



MISSIONARIES IN ACTION

DOMINICAN MISSION FOUNDATION

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Between the Heart and the Heavenly Father



Dear Mission Friends:

Poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote, *“The love of a Mother is ...the veil of a softer light between the heart and the Heavenly Father.”* In this month of May honoring Our Blessed Mother, I dedicate this newsletter not only to all our mothers, but to all those caregivers who protect and heal and nurture others with motherly care and tender strength.

Last year we reported to you about the *Albergue del Desierto* (Hostel of the Desert) here in Mexicali, which, since its opening in 1989, has been a welcoming oasis of refuge and relief for women and children (up to the age of 18) finding themselves in desperate and unsafe situations. At any hour of the day or night, they are greeted with meals, showers, clean clothes, and freshly-made beds.

The *Albergue*, over 30 years old and run exclusively by women, was the first hostel in Mexico to focus on protecting women and children migrants.

Current director Monica Oropeza Rodriquez (*right*) and assistant director Irene Mesa Carranza remain true to the original mission of its founder, Blanca Villaseñor Roca: **to provide “an efficient and compassionate service” for the needs of women and youth deportees.**

Once their guests’ immediate needs are met, trained staff members offer basic medical attention, emotional and psychological counseling, and legal advice. They also help migrants reunite with their relatives in the U.S. or find temporary jobs enabling them to afford a safe return to their homes in southern Mexico or Central America. When they have no family members to connect with, the staff helps them build new lives in Mexicali—women are assisted in finding permanent jobs and affordable housing; children are enrolled in local schools and, if alone, placed with adoptive families.

Fr. Miguel Rolland, O.P., the previous pastor of our mission parish here in Mexicali, began working with and supporting the *Albergue* and, with your generous help, I have carried on that association. I visit every few months, bringing along a check representing your latest donations.



My most recent visit was just weeks ago, and while it was still at the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the virus had already been detected throughout the city of Mexicali and its surrounding villages.

Remaining outside the front gate, I was greeted graciously and appreciatively by Monica (*above*), but it wasn’t long before I sensed her state of panic.



The place was already filled to capacity and she was worried about their ability to implement social distancing and hygiene requirements and replenish the rapidly diminishing provisions.



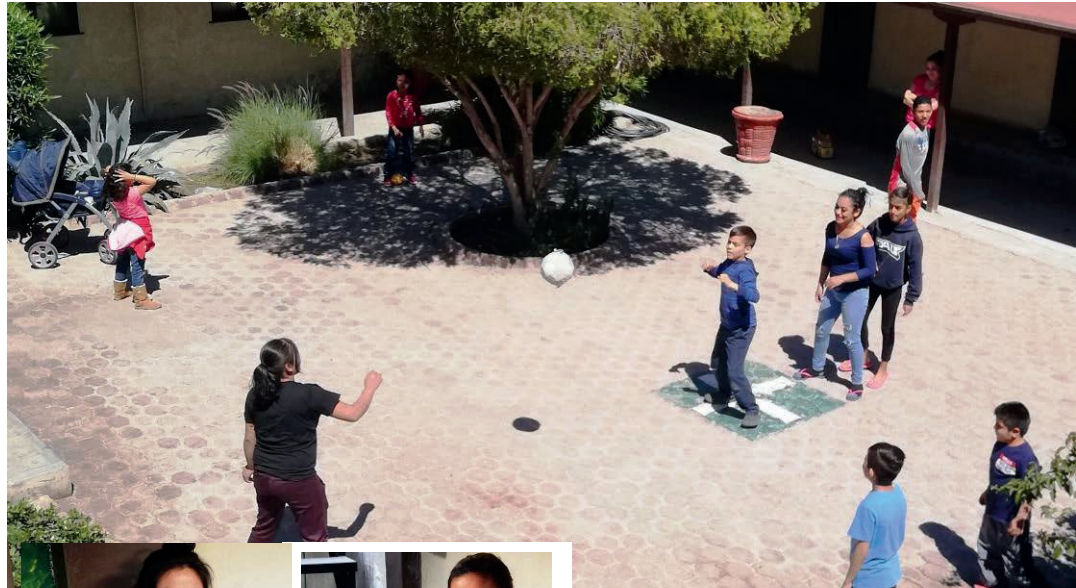
Thankfully, as I write, no one in the *Albergue* has been infected by the virus, but in her acknowledgement to me for our latest contribution, Monica writes, “It is always very important for us to provide a space that is safe and clean, caring and dignified, for the thousands of migrants who arrive each year. **Right now, however, in this time of pandemic and quarantine, being able to meet their fundamental needs such as nutritious food, basic toiletries, and clean clothes is absolutely essential.**”

