



THE VISITATION

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVITY HOUSE

AUGUST 2019

VOLUME 9 ISSUE 2

Walls On Our Hearts, Walls On Our Border

by Kayla Jacobs

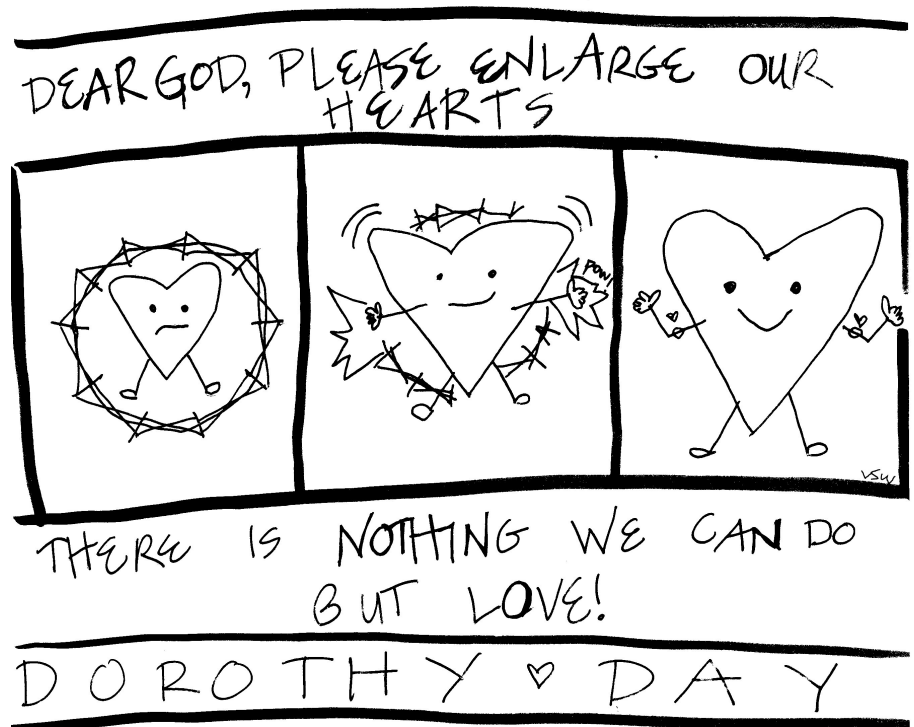
A while ago I attended a city commission hearing regarding the building of a for-profit immigration detention prison in a nearby town. I went in opposition to the proposed project because I believe in welcoming our neighbor and not making money off of incarceration. Gratefully there were overwhelmingly more people there speaking against allowing this corporation to come in and profit off of people's vulnerability than people speaking in favor of it.

When I first arrived I was expecting it to be just like any of the other dozens of public hearings I've attended. I quickly realized I was wrong. As the issue

of immigration has become highly politicized over the years and the plight of our immigrant brothers and sisters has been exploited, by both the left and right, this public hearing became a microcosm of the national debate as a whole. The scene was ugly and quite frankly, scary. After a couple minutes of the public comments I realized several things: 1) everyone in that room was afraid of each other, 2) divisions in the U.S. are worse than I thought (and I already thought it was pretty bad), 3) we're all to blame.

The hearing went on for hours as dozens of people gave passionate testimonies about why they

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Building Houses, Building Homes

by Venus Wozniak

During these days of summer, I am blessed with a bit of downtime when I can reflect on the year past and make some plans for the next year. Most recently I have been reflecting on 2019's mission experience.

2019 rolled-in in its usual sneaky fashion: I hover above the Manila fireworks in a 787 jet. The last three Januarys I rang in the New Year enroute to a mission destination in Bacolod, Negros Occidental, The Philippines. I have been blessed with the role of leading the Diocese of Joliet's University Mission to the Philippines for the second time. In all honesty, travel to the

Philippines was not on my bucket list. We all know what happens when we tell God our plans! It was in His plan not only that I travel to the Philippines, but that I go three times (with plans to go as many more times as He wills).

Many incredible, amazing, life-transforming things have happened over the last years of this mission. As pastoral staff and leader, it is always especially captivating observing the university students as they walk out in faith and courage, traveling to a third world country prepared (or not so prepared) for the big work of building houses. It's good, satisfying, and expected work.

