



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Care for the homeless
Mexico

Sunday 1st of Advent

December 1st

" Defend the lowly and fatherless; render justice to the afflicted and needy"
(Psalm 82, 3)

Large cities, such as Mexico City, offer great opportunities for work, production and economic growth, but they are also part of a great challenge. Around the corner from the street there can be poverty, marginalization, hunger, destitution...

Near the community of Augustinian Recollect Missionary (MAR) Sisters - in Colonia Santa María Insurgentes - there is an area for informal settlers, under the bridge of Nonoalco. This place is better known as the 'Vías', where many families live in makeshift houses, mostly people who have moved from their villages (some indigenous) in search of better life opportunities.

Since 2008, the Augustinian Recollect Missionaries (MAR) accompany these people with education, food, health and social assistance, as well as psychological help. For this, two days a week the young sisters who are in formation, together with the sister formator of this stage, go to the areas.

On Tuesdays, the families are visited and prayed with; while every Saturday catechesis and academic help are given. Also those who have problems related to malnutrition, as well the inconvenient situations with alcoholics and drug addicts.

Some families have become aware of their dignity as children of God who live in a society and want to be part of it. The 'Vías' project, which focuses mainly on education and health, offers scholarships to young people so that they can continue their studies and have hope for their future.

Likewise, the awareness of taking care of their health has grown, contributing to many people looking for alternatives to be able to have drinking water and drainage.

Reflection

Migrations are often such a difficult and complicated reality that can bring problems for the community where they are, however, what should be stressed is that the first affected are those who have been forced to migrate, most do not want to be there, have come looking for a better life than they had in the place from which they fled, remember that the same Jesus came from a family that had to flee to Egypt when he was only a baby, the holy family experienced migration and displacement, in essence in the same situation with our brothers and sisters.

Education for children at risk of exclusion



Five countries

4

Monday 1st of Advent

December 2nd

“Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it.” (Proverbs 22, 6)

Guaranteeing a quality education for children and young people, especially for the most disadvantaged, is one of the priorities of the Augustinian Recollect Solidarity Network (ARCORES), the Order's international NGO. To achieve this, ARCORES maintains a close relationship with the International Augustinian Recollect Educational Network EDUCAR in various fields.

With this objective, a project has been carried out to support the education of children at serious risk of social exclusion, which provides economic aid to poor and disadvantaged families. The plan is made possible, thanks to the financing of the Province of Our Lady of Candelaria and the from the financial assistance of ARCORES Spain. Thanks to this project, 140 children are enrolled in compulsory or early childhood education in five countries.

Thirty (30) children from Totonicapán (Guatemala); ninety (90) from Tamare, Palmira, Maracaibo and Caracas in Venezuela; twenty (20) children in Quito (Ecuador); and four (4) young people from Barranquilla (Colombia) are beneficiaries. The project also financed the salary of fourteen (14) teachers and the training of five (5) teachers in rural schools in Makeni, Sierra Leone.

This project constitutes the first step of the future "Education Fund" that ARCORES wants to create and that would help in sustainably financially supporting the education of more children scholars in the future.

Reflection

It is necessary that in the world we have the intellectual tools to know how to develop in the social environment that surrounds us, that we know how to respond to the reality that is placed in front of us to defend ourselves from marginalization and create new spaces of sustainable co-existence. Education guarantees that people can live their present and future better, while building something imperishable and indelible in each of those who are beneficiaries of the scholarship program, is something that stays with you and that nobody can take away. Let us ask the Lord that education in people begins from childhood when the mind is more receptive, and that every day more individuals are ready to teach the young people.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

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Human development of communities

Brazil

10

Tuesday 1st of Advent

December 3rd

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." (Mt 5:6)

The violation of the fundamental rights of the inhabitants of the rural, riverside and indigenous communities of the municipality of Tapauá has led the Prelature of Labrea - where these communities are located - to set in motion an integral human development project. Ninety per cent (90%) of riverside dwellers do not own the land on which they live and work. All its inhabitants are breaking the law and therefore cannot benefit from social policies. Likewise, there are still lands, rubber plantations, lakes and chestnut groves belonging to farmers who exploit the riverside dwellers and the indigenous people who work them.

In this area, ARCORES Spain has incorporated a human development plan for the indigenous communities of Tapauá that has benefited 7,240 people. In order to contribute to the human and social development of the indigenous communities of this region of Labrea, training, information and skills development of the leaders of the poorest communities, as well as universal human rights program have been implemented. This has been done through intensive workshops and practical actions. With this project, leaders and families have been educated in the defense of their values and their rights.

In this way, they have the capacity to detect when their dignity is threatened and what rights they are entitled to. In order to carry out this work, it has been necessary to invest in a boat that has allowed them to make support trips to the riparian communities.

Reflection

Sister Cleusa committed herself, with all its consequences, to the defense of the indigenous people of the region of Labrea, visited them, oriented them, evangelized with respect for their culture, defended them and accompanied them when their rights were violated by the powerful. This missionary commitment awakened hostile attitudes towards her. She received death threats, until April 28, 1985, when the waters of the Pacía River, a few kilometers from Labrea, and the nearby jungle, became red with the spilled blood and the sacrificed love of Sister Cleusa, for defending her brothers. The then Superior General of the Congregation of the Augustinian Missionary Sisters summarized this fact: "She loved the life of her brothers more than her own and that is why they killed her. They killed her, yes, but they did not take her life, because she had already given it so that Christ would reign".

Lord, in the image of Sister Cleusa and so many other martyrs and missionaries who have worked for peace and human dignity. Let us also know how to be courageous Christians, ready to fight for justice, to build a more fraternal world.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Food Bank Management

Colombia

12

Wednesday 1st of Advent

4th December

"What good is it, my Brothers and Sisters, if anyone says, 'I have faith,' if he has no works? Can faith save him? Faith, if it has no works, is really dead." (James 2:14-17)

More than 305,000 people are served by the Bogotá Food Bank, an independent entity that distributes more than six million kilos of food. The important work of this institution continues to feed the hungry, thanks to the voluntary action of thousands of people who collect, order and distribute food, as well as accompany the beneficiaries of this project.

In its work for human and social development, the Universidad Agustiniana de Bogotá began to collaborate with the Food Bank to strengthen and professionalize its work. The students and teachers of *Uniagustiniana* provide professional advice to the organization in its strategic, tactical and operational areas.

The university of the Augustinian Recollects studies the structure and way of working of the Food Bank and promotes all its fields of action. This institutional collaboration extends from corporate relations to the process of beneficiaries and donors.

This social action of the *Uniagustiniana* creates a shared process of social assistance. That is to say, in the first place, it helps the institution to improve its performance, in a professional, technical and competent manner. At the same time, it contributes to the integral formation of the students, awakening in them social sensitivity and forming an awareness for the most needy and the development of society.

