

Adding On A Few Rooms

This past week, I had a remarkable experience visiting a number of migrant workers and their families from Los Angeles to San Francisco. This mission trip was sponsored by *Catholic Extension*, an organization in the American Catholic Church which reaches out to the poorest in the United States. Their ministry extends to all parts of our country and encompasses many cultures, races, languages and even religions.

At St. Teresa we pride ourselves on having a growing mission to the outsider and those who live on the margins. Our mission defines our parish...the mission is slowly transforming our ministries and even our buildings. *We are* the mission.

My experience this past week, meeting many people who are living hidden lives, invisible to much of the mainstream, gave life and meaning to the image Jesus uses in the gospel: he is preparing for each one of us a "dwelling place" in his Father's house, a place of many such dwelling places. This dwelling place begins here and now—today—and begins in our own hearts.

Our own hearts become the foundation, the cornerstone, of this dwelling place, with Christ at the center. Each person we meet is given a dwelling place of memory so that within our own hearts...we have many dwelling places in which resides the memory of the people we have met.

My heart has expanded this



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past week with new dwelling places: Fernanda, Virginia, Fidelia, Raul, Lalo, Catalina, Stefani, Herlinda, Sergio, Sr. Sandra, Sr. Gabi, Cirio, Jose, and many more. The place that Jesus is preparing for me now has grown with these new “human stones” which form a beautiful building of humanity in my own heart.

Jesus, the stone rejected by the builders, is the foundation of this dwelling place. Inside his rejection is the suffering of these human beings, who in their own are also rejected by others who choose to look the other way and pretend that they don't exist.

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me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these...” The work that we do is in opening up our hearts, expanding them so that those hidden human beings may have names and faces in our own hearts. To give the poor a place in our hearts will demand a price: the price of conversion and a change in how we see ourselves and what values we choose to live by.

The works that are even greater than the works of Jesus himself...an amazing statement in and of itself...are works of justice, giving voice to the voiceless, empowering those on the fringes to stand on their own. We do these works of Jesus when we leave our own homes and parishes and go out to the fringes and areas that are deemed undesirable and listen to the stories of the people who live there.

The price we pay for creating a place in our hearts for the poor and suffering is the wound of love, which pierces the heart and compels us to change, to look at life differently.

The people I met this week—those names I mentioned—they gave me more than I could ever give them...they gave me a bigger heart with more dwelling places.