When we are preparing as a mission team in the months leading up to the trip the pastoral staff and veteran missionaries try to convey the unexpected work that will be done. Call this other work what you will: relationship building, solidarity, Kingdom building, loving. In reality, this is both the hardest and best work that we do. Our attempts to prepare the new missionaries for this unexpected work of the mission are feeble at best. At some point halfway through our time on the ground there is a shift. We realize that our work building houses is secondary.

Building houses becomes sec-

ondary because - the villagers, the foremen, the women, the children, the families that will receive the new home - the people are no longer strangers. They are Marisa, Carlos, John Dave, Gina, Rosalie, Dadong, Analiza, Christian, Lahara, Prayla, James, Jinny Mae (just to name a few.) We begin to get to know those we work with. We hear their stories.

For the days that we work in the village, we provide \$100 per day for the head Ninays (mothers) to make lunch. For this amount they

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Letter from the Directors

Dear Friends of Nativity House,

We are thick in the dog days of summer. The sun is hot. Rain is welcome by the dry parched ground. When we do get a nice rain shower the Nativity House gardens burst forth with new growth of vegetables, fruit, and flowers alike! The garden has been abuzz with much excitement of new and old membership. We have a total of 9 families sharing the duties of planting, weeding and harvesting.

Ivy and Rua, our Nubian does became first time mothers this winter and spring. With the birth of our first Nubian goat kids, Justin and I have become adept goat milkers. There is a prolific milk supply (a half gallon or more a day) to contend with. Weekly cheese making has become the latest food preservation technique to master! We have made queso fresco, chevre, and mozzarella. We are looking forward to attempting aged cheddar very soon. The Nativity House Apiary has expanded from one beehive to three. We are looking forward to a fabulous honey harvest this fall!

This new endeavor of cheese making has added a fun new tradition our garden workdays. At the end of the our time in the garden we bring out new cheeses, garden recipes, teas brewed fresh from the garden for tasting and refreshment. So far this summer we have tasted many different spiced cheeses with garden herbs, goat milk ice cream with fresh strawberry sauce, mint and lemon balm tea - just to name a few.

The most exciting news to share is that mid-June Rebecca Storey moved in. She is our new full-time intern. Becca hails from Noblesville, Indiana. She learned about community living and farming through her youth group's trips to Bethlehem Farm. We are grateful for Bethlehem Farm's example of community, service, and sustainability!

Our biggest community event of the year is quickly approaching! The 5th annual Nativity House Farm to Table Celebration is Sunday, September 1. We will begin with Mass at 4pm. We have already begun praying for no rain. You are invited to come and participate in this fabulous celebration of God's most wondrous creation in the form of harvest, community life, music, and games.

We are truly blessed through your continued support and prayers.

Peace of Christ to you and yours,

Venus and Justin Wozniak

About The Visitation

This newspaper, *The Visitation*, is a publication on topics of social justice, spirituality, and theology. It is published four times a year by Nativity House. Submissions are accepted from readers everywhere.

To contact us, email us at:

newspaper@nativity-house.org

Past issues are online at:

<http://www.nativity-house.org>

About Nativity House

Nativity House serves as a house of hospitality for first-time mothers in need of residence in the southwest Chicago suburbs. Nativity House operates an on-site community supported farm (CSA) that provides nourishment for the Nativity House and the greater community. Overall, we envision a healing environment focused on the dignity of each person, the dignity of work, and stewardship of the earth.

Nativity House is administered by a board of directors and an advisory committee of individuals with a broad range of experience. Nativity House has formed positive relationships with relevant local organizations that are extremely helpful in carrying out the mission of the house. Nativity House was recognized as a public charity in August, 2011.

To connect with us, please email Venus Wozniak at:

venusad@nativity-house.org

Postal mail should be addressed to:

Nativity House
17141 W. 143rd St.
Lockport, IL 60441

We extend the sincerest thanks to all.

