSanza said. "God worked it out that I got my visa and a police escort through hostile enemy territory."

DiSanza lives in Inverness, Fla., where he is a member of nearby Citrus Family Worship Center and continues to travel around the world to minister to police officers. Through Cops for Christ, he says, more than 1 million people worldwide have heard the gospel, and 300,000 have come to Christ.