

# A Journey of the Heart

July 2016

## Reflections – A Journey to Juarez By Michelle and Keith Underwood

It is not easy to let everything go and place your trust in God, but this is the foundation of the “Journey of the Heart” ministry at St. Michael’s Parish in Olympia Washington. For some it is a struggle to let go and for others it seems natural, however for all it is a rewarding experience being able to help with the many projects and activities at the Holy Spirit Center in Juarez.

Keith and I traveled to Centro de Espiritu Santo in December, meeting Deacon John and Leanne Bergford.

We experienced a celebration of the “Christmas Miracle” of the Juarez dump, the 1972 event that mirrors the Gospel story of the loaves and fish.

There were two days of activities, Friday for the school children and Saturday for the entire community (over 1400). We made tamales, packaged the weekly food bags for the community members in need.

Leanne shared many stories about how the children could use the simplest things to entertain themselves.

Especially noted was the boy with the single marble and how he shared it with five other boys in a game. A shoebox of marbles was brought by Leanne to add to the centers supplies.



It was a pleasure to watch the children come into the dining hall where the little ones were closest to the barrel stove keeping the chill from the room. Before taking their seats, they gathered in a circle to give thanks for the food and offer prayer requests for family and friends. It is touching to watch a 6-year-old ask for prayers for their parents. At the other end of the dining area a group of elders gathered and waited. God had another reminder for me – His time is not my time.

Shortly after the meal, we distributed bags of food supplies to those waiting.

During the festival we watched as the children broke piñatas - most of which were seven-pointed, symbolizing the seven deadly sins. We couldn’t believe how well-behaved and enthusiastic they were, for the game and for each other.



In the more than six months since our return I regularly remember so many things:

- The little girl smiling who copied Keith licking the cheese sauce from the paper plate.
- The teenage boys who had chomped down on chips and cheese and several tamales.... When offered more, they ate even though they were full. Not sure where the next meal would be as there was a break in the school.
- Mass at Santa Maria de la Montana where Father Vaca paused during his Homily to admonish a group of young boys with his eyes.
- Staff who are always smiling and are protective of their center and the families they serve.
- Watching the children perform a nativity play. I loved the pride in the kids and the parents. I knew the story but their interpretation put another layer for me.
- Seeing Bernice and Pilar working together to keep Frank’s vision alive. Pilar lives on the landfill and Bernice lives in El Paso. Each ministering from a different place, but true hearts that praise Jesus honestly and frequently in their words and actions.

*GLORY TO GOD AND THANK YOU JESUS for His mission. God has so many more miracles for His mission. He’s brought peace back to Juarez, and in doing so has brought mission groups back to His mission. God made the impossible, possible. If he’s tugging on your heart strings inviting you back to His mission, answer His calling. It’ll be the best decision you ever make and we’ll be waiting at His mission doors with open arms to welcome you home.*