Mom, Teach Me to Pray

by Luke Duchemin

Prayer is precisely this: “vital and personal relationship with the living and true God” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2558). Our capacity and our willingness to enter into relationship, into union with God, with the Most Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—defines the peak and purpose of Christian prayer. Mary’s Annunciation in Luke’s Gospel provides a bold and practical exploration of this prayer.

Mary’s prayer begins as the Angel Gabriel is “sent from God” (Luke

1:26). God initiates and Mary participates. She enters into the life of the Holy Trinity as she receives the very Life of the Son of God in her womb. “The Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28). This means God the Father dwells with Mary; His favor, His grace, rests upon her. This implies that Mary recognizes, or grows to recognize her dignity and identity as one who is loved by God whose deepest identity is Love (1 John 4:8). Christian prayer begins with this recognition: God is Father, I am Son, I am Daughter—I am Beloved. Jesus teaches his

disciples to pray in this way, as He instructs them to pray, “Our Father...” (Luke 11:2).

As we come to approach God the Father in prayer, if we follow Mary’s example, we must call upon the Holy Spirit... Through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, God will not just dwell “with” Mary—God will dwell within Mary. Without the Holy Spirit, Mary could not give birth to Jesus. The Holy Spirit does much more than enable us to pray; the Holy Spirit fructifies (a fun and fancy word for makes fruitful) our prayers! Through the Spirit, the Word of God truly takes flesh! The same Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us and we become, like Mary, “the temple of the Living God” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

We should also note how Mary does not avoid feeling her fears and asking her questions! We should learn from her example! If we are afraid and puzzled by the word or work of God we must let Jesus speak into our hearts: “Do not be afraid!” (Luke 1:30, Luke 5:10). Mary listens and believes what the angel pronounces about Jesus even as she wonders, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” We must pray to share in Mary’s great faith and remain open to the work of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:34).

Mary’s question, her powerlessness, manifest alongside her purity as one favored by God, compels us to compare her to Zechariah, who also had a brief and bombastic prayer experience with an angel. Zechariah, however, one conceived with the weight and burden of original sin, was much more skeptical: “How shall I know this?” He says that

he is old and his wife is barren (Luke 1:18)! (In other words, you’re crazy! This isn’t possible...) Zechariah, aware of his limitations, through his unbelief places a limit on the power of the Holy Spirit; Mary, aware of her limitations, yet through her belief, says yes for God to work, even in the midst of these seemingly impossible circumstances!

Our prayer lives, our vital and lived relationship with the Lord, is essentially nourished through scripture and the example of the saints, as evidenced by this reflection. Therefore, with Mary, let us make an act of faith to not only be the handmaidens of the Lord, but to be the handmaidens of the Handmaiden! For she who listened so attentively to the voice of Jesus will help us live by and love His word. Let us pray for an outpouring and overshadowing of the Holy Spirit; let us pray for God to continue to manifest Himself in our lives as Father; let us allow Jesus to be so alive in us that we cannot help but say with Mary, “My soul magnifies the Lord” (Luke 1:46).



NATIVITY HOUSE SEEKS STAFF



Nativity House staff celebrates Charlotte’s 1st Birthday with former Guest Mom

*Are you passionately Pro-Life?
Seeking a year of service?
Eco-justice minded?*

Nativity House is an intentional Catholic community and house of hospitality for expectant mothers rooted in Catholic Social Teaching in Lockport, IL.

We are seeking interns!
Full time and part time positions are available.

Job Description

- Living at Nativity House and participating in Intentional Community
 - Monthly Stipend, Room and Board, Health Care Benefits (for full-time staff)
- Tasks include*
- Hospitality: Caring for the specific needs of 1-2 guest moms
 - Community Living Tasks: managing keeping house tidy, cooking rotation for community meals, community laundry
 - Community Farm: participation in community work days, caring for animals – chickens, goats, cats, dog
 - Newspaper Editor: formatting, writing, delivering our quarterly publication *The Visitation*
 - Community Events & Fundraising: help plan 2 fundraisers per year; help plan community events Holy Mass & Roundtable Discussions
 - Spirituality: participate in morning & evening prayer; commitment to personal spiritual growth

Gathering at Anathoth

by Justin Wozniak

It was hard to believe, but under our feet, buried under about twenty-four inches of heavy snow, a wealth of nutrients were being prepared for a new season. We were led on a circuit through a medium-sized cattle farm in the northern reaches of Wisconsin called Anathoth to learn from the experiences of our hosts and a wide-ranging community of mostly amateur farmers. Our guides described a natural, underground water collection and retention scheme called swales: a careful network of tree roots, ditches, and contoured slopes. Years of planning and untold effort had been tucked under a deep layer of snow and were waiting unseen to retain meltwater for a full year of hay growth and cow feeding. The water supply for the year was insured against a dry year and underwritten by the reliability of gravity.