Reflection

Lord, we thank you for all those who are ready to help others. We ask you to accompany us, and to guide us, to always find your loving presence and your comfort in every moment of our lives. In moments of injustice and helplessness do not lower your arms, knowing that you are watching over our lives. Encourage our hearts, Lord, and awaken social sensitivity in all of us and in the whole world.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Youth Mission: to help and accompany

Argentina

4

Thursday 1st of Advent - Collection Day

5th December

"Because I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was an immigrant and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to see me. (Mt 25, 35-36)

The population of Barrio Quinto Cuartel, in Victoria (Entre Ríos) live in precarious conditions. Among the people who live in this part of eastern Argentina, conflict and drugs proliferate, but above all poverty.

The young people of the Recollect Augustinian Youth (RAY/JAR) from Argentina go there every year to carry out the Youth Mission. During the first days of January, about a hundred young people travel from different parts of the country, accompanied by the Augustinian Recollect religious, to help and accompany the population. In this way, the members of the RAY/JAR have the opportunity to be missionaries in their environment.

Every morning, the volunteers visit the houses of the Barrio and accompany the families. Among other things, they talk with the parents and play with the children. The day usually ends with the celebration of the Eucharist shared with the people of the neighborhood.

In 2019, the missionaries also visited the Victoria prison, the hospital and different residences for the elderly in Victoria on three occasions. Different works were also carried out to improve the neighborhood. The youth repaired the soccer field in the dining room Los Costeritos, where many children from the neighborhoods are fed, and made a mural to improve the chapel of the Fifth Barracks.

Petition

Lord send workers to take care of your little ones and give your Church the capacity to perceive you in the most needy, give us the strength and the illusion for the mission.



Artistic training for young people

Brazil

8

Friday 1st of Advent
6th December

Ex: 3, 1-2 "Moses shepherded the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led the flock through the wilderness to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame among the bushes.

The craft project 'Rescuing Dreams in Portel' provides opportunities for the youth of this Marajó locality, especially those in an area of social vulnerability. The Augustinian Recollects carry out this work that directly attends to 120 young people and indirectly to more than 250.

The project consists in the practical formation of the young people in techniques of craftsmanship and artistic painting. The professional formation is completed with the integral formation that includes: activities of school reinforcement and conferences on personal motivation, self-esteem, interpersonal relations and religiosity.

The objective of the project is to help adolescents and young people to achieve their insertion in the labour market, enabling them to achieve financial autonomy. In the short term, the project enables young people to occupy idle time with practical teaching in the artistic field, according to their own motivation. Parallel to this, through conferences with the participation of the families, inner reflection is promoted and the strengthening of family ties.

The project will continue in the following courses with the expansion and updating of the acquired techniques, and the introduction of other new techniques.

Reflection

Work dignifies the person, gives him or her an occupation, a sense of belonging, usefulness and participation. Also as believers, we can sanctify our work and as well as many saints and biblical characters who have found God in the midst of their daily work.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

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Towards ecological conversion
22 countries
12

Saturday 1st of Advent
December 7th

Ps 19:2-5 "The heavens declare the glory of God, the work of his hands proclaims the firmament; day by day he communicates the message, and night by night he transmits the news.

Taking care of the environment is an obligation for the Christian. In 2015, Pope Francis published the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, in which he highlighted the ecological damage to nature and, as a consequence, to people with fewer resources who are forced to live in rural environments. The Holy Father also called in his document for integral ecology (not only actions but intentions) to be a way of responding to the social crisis.

For this reason, the Heart Solidarity Campaign - which is celebrated annually by the Augustinian Recollect Family animated by ARCORES - has as its theme in 2019 the care of the environment. With the motto 'Change your life, not your planet', the International Augustinian Recollect Solidarity Network invites an ecological conversion of the person, within its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Concretely, ARCORES proposes for this Day that each person experience a collective encounter with Jesus in diverse social action, promote community action in the sphere of the Augustinian Recollect family, and donate resources to take care of the common house, in coherence with the Gospel.

Likewise, in the formative materials of the Heart Solidarity Campaign, ARCORES proposes a series of actions that can be carried out in daily life, at an individual or community level, for ecological conversion.

The ecological theme for 2019 is encompassed within the context of the Amazon Synod that Pope Francis convened for October of this year. The Amazon region suffers in a special way from the consequences of the ecological crisis.

Reflection

God's love is so great that not only is man to be praised, but the entire creation, which thanks to it we know the beauty, majesty and love of our Creator, even sending his Son to show us his closeness. But our sinfulness has made us forget the harmony between creation and man, that is to say, we were not made to destroy but to take care of, protect and make good use of our environment.

Let us pray to God, for the fruits of our efforts to change our way of thinking about the environment, to return to praising God harmoniously in all creation, which is where he manifests his presence; and also for the fruits of this year's day of heart solidarity 2019 "Change your life, not your planet".



Ecology at school

Brazil

4

Second Sunday of Advent - Immaculate Conception

December 8th

Acts 8:30-31 Philip ran to him and heard the prophet Isaiah read, and said to him, "Do you understand what you are reading? He answered, "How can I understand it if no one is my guide?" And he begged Philip to go up and sit with him.

In 1956, under the name 'Educandário Nossa Senhora da Conceição', the Augustinian Recollect Missionary Sisters began their educational work in Vitória (Brazil). More than 50 years later, the Centro Educacional Agostiniano continues this work. Today, it serves more than 375 students from middle and lower class families.

With the goal of educating all young people, the school has scholarships for students who cannot afford to pay for school and want a quality study in a Catholic school. This task cannot be entrusted to the government of the region, since at the moment it is not guaranteeing the financing of the schools. Also, six other young people can study with scholarships thanks to the contribution of several families of the center, who also participate by collaborating with food, transportation, school supplies and uniforms, and in this way do not miss the opportunity to receive education.

Since 2011, the Agostinian Center added one more goal in its educational plan: ecology. In all this time, the school has worked to defend the environment. In the first year of this project, an alternative medicine treatment was started, helping students, teachers, employees and families, and favoring nature.

In 2013, six tanks were installed to collect rainwater and air-conditioning devices that serve to clean the facilities of the center and also to save water. A recycling and waste separation plan has also been implemented in collaboration with the Vitória City Council.

Reflection

Man, because he is the image and likeness of God, is a being in relationship and who desires to know and to know; besides wanting that which he knows to spread it, the work of education is a point for it.

Lord, thank you for making us in your image and likeness, thank you for making you beings who relate to one another, may your name be praised and glorified for this great gift you have given us.

We ask that for those who help more people have this knowledge and thirst to love you, they can continue working for more children and people who need it.

