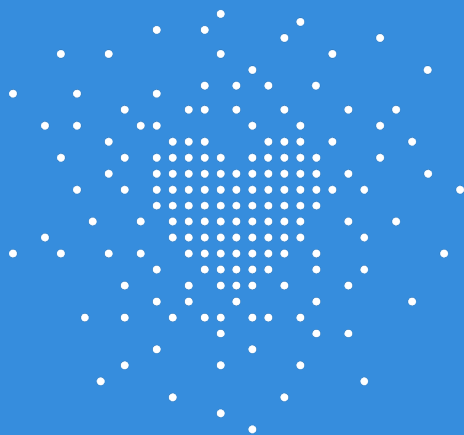


**arcores** augustinian recollect  
international  
solidarity network

# Advent - Christmas 2018



**Come and join ARCORES!**



# Star that illuminates the encounter with Jesus

**A**RCORES is an expression of the passion of the Augustinian Recollect family for God and for humanity. A family that is present where we hear the groans of so many brothers and sisters stripped of their most sacred dignity.

In this time of Advent and Christmas, characterized by hope and hope, we propose that each day you get involved in one of the many initiatives that we carry out all over the world. In this way you will be able to know, accompany and strengthen links with the communities and people involved in each of the initiatives.

For each day we offer you a thought, a brief description of the project and a prayer. It is a resource that you can use in the community and pastoral sphere. We invite you to enrich it with all the initiatives that your creativity and your commitment arouse in you to live this time of Advent and Christmas with greater intensity.

I am sure that you will be surprised by the number of projects that we carry out and that perhaps you did not know about yet. Each one responds to some of the challenges that have

been presented to us where we are. Precious testimonies of passion for humanity. We would like it not only to be a surprise, but also to penetrate the heart and move commitment.

You will see that each of the initiatives is in line with the objectives of sustainable development (ODS). With this we express that ARCORES wants to collaborate and work in the same direction with all organizations and entities that strive for peace, justice, social transformation and the integrity of creation.

We also continue to need to recognize Jesus in those who are not significant for today's world. May this journey through some of the works we do become a star that illuminates the path that leads to the encounter with Jesus.

From ARCORES we thank all of you who have wanted to share with us the dreams that come true every day.

Let us continue to move hearts and transform lives.

**Simón Puertas, OAR**

Reflections and prayers: Wilmer Moyetones, OAR  
Texts and design: Communications Department ARCORES

Sunday I of Advent.....4	Sunday III of Advent.....18	Holy Family.....32
Monday I of Advent	Monday III of Advent	Monday Christmas Octave
Thursday I of Advent	Thursday III of Advent	Mary, Mother of God
Wednesday I of Advent	Wednesday III of Advent	Wednesay Christmas
Tuesday I of Advent	Tuesday III of Advent	Tuesday Christmas
Friday I of Advent	Friday III of Advent	Friday Christmas
Saturday I of Advent	Saturday III of Advent	Saturday Christmas
Sunday II of Advent.....11	Sunday IV of Advent.....25	Epiphany of the Lord.....39
Monday II of Advent	Monday IV of Advent	Monday Christmas
Thursday II of Advent	Birth of the Lord	Thursday Christmas
Wednesday II of Advent	Saint Stephen	Wednesday Christmas
Tuesday II of Advent	Saint John	Tuesday Christmas
Friday II of Advent	Holy Innocents	Friday Christmas
Saturday II of Advent	Saturday Christmas Octave	Saturday Christmas
		Baptism of the Lord.....46



# Care for the Lepers

Rio Branco (Brazil)

**2<sup>nd</sup>** of december  
Sunday  
First Week of Advent

**3** GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING



*“The coming of the Son of man only instills fear among the unbelievers”*

Saint Augustine

Brazil is classified, along with Angola, Madagascar, Mozambique and Chad in Africa and India and Myanmar in Asia, as among those nations with the highest incidence of leprosy, as high as 5 to 10 lepers per 10,000 inhabitants according to the chilling statistics of the WHO (World Health Organization).

In Rio Branco, southwest of the State of the Amazonas, Brazil, where the Augustinian Recollects have been working for eighty years, the incidence of leprosy is the second highest in the world, only next to India.

The municipality of Rio Branco has only 28,000 inhabitants. The number of lepers treated in the municipal hospital since 1980, according to its records, reached 3,700.

In the suburb of Rio Branco is the leper colony of San Lázaro, called locally as lazareto. Today it is an organized village, with basic Christian communities participated in by the several families of lepers who opted to stay there and the many new settlers who joined them.

It's due to the work of the Leper Hospital, which leads the Augustinian Recollect Bishop Mons. Joaquín Pertíñez.

