

South Side Hospitality

by Sr. Bela Mis, C.P.P.S.

As part of my second year of Novitiate, I had the opportunity to learn, meet and share more closely in the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation in Chicago (PBMR). How can I describe my experience during these three months? PBMR is a special and unique place; the first thing that you notice is that every person is welcome! When people come into the center there is always a cup of coffee or tea to offer them. This is a very nice way to welcome each person and make them feel special and honored. Sitting down then at the welcome table, a very pleasant conversation is usually initiated with some of the young people who attend the program or with one of the mothers or some other visitor. This gives a warm feeling and a sense of being at home.

During my three-month summer experience, I had the opportunity to interact with many different people in various activities. One was helping in the garden. Being there I began to realize how the people marvel at seeing the garden with so many fresh vegetables. It was very nice to see happy people leaving the garden with their vegetables and talking about how they would prepare them. The garden and flowers located in the center of the Reconciliation Center offer the neighbors a nice and healing space to meet and contemplate the beauty of God in nature.

I was able to realize that the needs that come each day to PBMR are diverse, and often times difficult to hear. However, what is important is the offering of time to listen, just being present, providing a safe place where stories can be told and youth can share their fears and concerns in circle with others who understand. It is about giving a helping hand, and encouraging our youth to discover their talents—and to dream of living beyond the age of 25. This type of presence may not be noticeable to the naked eye, but so helps our youth feel supported and motivated to continue making their way toward a better future.

As a native Guatemalan, it is very exciting for me to see PBMR inviting the Hispanic families who live in the neighborhood to a closer relationship. Because I speak Spanish I was able to assist with connecting Hispanic families with PBMR. As I became more acquainted with the neighborhood, I could welcome



Sr. Bela Mis and one of the neighborhood children at PBMR

our Hispanic neighbors to the Restorative Justice Café at PBMR. There we had space and time to talk about different topics and the many struggles that they have to face. We gathered and shared stories, food, and laughter, showing solidarity with each other but also celebrating our joys and having such a welcoming place.

The opportunity to share with the mothers that participate in PBMR made me think a lot about God's love. This is because when someone asks how much can a mother love her child, the answer could be that a mother has a heart large enough to love into infinity. The truth is that their love does go beyond to the infinite, because they walk with their children regardless of the circumstances. Some of the families have children incarcerated, murdered, caught up in the streets—and yet they remain steadfast in their love for their children. It is an example of unconditional love; the same love God has for all of us!

This has been an experience of Faith and Action for me, because the Amen that I profess in the Eucharist and that I will profess on December 9th

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when I make my first vows as a Sister of the Precious Blood, invites me to meet my brothers and sisters who suffer in different ways in our society with that same unconditional love. I feel my main call is to love, to serve, and to walk with the suffering even when it is not easy. It is Christ who unites us through his Precious Blood and invites us to be Eucharist, to be givers of life in our broken world, to bring hope, healing and hospitality, especially to those who feel “far off.” ✠