Virgin Mother accompanies and guides all those who are in this work and encourage with your love of mother to all those who receive this benefit to have more hope to learn.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

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For the respect of human rights

Philippines

16

Monday 2nd of Advent
December 9th

Proverbs 31, 8-9 "Open your mouth for the dumb, for the rights of all the wretched. Open your mouth, judge justly, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.

For several months now, the forces of authority of the Philippines, by order of the Government of the country, have been waging the 'war on drugs'. Indiscriminately, drug addicts or drug-related persons are killed in the streets with shots fired by agents. More than 5,000 people have died in this context.

Faced with this, ARCORES Philippines, launched a courageous human rights initiative in response to the 'war on drugs'. The International Solidarity Network stands with this initiative clearly on the side of people who suffer the scourge of marginalization, poverty and exclusion, defending their rights and offering resources to overcome this situation.

ARCORES is firmly determined to eradicate drugs from Philippine society, always respecting human rights. For this reason, it has raised its voice against the practices, outside the law and fundamental rights, of the Government. The denunciation, argued through studies and various articles, is accompanied by public mobilization, through the "Pilgrimage for Justice," "Trees for Life and Justice" and other training seminars.

The comprehensive response of ARCORES Philippines is complemented by direct attention to victims. A fund has been created to assist murdered victims, a database of victims of these practices and a project to support the rehabilitation of drug addicts.

In this way, it is understood that the best way to fight against drug addiction and drug trafficking is to offer solutions for the rehabilitation of people and, in the event that they have committed crimes, they have the right to a defence and a fair trial.

Reflection

Eternal and merciful God, you have sent your only-begotten son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to bring freedom to each of his children, oppressed by social injustices, give us a pure heart, incapable of harming, so that together with your unconditional love, we may recognize that we are all brothers, his children, and fight together for a more just and fraternal world. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, and is God, for ever and ever. Amen.



Comprehensive help for the elderly

Venezuela

3

Tuesday 2nd of Advent
December 10th

1 Peter 5, 5 "Likewise, the younger ones, be subject to the older ones; and all of you, be clothed with humility in your dealings with one another, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

In La Victoria (Aragua State, Venezuela), the Augustinian Recollect Sisters of the Heart of Jesus count on the elderly Monsignor López Aveledo, who is part of the "United with Venezuela" program of ARCORES Venezuela.

The nursing home offers special care to the 38 elderly women who live in the center, providing them with a dignified and pleasant home in which they feel loved, valued and with the capacity to discover reasons to live and share in fraternity.

With the contributions of the "United with Venezuela" program, the 18 workers who make up the old people's payroll are paid in order to motivate them to work in favor of the elderly patient who is in a state of risk or abandonment.

Integral attention to the elderly in a situation of helplessness is one of the priorities of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters of the Heart of Jesus, who have a total of three homes for the elderly in the country.

Prayer

Eternal and merciful God, instill in the heart of each of your children, charity for each of the elderly, who today suffer the pain of abandonment by the society of exclusion, so that we know how to give them due respect and offer them a home that fills their hearts with hope, peace, joy, faith and love and can live their old age with the dignity of God's children. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, and is God, for ever and ever. Amen



Education for children at risk of exclusion

Brazil

4

Wednesday 2nd of Advent
December 11th

"It is true that one must be detached from everything and be alone from God, in order to live the life of a missionary" Saint Ezekiel Moreno.

Solidarity is a human and Christian value that must be taught from childhood. The Christmas Holidays are special for first-year elementary students at Santo Agostinho School, in Leblon (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). Each year, the children celebrate a unique feast in favor of the children of the Creche Santa Rita. This kindergarten serves 97 students from the favela of Vidigal, belonging to the parish of St. Monica of the Augustinian Recollects in Leblon.

This educational work is one of the most important social actions of the Augustinian Recollect family in Rio de Janeiro. It maintains the physical structures and salaries of 13 teachers and eight civil servants, who attend to about 100 children from the favela, children of families without resources, who remain in school until they are six years old.

For the 96 students of the Creche Santa Rita, Christmas brings with it the surprise of the gifts voluntarily donated by the *pequeños* of the Centro San Agostinho. In addition, the children from both schools share the evening of the feast together, after dancing and representing the birth of Jesus, among other things.

It is a way of inculcating, from a very young age, social awareness and concern for those who are discarded from society and who, as in this case, live close to each other.

Reflection

The Augustinian pedagogy must aim at the humanization of the person, that is to say "to be a worthy man among men"; in spite of the great difficulties of today's world, one is invited not to yield to resignation, must be a great Passion of the "I" for the "you" which is not resolved in didactics but in accompaniment.



Housing for needy families

Colombia

11

Thursday 2nd of Advent

December 12th

"What bitterness does the soul feel when the soul of souls is missing in the villages" Bta. María de San José.

Near the municipality of Ráquira (Boyacá department) is the first convent of Augustinian Recollects in America, founded more than four centuries ago. This department of Colombia is recognized as the capital of the crafts of the country, although its population needs help in its infrastructures.

Given the historical importance for the Order of Augustinian Recollects, the program of Architecture of the Augustinian University of Bogotá decided to launch the project 'Patria de Barro', a plan to three years of basic habitability and infrastructure, to provide the population with housing and public spaces developed. To this end, the architecture students developed a model of adaptable housing, modular and easy to build for families who needed to improve their living conditions.

In this way, from 2014 to 2017, two families with four and five members benefited directly, to which their productive and housing spaces were adapted. Also, the community of the Rural School Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria was helped with the construction of a wooden intermunicipal bus stop, which allowed a better connection between the families and the educational center.

The Uniagustiniana project considerably improved the living conditions of many people in Ráquira with the implementation of basic habitability infrastructures.

Reflection

To be Augustinian Recollects is synonymous with a community of people who believe and commit themselves to live in the world of charity, it is a community that works in love and is carried out in spite of the events of life, that through them as a way one reaches the heart inside with the help of the Inner Master, translated into giving oneself, only with availability towards Him.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

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Food for needy families

Cuba

2

Friday 2nd of Advent
13th December

Lk 9:13 "Give them something to eat"

For years, in the Parroquia Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria, in the city of Morón, Diocese of Ciego de Ávila (Cuba) they have a feeding program that every Sunday provides a lunch for people who do not have resources - mostly elderly - and that also provides food to families with sick people and children. The food support is complemented with visits to the families *beneficiaries*, thus offering them an integral assistance.