Our companions on this early February walk came from across the midwest to gather, exchange ideas, and generally refresh for the inbound spring and growing season. All were focused, or at least strongly curious about the network of community farms, houses of hospitality, or other centers for the works of mercy called the Catholic Worker. The workers and volunteers that populate these independent groupings live out a conversation about the meaning of the dignity of work, the value of creation, and our personal responsibility to care for those in need. The movement has been around since before World War Two, but is strengthened every time gatherings like this one up north are strung together.

Nativity House is inspired by the example of the founders of the movement, Dorothy Day (d. 1980) and Peter Maurin (d. 1949), as well as personal mentors at houses and organizations that thrive in too many cities to mention. Day and Maurin proposed an experiment, and alternative approach, but still a distinctly American approach. They started small newspapers, small farms, tight communities, and community prayer. This was a struggle, as the rest of the country leaned toward big industry, big urbanization, and big wars. There was no shortage of difficulty, but they caught the imagination of a wide range of people who felt called to this way of living, even if only for a short while.

Thus, we were fascinated to take the trip to Anathoth Farm, the hosts for the event. Anathoth, a name representing a biblical and agricultural sign of hope in the face of annihilation, excels at producing new ideas for sustainable sustenance with minimal (possibly negative) consumption of water, power, and other resources. We were hosted graciously and warmly by the West Denmark church and its members who provided hospitality to us as visitors. The weekend, structured around ad hoc round table discussions (in the spirit of Maurin), was most alive during introductions and reunions of new and old friends. The various communities prepared hearty meals made from the products of the small farms represented there. Nativity House brought pumpkins, green beans, bread, and jams. Others brought butters and cheeses so tasty we considered getting a small cow.

Easy Essays:

Reconstructing the Social Order

by Peter Maurin
(1877-1949)



Chesterton says

“The Christian ideal

has not been tried

and found wanting.

It has been found difficult

and left untried.”

Christianity has not been tried

because people thought

it was impractical.

And men have tried everything

except Christianity.

And everything

that men have tried

has failed.



The overall experience made me consider how much time and work goes into building and maintaining something that can be flexible and unpredictable. The whole thing looked and felt spontaneous but was really the result of communities and friendships that have been organized and developed over decades. The farms and the expertise that runs them were

cultured over similar time spans, but every year brings new projects and unexpected challenges. Gatherings like the one at Anathoth remind us that the efforts are more than worth it.



Justin is a computer systems professional. He may be reached at justin@nativity-house.org.

5th Annual
Nativity House

FARM TO TABLE
CELEBRATION

1 SEPTEMBER 2019 • 4:00 PM
NATIVITY HOUSE

4 PM *Mass*
5 PM *Mingle on the
Farm*

Charcuterie, Silent Auction, Live
Music, Yard Games, Children's
Scavenger Hunt

6 PM *Feast*
5 course meal featuring local
produce, Nativity House's own
goat dairy, and Nativity House
honey

7 PM *Live Music*

ALL FESTIVITIES WILL BE HELD AT
NATIVITY HOUSE 17141 W. 143RD ST. IN LOCKPORT, ILLINOIS.
RSVP TO VENUSAD@NATIVITY-HOUSE.ORG
A FREE WILL DONATION WILL BE COLLECTED
FOR FREQUENT EVENT UPDATES FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK



Walls

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support or oppose the project. Some testimonies were quite moving and beautiful, specifically the testimonies of formerly undocumented people. But alongside of the testimonies was a lot of hostility and intimidation, on all sides. People screaming at each other and taunting each other. While I was there with a clear and strong position of opposition I was actually shaken by the people I was there in agreement with, just as I was shaken by the people who I was in disagreement with. I cried my whole drive home.