Upper left, the Albergue as seen from the inner courtyard; right and below, preparing and partaking of a typical day's meals.



I live in a house with just a handful of “mature” priests, all of us fairly healthy and active but moving slower these days. Abiding by all the latest guidelines—keeping our distance, sanitizing of common surfaces, frequent handwashing, and wearing masks and gloves as necessary—requires constant vigilance. I can only imagine the daunting struggle to maintain a free and healthy space for dozens of children of all ages, lively and ever in motion, as well as their tired mothers, fraught with many other troubles that brought them to the *Albergue* in the first place.

Monica continues, “We offer daily talks to raise awareness of and provide updates regarding COVID-19. To safeguard the health of our guests, their families and our staff members, we are requiring that all strictly abide by the precautionary measures that we have implemented, including remaining inside the gates of our facility until it is time for them to leave for good. Housecleaning and disinfecting chores are shared by all, creating not only a culture of hygiene but also of responsibility and pride.”



“All the children have daily school assignments appropriate to their ages, and our staff members teach and assess as needed, in the hope of minimizing any gaps in their learning. We also offer arts and crafts and organize indoor games, for women as well as the children, helping to restore and sustain the emotional stability of all. We are fortunate to have an enclosed yard for recreational activities, too. Children can run and jump, play ball, and exercise; mothers can stroll their babies; and all can get sunshine and fresh air.”



Far left, a grandmother saying 'grace' before her meal; left, grateful for the hospitality of the Albergue, a family setting off to begin again with relatives in a nearby town.

In closing, Monica writes, “*We thank you for your much-needed support and send a big hug to all your donors. Dios lo bendiga por siempre acordarse de nosotros. (May God bless you for always remembering us.)*”

In this troubled and unsettling time, with the economy drastically slowed and all our priorities necessarily shifting, please know that we are aware of unexpected financial burdens being imposed upon so many of you. You and your loved ones remain in our daily prayers.

In Christ's Peace,
Fr. Martin de Porres Walsh, O.P.



CAREGIVER PRAYER

Dear Lord,

When we entered this world as tiny babies, you gave us caregivers, who watched and waited on us, who fed and clothed us, who taught us how to live...

We pray today for caregivers: mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters and cousins, neighbors and family friends, all who care for children.

Give them the wisdom they need to do this work!
Give them endurance and patience and hope, and above all, compassion, treating each child as they would want to be treated...

Our prayers are also directed today for caregivers around the world who face special challenges:

for those many caregivers who are caring for all those affected by COVID-19;
for caregivers who are without food, walking long distances with children in their arms;
for caregivers in war-torn countries trying desperately to protect their children from bombs and guns.

So many dangers in this world, Lord, and you know them all.
Bring peace to our troubled times, healing to those who are sick, justice for those who are oppressed, hope to those who are hopeless.

Lord, you are the Great Caregiver. Help us...to be aware of your love, your gaze upon us, encouraging us, sustaining us, directing us. Amen.

Hail, Holy Queen,

Mother of Mercy,

our life, our sweetness and our hope!

To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.

*To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping
in this valley of tears!*

*Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and
after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Amen.