The feeding program 'social canteen', is made effective by the help of the group FRAMAR - Fraternity of Augustinian Recollect Missionaries - which coordinates the activity, participates in the distribution of food and organizes the groups of volunteers from the parish who cook, attend to the dining room and accompany the families. The Augustinian Recollect Missionary Sisters, who have lived and worked in Morón for 27 years, animate and give ongoing formation to the FRAMAR group. In addition, they also support the program by contributing food and money (for the purchase of food that is needed). With the collection, they can purchase food enough to give 50 rations weekly.

The MAR and FRAMAR who run the social canteen with the support of the new parish priest want to increase the number of people *beneficiaries* of this food programs and infuse integral socio-family accompaniment, because the need detected, far exceeds the 50 people currently served. Because of the current vitality of the FRAMAR group and the parish community, the feeding program is effective.

Reflection

With these words Jesus exhorts his disciples who wanted to ignore the crowd that had accompanied them and listened to the "master" for several hours. We Christians are also disciples of God and in the same way as they are, he invites us not to turn our gaze away from the poor, the needy, the forgotten of the world.



Reconstruction after natural disaster

Philippines

4

Saturday 2nd of Advent
December 14th

"Don't be wise to yourselves. Receive the Spirit. In you there must be a source, never a deposit, from which something can be given, not where it accumulates." (St. Augustine, S 101,6).

In 2013, the super typhoon Haiyan devastated the islands in the Visayas region in the Philippines. The natural phenomenon badly affected the islands of Leyte and Samar. The super typhoon damaged the building of Holy Trinity College, the school of the Augustinian Recollects Sisters in Alang-alang, Leyte. In addition, it caused extensive damage to the school facilities.

In the midst of this situation, the ground floor of the school was the only evacuation centre for those affected in the Alang-alang town. However, when the second typhoon - called Hagupit - arrived, there was not room for everyone.

Through a private loan, part of the school has been rebuilt, although Holy Trinity College is also asking the help of ARCORES, as it is a missionary school subsidized by other communities for its operation. Currently, the school in Alang-alang needs the construction of eight new classrooms to expand its educational services in response to the demands of the population.

The Augustinian Recollects Sisters have recovered from the calamities, but it still aims to continue with its mission: by accommodating students, especially the poor; providing them educational scholarship.

Reflection

Teach us, Lord, to give everything to the point of giving the heart itself. We ask You to help with Your infinite grace all those who work to protect and educate the population of Leyte; be their consolation in moments of difficulty and their joy in moments of triumph. And to us, Lord, allow us to help, according to the measures of our strength, our brothers who need us so much. Amen.



Aid for access to drinking water

Peru

6

Sunday 3rd of Advent

15th December

Is 12:3 "Ye shall draw water with joy from the fountains of salvation.

In Peru there are enormous differences in living conditions between regions. This is the situation experienced by the inhabitants of Conchán, and more specifically by the communities of Surumayo Alto and Surumayo Bajo, in Chota. Inequalities take the form, among other things, poor access to drinking water, which is a source of infection and disease.

With the aim of promoting the human right to water for all families in the communities of Surumayo, ARCORES has launched and supported in 2018 (thanks to funding from the Government of La Rioja and ARCORES' own funds) the project to build two water systems and thus prevent the spread of contagious diseases. The two systems connect each home from their tanks, each having a chlorination system.

In addition to the construction, the project also included activities related to the training of both the rights holders of this system and the people who will use the systems. The aim is to achieve a clear awareness of the importance of drinking water in people's lives.

Reflection

Water is an essential element throughout the Bible. It is present from creation, through baptism, to the emanation of the side of Christ death on the cross. Jesus himself considers himself the giver of the water of life. This significant presence in the scriptures speaks to us of an essential element for human life; indispensable for health and dignity. That no person lacks is also a Christian task.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Monday 3rd of Advent

16th December

"He who loves education loves knowledge" Prov 12,1

ARCORES and the Augustinian Recollects agreed in 2017 that it was necessary to reinforce their social and educational commitments in Kamabai (Bombali district, Sierra Leone), after several years of continuous use of the educational infrastructures built and managed by the Augustinian Recollect Family.

Until 2013, the first "St. Augustine" nursery school had been established in the region and it had been equipped with classrooms with teachers trained in primary education. However, the students could not continue their education in Kamabai. In 2017, ARCORES decided to build a school so that the young people of Kamabai can continue the second phase of the educational process - called in the country: Senior Secondary.

The Our Lady of Sierra Leone Education Centre - which welcomes students between the ages of 15 and 18 and prepares them in the phase prior to higher education - already has facilities, staff and a well-established educational experience to enable more young people from this rural region of Sierra Leone to have access to education, without the extra costs of having to travel to the regional capital, Makeni, or the country's own capital, Freetown.

The Augustinian Recollects continue to rely on education as the best means for the development of Sierra Leonean society. The Church is responsible for 70% of education in the country, even though only 5% of the population is Catholic. The two Augustinian Recollect mission centres in northern Sierra Leone (Kamabai and Kamalo) manages about 80 schools.

Reflection

Lord, we want all men to know you and be able to love you, so we spend and wear out teaching your name without rest. We ask you today for all those young people who are being trained in our schools in Sierra Leone, give them wisdom and strength to face the studies; and teachers, infuse them with your wisdom so that everything they teach is in accordance with your will. Amen.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Pastoral work with the peoples of the Amazon

Brazil

1

Tuesday 3rd of Advent

17th December

"The more man participates in the knowledge and love of God, the more he tends to spread this knowledge and love among his fellow men" (OAR Const. 23).

Since 1988, the Augustinian Recollect Missionary Sisters, together with the Augustinian Recollect religious, have been carrying out the so-called 'Pastoral das Curvas' project in the Amazon River. The objective of this social action is to provide an integral accompaniment to the riverside communities. By means of boats, the two religious and the Augustinian Recollect who composed the team have access to the different communities that live by the river, and provide them with social and spiritual formation.

Specifically, the communities know more about respect for nature - especially important, given that they live in the Amazon region - care for the environment or basic rights related to health, education or work, as well as the rights of indigenous peoples.

There are two visits to the communities each year. The first one takes place at the beginning of the year. The team of religious visits the families of the riparian communities in their homes and guides them in some of the aspects mentioned above. Afterwards, with the whole community, they lead several talks on Christian formation and conclude with the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments.

This same procedure is repeated in the visit they make in October, in which they continue with formation in faith and social rights. In this way, each year different themes are dealt with and progress is made in the formative process.

Reflection

Only love can impel hearts to live from generosity and gratitude. Only love, with the impetus of its strength, can lead man to seek the same charity without rest. So what are we going to do if not to love? Lead us, Lord, through the rivers of your love, where only the heart can find you, rest and love.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Care for the homeless

Costa Rica

3

Wednesday 3rd of Advent

December 18th

"Social charity makes us love the common good and leads us to effectively seek the good of all people, considered not only individually, but also in the social dimension that unites them. (Social Doctrine of the Church, 207)

The projects "Calle Esperanza" (Street Hope) and "Salud Esperanza" (Health Hope) are two of the social action programs of ARCORES Costa Rica, created in May 2019. The two apostolates, which have the hope of the most needy as their main goal, are aimed at addressing the needs related to hunger and health.