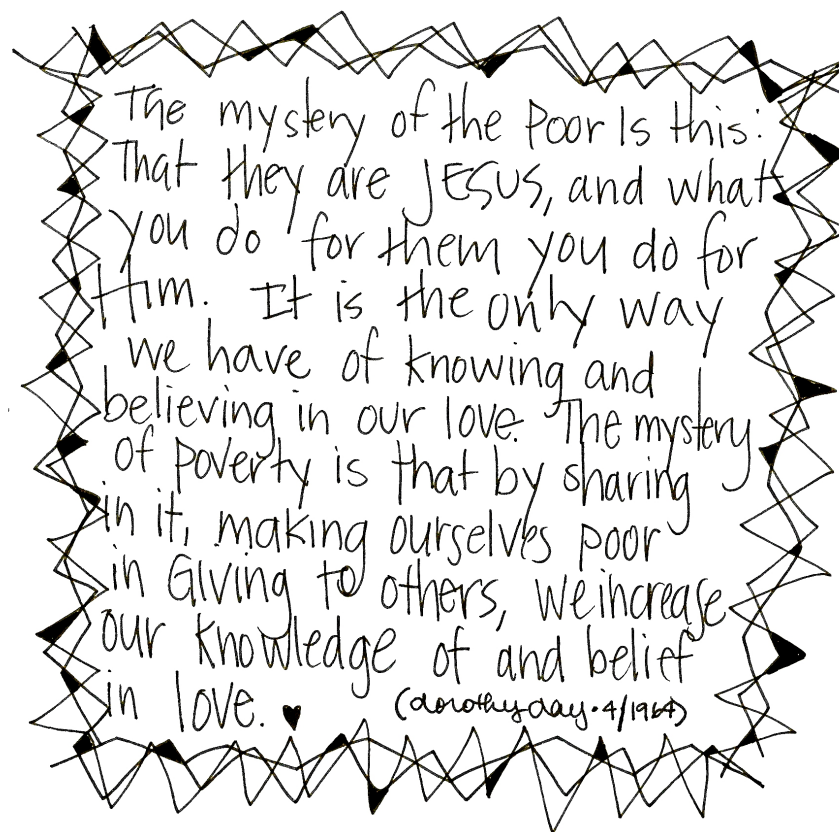
As I was reflecting on the experience I thought to myself, "no wonder the country is at the point of potentially building a border wall." Certainly if we can't beat the divides in our hearts, and with our literal next door neighbors, how can we beat this actual physical divide like the border wall? The border wall is solely symbolic; statistics, reality, and history show us that it will be ineffective in terms of "national security." It is not only a symbol of hate and racism, though it is, it is also an outward sign of our failings as a country, and individuals, who have created and culture of division. Unfortunately, we are all culpable.

I'm not suggesting a weakened and compromised solution to immigration policy. Let me be clear, there is a right and a wrong. Racism is wrong. Making a profit by incarcerating people is wrong. Separating families is wrong. Unwelcoming the stranger is wrong. We still need to speak truth, strongly and loudly, to power. We need to do direct actions and, when necessary, acts of civil disobedience. We should never weaken or compromise our stand for social justice and the common good.

What I am suggesting is that all of us take some time to examine our own weaknesses, failures, and unintentional (or maybe even intentional) harm we might cause when we pursue justice with the spirit of combat. Do we use violent language? Do we use intimidation tactics? Do we return hate for hate? Will that help us win justice for the poor and vulnerable? Most definitely not. It will just contribute to their oppression.



