

An Invitation to Walk with Fr. Frank on a Missionary Journey



Young Oaxacan families like this one often live in desperate conditions with multiple families in one dwelling, but a visit from Sister Sandra Ann Silva (center) ensures they feel the Church's presence.

Recently I had the opportunity to learn about the amazing ministry of Sister Sandra Ann Silva, who ministers to Oaxacan migrant workers in California. Sister Sandra's ministry is funded by Catholic Extension donors. Catholic Extension (catholicextension.org) is a wonderful organization based right here in Chicago whose mission is to build and strengthen Catholic faith communities in the poorest areas of the U.S. All donations raised during my Camino will go to support Sr. Sandra's ministry.

Reaching Out to the Poor and Forgotten

Sister Sandra has spent most of her life helping immigrant farm workers in central California.

(please turn over)

I am very much looking forward to my pilgrimage in October to experience the Camino de Santiago. My trip takes place during our parish's 125th anniversary celebration—a fitting time to reflect upon our wonderful parish and the next 125 years. I have decided to dedicate funds raised from my Camino to a special ministry that supports some of the poorest and most marginalized people in our country. I feel fortunate to take this pilgrimage and, in doing so, to support “the least among us.” Let me tell you a bit about these people.



Sister Sandra Ann Silva advocates for the Oaxacan people, who speak their own dialect and often are discriminated against by other immigrants.

To sponsor my pilgrimage by contributing to Sr. Sandra's ministry, go to: www.st-teresa.net
Checks made payable to St. Teresa of Avila Parish. Please notate *Catholic Extension*.

Among the immigrant poor, she discovered the indigenous Oaxacan Mexicans. They were barely surviving, living in squalor in garages and sheds. Up to five families with children live together; whole families often share one bedroom without indoor plumbing. The Oaxacans do not speak English or Spanish (only their native language of Mixteco). They often are discriminated against by other immigrants. Four years ago the Diocese of Monterey asked Catholic Extension to fund Sister Sandra's ministry, ensuring a continued source of hope for the Oaxacan people.

Sister Sandra: a Hero to the Poor

Working out of a parish closet for an office, Sister Sandra brings the light of Christ's love and hope to Oaxacan families. She provides food, clothing, counseling and spiritual guidance. She also advocates on their behalf within the legal, health care and social services arenas. She advocates for teenage girls who often find themselves in arranged marriages, sometimes in exchange for nothing more than a case of beer. She also is working to stop the abuse of Oaxacan infants, who often are left with unlicensed caretakers while their parents labor in the fields.

Sister Sandra builds faith one family at a time. She provides Bible classes and religious education for children, teens, young adults and adults. She trains catechists to help prepare children and adults to receive the sacraments.

She helps the Oaxacans see that—through faith—they are more than their circumstances. She holds sewing classes (truly a women's empowerment group), where she gathers oppressed women and helps them gain confidence and an appreciation of their individual self worth. Because of Sister Sandra's ministry, an often forgotten group of people is being made to feel welcome in the Diocese of Monterey and, more importantly, in the Church.

To see videos and photos from my experience with Sr. Sandra, go to my blog: frfrankscamino.com



During my visit to the cherry orchards I had the opportunity to meet Raul, a migrant farm worker who works six days a week, long hours, and yet is an active Catholic.

"I ask you today to please pray for me and support me in my Camino by giving a donation in any amount which will be designated for Sr. Sandra's very special ministry through Catholic Extension."

— Father Frank



I was especially touched by Fernanda, an 18-month-old girl who may need a heart transplant to survive—birth defects are common in the Oaxacan community.