The first of them, Calle Esperanza, has as beneficiaries the so-called "street dwellers". The project aims to reintegrate homeless people into economic, social, work and family life in Costa Rica. The program provides food donations and help in different areas, although, above all, the volunteers of ARCORES Costa Rica help the beneficiaries by listening to them and accompanying them. The project has been carried out since last year, thanks to the members of CEAR Costa Rica, and is carried out approximately once a month.

The Salud Esperanza project focuses on the indigenous communities of Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí Limón. Following the line of the ODS objectives, ARCORES Costa Rica intends to create an ambulatory clinic that reaches the area of attention and provides free medical services to the most needy with a team of professional volunteers. The clinic would have four areas: general medicine, pediatrics, dermatology and gynecology. Salud y Esperanza has not yet started. The International Solidarity Network is working to obtain sufficient funding to make it a reality.

Reflection

Lord, we want to be aware that, in the midst of so many needs, we may be able to offer our contribution to the building of a more just society, where the fallen can be lifted up, where the weak can be supported, where we can accompany those who are alone. Give us a generous heart to unite ourselves in this project, and thus promote a better quality of life to all our brothers and sisters who are waiting for our response.



Aid for education and employment development

Philippines

8

Thursday 3rd of Advent

19th December

"The first shall be last, and the last first: for many are called, but few are chosen" (Mt 20:16).

The University of Negros Occidental - Recoletos decided several years ago to beautify its environment, which includes the facade, doors and access roads. It was then suggested to demolish the kiosks and mobile shops of street vendors in poor condition, which meant having to displace the vendors, affecting their livelihoods and their families. The best alternative is to help them become part of the street beautification. Thus, the UNO-R Community Development Office (UCDO) created the "kariton rekoleta". *Kariton* is the Filipino word for cart, a functional cart used primarily by Filipinos for livelihoods, transportation and other lifting needs.

This program began with five beneficiaries, residents of Bacolod, although it has progressed to assist four additional beneficiaries; and has been replicated by other non-governmental organizations in other towns and cities on the island.

The "kariton rekoleta" has three components in its program: Education (conferences and seminars on improving livelihoods are held twice a month); Physical "kariton rekoleta" (provides each provider with their own "kariton"); and financial capitalization (the university provides them with capital that allows their small business to grow and prosper).

Reflection

The text we have used refers to an owner of the vineyard who at all times calls workers for his field. That owner is the Lord who constantly seeks men to work in the building of the Kingdom of Heaven in different ways, includes the most forgotten and poor, those who are tired and overwhelmed; and with all is good, because the fruit of work is the joy of Salvation, of being in his presence. We place in the hands of the owner of the vineyard this project of employment, so that it may serve to build community and that through it we may follow in fidelity to the owner of the vineyard, God and Father of mercy.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Coffee for the families of the sick

Mexico

3

Friday 3rd of Advent
December 20th

This program is one of the services offered by the Centro de Acompañamiento Recuperación y Desarrollo Integral (CARDI). It consists of the delivery of free coffee and bread to hospitals near CARDI. The beneficiaries also receive accompaniment and listening.

United by a Bread, it is carried out in the General Hospital of Mexico and in the Children's Hospital Federico Gómez.

At the Federico Gomez Children's Hospital, bread and coffee are delivered in the mornings, three days a week in the Solarium of the hospital to mothers and fathers whose children are hospitalized and to those who go for outpatient consultations.

In the Emergencies of the General Hospital of Mexico, bread and coffee are delivered Monday through Friday nights and Saturday mornings in the emergency room and in the esplanade of the Hospital.

This service is provided entirely by CARDI volunteers, who have received a specific training officially recognized by La Salle Pachuca University.

The volunteers prepare the coffee and the bread every day, put it in carts and take it to the hospital where they organize the free delivery and share this moment with the relatives of the sick, offering their listening, accompaniment and orientation on the concrete situations of each family and the services that CARDI offers them.

Reflection

We thank you, Lord, for your goodness towards us, because you know our needs.
and you don't close your eyes to our difficulties.

Continue to nourish us with your Spirit and take care of so many people who need your help.
You who are the bread of life.

Send us your servants, ready to serve your people from their specific vocations,
that they may be your presence in the midst of your people.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Food for poor families

Argentina

2

Saturday 3rd of Advent

December 21st

Together with the parish and the school Nuestra Señora de Luján, the Augustinian Recollects have been carrying out since 1992 in Rosario (Argentina) a program of social attention in the social dining room Nuestra Señora de la Consolación. The people who come to this home receive social assistance and food.

In the kitchen of Nuestra Señora de la Consolación, food is prepared so that people with few resources can eat with their families. Every day 500 food rations are made. Breakfast and snacks are also prepared for children in situations of malnutrition and economic deprivation. Every day, 400 breakfasts and snacks are served in the dining area for minors.

The canteen serves more than 162,000 people annually and is supported by the work of only ten volunteers. During 27 years of history, it has provided food to children and adults in situations of indigence; it has encouraged local volunteering by encouraging the commitment of neighbors in the uninterrupted support of the dining room; it has channeled aid from *Cáritas Nacional*; some companies have sporadically collaborated; and it has fostered the collaboration of individuals and church groups.

Reflection

As an Order of Augustinian Recollects, we also feel that we are a church in solidarity, which in the spirit of Our Father St. Augustine seeks to embrace society that is excluded and so in need of help. We are, by the law of Christ, responsible for the other, and this calls us to commitment, to the "love that makes all fatigue soft" (St. Augustine, Confessions). From our small acts of love, we will be able to renew the world and inundate it with the love of God..



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcorés

Spiritual care and accompaniment

Peru

1

Fourth Sunday in Advent
December 22nd

I don't want that I go away in another thing the hours that leave me free the necessities of the refecton of the body, of the attention of the soul and of the services that we owe to the men, and those that we don't owe, and, nevertheless, we give them (Confessions 11,2)

At the beginning of 1994, the Augustinian Recollect Missionary Sisters began an exciting and hard mission in Cochabamba, Chota. Together with the parish of San Bartolomé, the nuns began to accompany the peasant communities of the district of Cochabamba, many of them without resources or basic education. At present there are three nuns who carry out this project.

The work consists of spiritual attention and accompaniment to the population of extreme poverty, mostly peasants. The nuns take care of the parish in all its activities (catechesis, visits to the sick, visits to homes, family assemblies...). In addition, they listen to and guide the people who come to the parish.