Kayla is the Relief and Development Coordinator for the Justice and Peace Ministry of the Diocese of Joliet and a community member at Nativity House. She can be reached on Twitter: @KaylaSueJacobs



Trust

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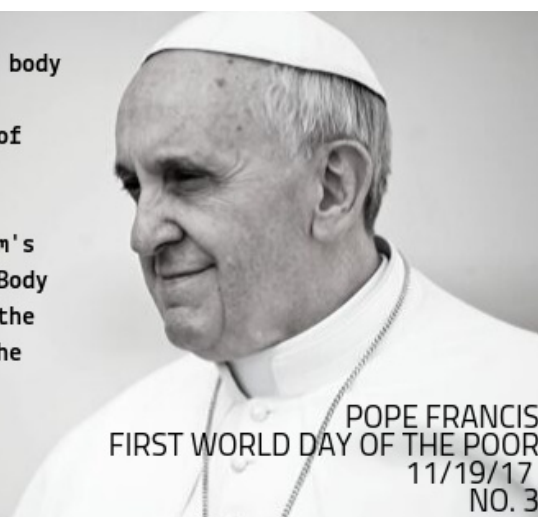
has hurt us, maybe it means reaching out to someone in need, maybe it means sowing the seeds of peace and reconciliation in our own families. Living mercifully is not always easy, but to quote the Divine Mercy Chaplet, "in difficult moments, let us not despair nor become despondent, but with great confidence submit ourselves to God's holy will which is Love and Mercy itself." As we continue to grow in trust and confidence in Jesus, may our hope be renewed each day in

knowing that His love and mercy towards us is never-ending! Let us respond to this great gift of mercy with the gift of our lives, lived in gratitude and praise to God. In the Resurrection of Jesus, we always have a reason to rejoice! Today and everyday, let us open wide the doors to Christ's infinite mercy! St. Faustina, apostle of mercy, pray for us!



Annemarie is a former intern of Nativity House. She is currently the Youth Minister serving St. Petronille Catholic Church in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

If we truly wish to encounter Christ, we have to touch his body in the suffering bodies of the poor, as a response to the sacramental communion bestowed in the Eucharist. The Body of Christ, broken in the sacred liturgy, can be seen through charity and sharing, in the faces and persons of the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters. St. John Chrysostom's admonition remains ever timely: "If you want to honor the Body of Christ, do not scorn it when it is naked; do not honor the Eucharistic Christ with silk vestments, and then leaving the church, neglect the other Christ suffering from cold and nakedness."



POPE FRANCIS
FIRST WORLD DAY OF THE POOR
11/19/17
NO. 3

Houses and Homes

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are able to prepare a good meal of meat, fresh vegetables, soup, and rice for roughly 100 people and our workers. We are able to feed the families that are helping with the build, the children, the workers, and ourselves for what seems like a bargain. To put things in perspective, the average wage for one of our friends in Mangrove Village is \$2 a day. A typical family prepares chicken (the most affordable meat) only once every 2-3 weeks. They purchase the chicken for their family dinner on credit. It takes 2-3 weeks to pay back the loan for dinner. Once, it's paid back, the cycle starts again.

A sure-fire way to break the cycle of poverty is education. Many of the families that we met, children attend school sporadically only to drop out at fourth or fifth grade. Upon learning that there is public school, I questioned, "then what keeps children from going to school?" For most, schools are in walking distance. But in typhoon season, walking is not an option. It is also important to note: typhoon season, thanks to climate change, is not so much a season as all year long. Transportation to a school 2-3 miles away is \$.28. For a family that takes a monthly loan to eat, transportation money is not a necessity but a luxury.

When back on the ground stateside I began to do some digging for world poverty statistics. According to Catholic Relief Services 40% of the world's population live in poverty. Around 6000 children per day die from complications of malnourishment/starvation. With hunger statistics like this it seems

silly to speak of education. If the brain is not nourished, school becomes quite a challenge.

Then I began to wonder, what about poverty in the USA? We in the United States enjoy peak privilege throughout the world, what do our poverty statistics look like? According to povertyusa.org (an affiliate of Catholic Charities) 12.7% of the USA lives at or below the poverty level (an annual income of \$24000 for a family of 4.) 21.7% of the nation's children live at or below the threshold of poverty; that is roughly 1 in 5 children. Each of these statistics does not count those on the edge of "poverty." 20.2% of the nation's households suffer from food insecurity.

As I reflect on my time in the Philippines mission field, I hold these Filipino friends close in prayer. I have begun taking up the practice of prayer accompanied by fasting. The practice of fasting has new meaning these days. The hunger pangs are manageable when I think of the friends I have abroad who struggle with real hunger. The hunger pangs are manageable when I think about the 1 in 5 children in my own country who struggle with real hunger.