In addition, the missionaries distribute food for the most needy, which is obtained thanks to the solidarity of the peasants. They also carry out activities such as missionary childhood, youth groups and family catechesis.

The Recollect nuns also help in the patronal celebrations, in which the faith is strengthened, the unity of the Christian community and the cultural values.

Over the course of 25 years, the population has changed considerably. At present, the sisters work with the community on issues such as ecology, respect, hygiene and health.

Prayer

Lord, our God, we are poor and helpless, but you are generous to all those who turn to you and take care of us. Protect our lips, those of the body and those of the mind, from all recklessness and lies.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Soccer for children with few resources

Philippines

16

Monday 4th of Advent
December 23rd

Kamagayan is part of the social outreach initiative of the "Pundok Kadasig" program of the Department of Journalism and Communications of the University of San Jose - Recoletos - which is part of ARCORES Philippines.

The Kamagayan Football Club's solidarity project began in 2016 by a university communications student as an alternative sports program for children in Barangay Kamagayan, located in the heart of the city of Cebu. Most of the children are abandoned, and some belong to dysfunctional or poor families.

Over the years, the club has also been transformed into an educational centre, helping the children in their education to advance correctly in the formative process. The football club has also participated in many football leagues in the province and has become a winning team.

By making a social impact on the lives of the members of the football team, it also transformed the Kamagayan community as a place of hope. The project won the 2018 John Paul II Award from the Catholic Media Association of the Philippines.

Reflection

Lord, protect our children from all evil and from all those who try to destroy their lives, taking away their innocence, purity, their dreams, joys and hopes and help us to feel responsible for them without discouraging and without giving up our mission and that we can imitate the little ones in their simplicity, trust, spontaneity and sincerity.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Accompaniment to women without resources

Brazil

1

Tuesday 4th of Advent

December 24th

"Each one of you waits to receive Christ seated in heaven; see Him lying in a gate; see Him starving, cold; see Him poor, a pilgrim." St. Augustine (Sermon 25, 8, 33)

Aware of the harsh reality suffered by their faithful, in 2012 the Augustinian Recollect religious began their social work in the parish of St. Augustine, in the neighborhood of Novo Leblon, in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). Since then, the parish attends to women without resources with food, clothing, personal hygiene and accompaniment.

Each woman who needs it receives a package with basic food and clothing. Likewise, in the same parish they can eat or have a shower to wash and dress themselves. This work is assisted thanks to the work of twelve people, ten of them on a voluntary basis.

Each year, the parish helps more than 400 families. Thanks to this work, poverty does less damage to the vulnerable population of Rio de Janeiro.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, grant us a sensitive heart to be able to recognize You in those people of our society who today suffer hunger, cold, discrimination and rejection because of their social condition. You, Lord, who poured and continue to pour out the abundance of your love and mercy on your beloved children, the poor, we pray that you continue to infuse in the hearts of many that same love so that we may not be indifferent to social injustices and may announce your message of salvation to the most needy.



Access to safe drinking water

Kenya

6

Wednesday - Birth of the Lord
25th December

If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, "Give me a drink," you would ask him, and he would give you living water. (Jn 4, 9)

Since her arrival in Wote in 2008, water has been one of the most important challenges for the contemplative Augustinian Recollect nuns of the monastery in this Kenyan locality. The survival of the community was linked to the existence of water, since in addition to human consumption and cleanliness, it would allow for the obtaining of vegetable food and the raising of small livestock.

Almost a decade later, after numerous surveys, the community of nuns found a well. Since then, water has been distributed to 25 families twice a month. The municipality has about 6,100 inhabitants, so it was necessary to expand the distribution.

Subsequently, the Augustinian Recollect nuns have invested in a water purification system, as well as a small bottling plant, which guarantees quality and ensures supply to the population of the area.

Recently, thanks to the ARCORES (International Augustinian Recollect Solidarity Network), the community has a new water reservoir that has allowed to expand, in distribution and reach, the distribution of water, which extends to the towns of Machakos and Nairobi.

Reflection

We thank You, Lord our God, for all that You have created and given us every day of our lives. We praise you for the love you show us with your works, which we participate in because you call us to build community in the midst of difficulties. May our desire always be to drink of the water that quenches thirst and to be able to be sources of living water by your Word. We place in your hands this work that quenches the thirst of the body, asking for the well-being of all who drink from it and that it lead them to the encounter with the One who grants the gift of living water. Amen.



A bus to teach ecology

Philippines

12

Thursday - San Esteban
December 26th

"All is not lost, because human beings, capable of degrading themselves to the extreme, can also overcome themselves, choose the good again and regenerate themselves" Laudate si, Nº 205, Pope Francis.

In order to strengthen the environmental awareness of young people in northern Cebu, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) of the University of San José-Recoletos created the eco-bus several years ago. The original idea is a means to raise awareness of the care of the common house and to show possible ecological actions.

The bus is a mobile library full of books on climate change. Its tables and chairs are made of recyclable materials, such as tires. It is also decorated with stickers showing what people can do to protect Mother Earth.

The bus has toured some of Cebu's slums to showcase its climate change protection initiatives, as well as to teach how to make recycled materials and explain the results of the university's waste management system.

The ecological bus (Earth Bus) of the University of San Jose - Recoletos offers its services in collaboration with the municipalities and schools of Cebu.

Prayer

Lord, allow us as conscious and rational beings, to value our planet, and thus together, to be able to work for the future of humanity; and may your love continue to be transmitted from generation to generation, having as its purpose a better care of our common home for the good of all. Amen.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Food and accompaniment

Mexico

2

Friday - St. John the Baptist

December 27th

"We can't do great things, but we can do small things with great love" Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

The Comedor Lomas de Casablanca is part of the social pastoral program of the Divine Redeemer Parish of the Augustinian Recollects located in this neighborhood of the city of Querétaro where there are large pockets of marginalization and social exclusion. There are also problems related to human trafficking, violence and insecurity.

The Augustinian Recollect Missionary Sisters (MAR) are responsible for the social pastoral program of the Parish, which, due to the situations of indigence of many people who are cared for, has an important component of primary assistance.

It is a program that provides personalized accompaniment to the families it serves, with a small doctor's office for basic health care and a social canteen.

The families that are accompanied are given a monthly food pantry while the social canteen attends to the most emergency situations: people in street situations, passers-by, passing migrants, etc. The canteen has a capacity for 60 people.

The social ministry of the Divine Redeemer Parish also involves the RAYs and the different parish groups, which allows for integral attention to needy families, sometimes leading to the rehabilitation of houses.

Reflection

In this time of preparation, may we attain the grace to make our hearts always foster a sense of charity and compassion for our neighbor, contemplating the face of Christ in the most needy, and to make our grain of sand a sea of hope in the midst of the pain and despair of those who suffer; feeling ourselves partakers of the building of the kingdom of God.



Housing for low-income families

Philippines

11

Saturday - Innocent Saints
December 28th

Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do to you? (Mk 10:51)

With the desire to work disinterestedly for the poor, and attentive to the reality of the Philippine communities, the Order of Augustinian Recollects decided to work more intensely in the area of solidarity. For this, the focus was placed on the employees and personnel who work for the communities of Augustinian Recollects and who have few resources. The decision was to help them to acquire decent housing.

On the occasion of Recollection Day, December 5, 2017, twelve houses were built and blessed for the employees of the Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary. The employees who benefited from the housing project are the Seminary's librarians; administrative, kitchen and laundry staff; drivers; and utility workers.

Each house has an approximate area of 40 to 50 square meters, with a mini lawn, kitchen, three bedrooms, a terrace and two bathrooms. The houses were built within the Order's 800 square meter property.

Reflection

It is difficult to imagine and believe that in our advanced societies we continue to see people who do not have the minimum to be able to live adequately, the world cries out and in spite of the cries and tears we continue to see injustices in the midst of society. Lord, grant us the courage to be able to denounce the injustices that the world has, as well as to be able to go out of ourselves to meet the most needy who need so much help and who are often excluded from our gaze.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Medical assistance to the poor

Venezuela

3

Sunday - Solemnity of the Holy Family
December 29th

Jesus traveled all Galilee healing every sickness and disease among the people (Mt 4:23)

The San Judas Tadeo Medical Clinic is one of the 30 social works of the program 'United with Venezuela' of ARCORES. It is located in La Pastora (Caracas, Venezuela).

It offers medical assistance services to the community of La Pastora. Approximately 1,200 low-income people are treated monthly. The center has consultations for general medicine, dermatology, dentistry, gynecology, pediatrics and laboratory clinical analysis.

The service offered to Venezuelans is Monday through Friday, and serves children, youth, adults and seniors. The doctors who attend the office do so from their personal commitment, as they receive a symbolic payment for their work in the office.

Currently, people come to the office from far away neighborhoods of Caracas, for the quality of care and minimal cost of services.

Reflection

At times when we find hope on the ground and surrounded by chaotic situations, we feel with the water up to the neck, without being able to place our feet on land to breathe a little better, is in those moments where you get to see that not everything is finished, you get that friendly hand that helps you get out of those waters that sift life. Lord, we ask you for the people of Venezuela, so that in the midst of difficulties hope does not falter, that we are always able to help and be sensitive to the needs of people who cry out for help. Make us aware that together we can transform the painful realities that surround us to make our world a more prosperous place.



Support for pregnant teenagers

Dominican Republic

5

Christmas Monday

December 30th

"To love everyone, but each person must be loved differently" De Catequisadi Rudibus XV, 23,5

For several decades, the Augustinian Recollects have been carrying out an important welfare work in Bajos de Haina, through the medical dispensary of St. Augustine. Every year thousands of people are attended in the different lines of action: general medicine, dentistry, pediatrics...

As part of this, the San Agustín Medical Clinic will implement a comprehensive health care service for pregnant adolescents from an impoverished environment to monitor pregnancy in accordance with the regional health programme (medical and nursing consultations, ultrasound scans and analyses) and to prevent complications.

An integral care and accompaniment space will be offered to teenagers that will include psychological support for their empowerment in decision making and personal autonomy process, favoring self-care, continuity of their studies and/or professional training. In addition, they will be provided with legal assistance.

This service will pay special attention to childbirth and the puerperium and will last for the first year of life of their sons and daughters.

Reflection

The Augustinian action shows a true method, which is a practical pedagogy demonstrating that every moment is "a moment to educate the heart" to speak from the experience and the affective relationship with life and with the brothers.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Food and medical care for minors

Philippines

4

Christmas Tuesday

December 31

Mt 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

The school of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of the Augustinian Recollects Sisters is located in Manila. It has never stopped betting on its social action programs in favor of the most underprivileged.

Sacred Heart's Talangpaz Outreach Program includes teachers, students, alumni, administrative staff and other entities close to the school interested in this work. They all enthusiastically participate in the program which has two lines of action: food, and medical and dental care.

In these activities and programs not only the members of the educational community participate, but also external people who voluntarily help in this work. The outreach program is named after the founders of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters Dionisia and Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz.

The objective is to motivate the school community to share the experience of charity with the poor communities that live near the campus of the Sacred Heart School.

Reflection

In the so-called sermon on Mount Jesus reveals God's new law. In it we have an accumulation of revelations and promises, some of an almost revolutionary character. Hunger and injustice do not have the last word; there will be justice for those who suffer, but not only in the Kingdom of Heaven, and on earth God has people with a sensitive and docile heart to attend to the needs of the most vulnerable.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

Youth volunteering in the peripheries

Argentina

4

Wednesday - Holy Mary, Mother of God

January 1st

Mk 10, 13-16. Jesus said to them, "Let the little children come to me, do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

The "voluntariAR" project was born on the initiative of the students of St. Augustine's School in Mar del Plata. Through the Pastoral Department of the school, they came into contact with the parish Caritas of Our Lady of Fatima of the same Augustinian Recollect community and saw the opportunity to join forces and work together.

Cáritas serves a picnic area in a needy neighborhood in Mar del Plata. A snack is given to approximately 50 children between the ages of 0 and 15 who, in addition to the snack, find a safe space to play and interact with other children.

VoluntariAR collaborates with the dining room in the following way:

- - All high school students undergo a previous formation in the Augustinian Recollect charism, with emphasis on the missionary dimension of our family.
- - Students from 1st to 4th year of secondary school participate by raising funds, school supplies, clothes and food for the picnic area.
- - The 5th and 6th grade students are the agents responsible for organizing the visit once a month and bringing all that is collected..

It is a recent project that continues to be organized and improved on the basis of experience. It is an open project, with the vocation of involving the entire school community, so that it can go out to meet these children and their families, contributing its grain of sand.

Reflection

Let us pray to God for all those who are part of the Volunteer of Mar del Plata, Argentina, so that Almighty God may bless them, fortify them and of constancy and permanence in this work for the benefit of those who need it, and to our mother, the Virgin Mary, in her title of virgin of Lujan, protect them and guide them in their journey..



School for families with few resources

Mexico

4

Christmas Thursday

2nd January

"The Lord will go before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you or forsake you. Fear not therefore, neither be discouraged" (Dt 31:8).

The Fray Luis de Leon Querétaro Evening School was born in 2010, as a social project by which young people from families with limited resources can complete lower secondary education.