We were touched by these new friends. They honored us by sharing their stories; for stories of poverty are not always easy to tell. They stretched us. They opened our hearts to the reality of the hardships life for many in our world. We honor our new friends by sharing their burdens and telling their stories. Our new friends challenged us to see poverty in a new way - a human way.

In a rush this year, I designed the 2019 mission t-shirt "Build a House, Build a Home." Little did I know how deep this theme would run. We went there, clear to the other side of the world, with open hearts. College students had to raise a substantial amount of money for the trip and we all left our families during the Christmas Holidays to be strangers, to serve strangers in a foreign land. Yes, we built houses to better one small village in the Philippines, a

country ravaged by poverty and stark inequality. The strangers that became our friends, they were also building. They built a place, warm and cozy, in each of our hearts. We built the house, they built a home. Look what we did together.



Venus is the Director of Faith Formation at St. Dennis, and the Director of Nativity House. She can be contacted at: venusad@nativity-house.org





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- **Visits and visitors**
- **Prayer and mercy**

Nativity House
17141 W. 143rd St.
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Jesus, I Trust in You

Feast: October 5

by Annemarie Coman

After Easter, probably my favorite feast day is Divine Mercy Sunday. The Church celebrates this feast, instituted by Pope John Paul II, every year on the Sunday following Easter. The story behind how this became a feast of the Church is a fascinating and beautiful one. It all starts with a Polish nun named Sr. Faustina Maria Kowalksa. Right before the start of World War II, this nun began receiving instructions from Jesus to share His mercy with the world. During her lifetime, this happened in a hidden way as she lived out a simple life following the duties of convent life. At the same time, she experienced great graces from God and encountered Christ in both visions and conversations. St. Faustina recorded her conversations with Christ in her Diary, which is published under the title, "Divine Mercy in My Soul." Jesus told her, "You are the secretary of My mercy. I have chosen you for that office in this and the next life." God called St. Faustina to a life of hidden holiness in her convent, but a life that would eventually

spread the message of God's mercy to the whole world. In one beautiful phrase which seems to sum up her whole life, St. Faustina writes, "Only love has meaning, it raises up our smallest actions into infinity."

Today, millions of copies of the Diary of St. Faustina have been sold, and she has helped so many on the path to holiness. In my own life, St. Faustina has inspired me to live with radical trust in Christ, and many times her diary has been a source of comfort and inspiration for me. One of the most striking parts of the story of Divine Mercy is when Christ appears to her with rays of red and white coming from his heart, symbolizing his overflowing love and mercy for souls. He asks her that a painting be made of this image, with the words "Jesus I trust in You" written underneath it. You may have seen this image before as it is now known all over the world as the Divine Mercy Image. Anyone who opens up the Diary of St. Faustina will be amazed at God's merciful love as shown to St. Faustina personally and

her response of trust even when God asked her to do things that seemed impossible. After her death the message of Divine Mercy continued to spread. Pope John Paul II canonized her in 2000 and the prayers that Jesus taught her, The Divine Mercy Chaplet, are now prayed all over the world. Christ himself called for the Feast of Divine Mercy to be instituted, on the Sunday following Easter. He said to St. Faustina, "I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day, the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain the complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day all the divine floodgates through which grace flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet." — Diary 699

With such a gift as this, how can we turn away from this outpouring of grace!

What I have realized is that this story of God's mercy in the life of St. Faustina is part of the greater story of salvation history. Through Christ's passion, death and resurrection, He has revealed his infinite love and mercy for us. Do we trust in this love though? I know



that I often fail. Again God has mercy on us and so through St. Faustina and in our own lives he continues to pour out his love and mercy on us in so many ways. It is up to us to begin to recognize these graces and respond by picking up our crosses daily and follow Him. When we trust in God, amazing things happen! Jesus said to St. Faustina, "Tell souls not to place within their own hearts obstacles to My mercy, which so greatly wants to act within them. My mercy works in all those hearts which open their doors to it."

How is God calling you to open the doors to His mercy? Maybe this means turning back to the gift of the sacrament of Reconciliation, maybe this means forgiving someone who

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