For almost a decade the project, which began as a small group of students using the available classrooms of the school in the afternoon, has not stopped growing in number of students, in educational possibilities, in activities becoming part of the school.

Currently, the students of the evening school, in addition to the official subjects, follow practical workshops, receive personal follow-up through school tutoring and the psycho-pedagogical department, carry out cultural outings and participate in sports competitions.

The school also makes an important effort to involve parents in their children's education by offering them a parents' school.

In addition, each year, some of the young people who finish the evening school receive a scholarship from the school itself to continue the High School, a course that gives access to the University.

Reflection

We entrust to you, Lord, the lives of so many young people who, loaded with dreams and hopes, run after the adventure of their yearnings, striving to achieve human and intellectual growth. He presents on his way the solidarity of so many men and women who can favor the advancement and realization of their dreams and hopes, their professional development and family welfare.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

The work of the missionaries

Costa Rica

1

Christmas Friday

3rd January

"Whatever you do, do it with all your heart, as for the Lord and not for men" (Col 3:23).

Sarapiquí Mission is located in the province of Heredia northeast of San José, the capital of Costa Rica. The Augustinian Recollects began their work in the mission 40 years ago, at the height of the expansion of banana cultivation in the region, by the multinational company Dole.

The work of production, logistics and transportation of the banana company, was shaping the physiognomy of the region with settlements of workers, which led to population centers. This fact determined that the OAR Mission had a determining social work in the demand of the rights of the workers and their families: dignified housing, educational and sanitary infrastructures and organization of the social fabric.

At the same time, the generation of these population nuclei linked to a fluctuating productive activity brought with it social problems: alcoholism, precarious work, family disintegration, exploitation of women, which have marked the social configuration of Sarapiquí and the work of the Augustinian Recollects.

The Augustinian Recollect family of Costa Rica continues its missionary commitment and social action in Sarapiquí through the parish of St. Augustine of Puerto Viejo with the support of ARCORES Costa Rica.

Reflection

The dignity of the human being demands that he be free, that he be able to grow and develop as God wills, for this it is necessary that he possess the suitable means and that his circumstances be favorable. This is where work comes in, but not any kind of work, but one that is correctly remunerated and does not wear out excessively, that does not destroy the worker, that allows him to have life beyond his job, that provides him with bread and the opportunity to seek every day a better bread for him and for all. Let us ask the Lord to give us the strength to fight for a world with just work.



Scholarships for students without resources

Philippines

4

Christmas Saturday

4th January

"May I know you, my connoisseur, may I know you, as I am also known." St. Augustine, conf. Book X, I.1

The Order of Augustinian Recollects has nine schools in the Philippines, including two universities.

Aware of the social realities in the country and the difficulties of Filipino families in sending their children to school, the Augustinian Recollects introduced the Augustinian Recollect Educational Assistance Scholarship Program (READS). It is a way to train those who have fewer resources and give them the opportunity to take advantage of university education free of charge. For the Order of Augustinian Recollects, it is a faithful response to the Church's preferential option for the poor.

This scholarship program has succeeded in graduating students in the areas of public service, business, and independent professional activities. Many of the young READS beneficiaries are working at home and abroad.

Each year the scholarship program benefits 600 young people with an investment of 325,000 euros.

Reflection

In an audience with the participants of the plenary session of the Congregation for Catholic Education, Pope Francis recalled that "the university is a privileged environment for thinking about and developing the commitment to evangelization and Catholic schools constitute a very valid contribution to the evangelization of culture, even in countries or cities where an adverse situation stimulates us to use creativity to find suitable ways. Education generates hope. In fact, education is a giving birth, it is a making grow, if it is situated in the dynamic of giving life. And the life that is born is the most fruitful source from which hope springs, a life always in search of beauty, goodness, truth and communion with others for a common growth".



Solidarity through contemplation

Kenya

17

Sunday

5th January

Lk 5:15-16 "His fame spread, so that a great multitude came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. But he withdrew to solitary places to pray.

The history of the Augustinian Recollect Monastery in Lodwar (Kenya) began on February 2, 2008, at the request of the diocesan bishop, Monsignor Patrick Joseph Harrington. Seeing the needs of the area, the Bishop requested the foundation of a monastery of cloistered nuns in this diocese, still considered a first evangelization and where at that time there was no presence of contemplative life.

Their main work is the contemplative life: continuous praise to God and assiduous prayer, in an atmosphere of silence and recollection, end for which they were desired and called. In this way, they spiritually support the apostolic work that is carried out in the Diocese of Lodwar, participating in work of the Bishop, missionaries, consecrated and lay people.

All the social works of ARCORES are nourished and strengthened through the persevering prayer of the Augustinian Recollect Nuns. Their silent work is also expressed in through tireless social commitment. They respond faithfully and permanently to all the calls for solidarity that they receive, through campaigns, projects, activities and diverse initiatives, contributing economically to each and every one of them.

Prayer

Lord, You who taught us the importance of prayer, instill in our hearts the gift of contemplation, so that contemplating you, we may love you, loving you we may serve you and serving you we may find you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTION GUIDES

arcores

A plan to weave the solidarity network

22 countries

17

Monday - Epiphany of the Lord
6th January

Psalm 89, 17: "Let the goodness of the Lord come down to us, and let the works of our hands prosper."

The General Chapter that the Order of Augustinian Recollects celebrated in 2016 reflected on the social work that it had been doing and agreed on the creation of a project that would unite all the work of the Augustinian Recollect family for the transformation of society in the world. Three years later, the project, which later adopted the name of ARCORES, continues to be consolidated.

Since last June, ARCORES has been working, in the seven countries in which it is already present, in a coordinated way thanks to the strategic plan approved by the first international assembly of the International Augustinian Recollect Solidarity Network. The plan, which lasts up to three years, establishes some common work guides that will be shared by the seven ARCORES already constituted and the rest of the social works of the Augustinian Recollect Family in the world.

ARCORES International and each national ARCORES have set themselves objectives and programs, which must be fulfilled within a period of time and which will help the professionalization of the social work. With the slogan 'Building Bridges', the plan establishes as its main goals the construction of a balanced financing model, the consolidation of the national ARCORES and the results-oriented internal collaboration. All these, are fomenting values such as humility, communion, networking and dedication.

Prayer

Our God, we thank you because you have placed in the heart of our Augustinian Recollect family the desire to work and serve with greater commitment and disposition the most needy of our society, transforming the reality in which we live. We know that without your grace we can do nothing, that is why we ask you to give us the wisdom to recognize that this work comes from your goodness towards us; make your love the motor that impels us to work together with one soul and one heart; ignite other hearts in this work; and impel us to give ourselves each day in the service of continuing to build bridges for the edification of your Kingdom.