## Reflection

Today's Gospel does not sound, in the beginning, like a proclamation of good tidings because it uses apocalyptic images that generate fear, anxiety and hopelessness. But in reality it is good news of hope, because when these things happen, they are not meant to make us cower in fear but rather to keep us steadfast in hope as Jesus urges us because the time of liberation has come. It is now time to listen to the call of Jesus. “Get up, go and encourage each other!” “Lift up your heads with confidence!” Let's not take the future and life only from our own perspectives. “Your liberation is coming.” Someday we will live with our heads held up high, thanks to Jesus, who has freed us from all those things that pull down our lives... thanks to the presence of the Emmanuel -God with us- we can enjoy hope and joy.



# Social Formation Workshop

Yopal (Colombia)

**3<sup>rd</sup>** of december  
Monday  
First Week of Advent



*“True faith is a gift from God, the gift to be asked for, not in a demanding way, but in true humility and hope that the Lord will grant it”*

Saint Ezekiel Moreno



The Acts of Peace project is carried out by the Vice-Rectorate of Human Development of the Augustinian University of Bogotá, of the Augustinian Recollects. In the context of the peace accords reached by the Colombian Government and the FARC, the objective of this plan is to provide multidisciplinary development and the continuity of initiatives, as well as to engage the Uni-agustinian community with the national reality.

The project has been developed through the execution of training plans and academic updating where more than 180 people belonging to the municipalities of Yopal, Trinidad and San Luis de Palenque participated in the different training actions, which were geared towards family, finances, awareness of the provision of tourist services, basic aspects of customer service, administration of the human resources in organizations and sustainability of the 21st century companies.

The Acts of Peace project pursues the training of students in different areas and contexts, with the aim of

involving them as active social agents for a more just society, always seeking equality and communion among all peoples. Solidarity lies in the effectiveness of the Uni-agustinian team, instilling in them a series of indispensable social virtues for a relevant participation in the social molding of the country.

## Prayer

“Lord, I am not worthy that you enter into my house; but just say a word and my servant will be healed.” Lord, grant us that same faith of the centurion, a faith that does not require seeing before believing. Let it be strong as a rock upon which we can firmly build our lives. Lord, help us to trust that with your word all our wounds, our illnesses will be cured. Give us a faith that fills our hearts with peace and strength to remain firm and confident in the midst of the difficulties of life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



# Ecology vis-à-vis Natural Disasters

Philippines

**4<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Tuesday  
First Week of Advent



*"If you want to get to the truth, do not look for another way than the one drawn by God himself, who knows our illness. Now, the first is humility, the second is humility, the third is humility, and how many times you ask me I would answer the same thing"*

Saint Augustine

Typhoons and environmental disasters are a common reality in the Philippines. Thousands of people die every year because of these phenomena of nature.

ARCORES Philippines works for the environment, through programs of awareness of the common home, initiatives for the prevention of catastrophes, rehabilitation of affected settlements and help for the victims. All these are within the ambit of the Augustinian Recollect International Solidarity Network objectives.

Among their programs is the series of ECO-Tabang workshops, an ecological and sustainable response to the disasters. The objective is to provide an immediate response when storms or typhoons occur that leave the population without light. In these workshops, initiated by the Augustinian Recollect Jaazeal Jakosalem, citizens are taught to make solar lamps (DiY) with plastic bottles and other recyclable materials.

DiY ecological lamps prove to be the most practical way to respond to disasters. Participants are trained to improvise solar lamps with recycled plastic bottles, connect them to a solar panel and the battery and have autonomous lighting systems. "The best part of the workshop is when the participant is able to produce a solar lamp and donate it to someone affected in the disaster area," says Jaazeal Jakosalem.

## Reflection

Advent is a time of preparation, a strong moment of adjustment in our lives. Let us strive, then, to be simple and humble people, to be the joy and pride of our God as his Son says today: "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children." God does not look for the most capable people on earth to be known, but rather to the smallest ones, because only the smallest possess the only wisdom that has value: humility.

# Natural Alternative Medicine

Vitoria (Brazil)

**5<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Wednesday  
OAR Day



*“Live all in unanimity and concord; and honor one another in God  
from whom you have been made temple”*

Saint Augustine



Bioenergetics is a method capable of identifying physical and energy imbalances of the body. Among other things, it is able to identify diseases before their manifestation.

This type of medicine was introduced in Brazil for the first time in 1992 by Fr. Renato Barth. Sr. Alaide, an Augustinian Recollect missionary who was passionate about natural medicine became interested in this discipline.

In 2002, the bioenergetics and natural medicine project began, first with the sisters of the Congregation and the Augustinian Recollect religious friars. Later it was opened to all the town of Vitoria.

Now on its 16th year in 2018 and counting and over 12,000 people helped with care and cure of their illnesses, the endeavor proves indeed to be a miraculous relief to a lot of people.

More than 567,000 doses of ointments, special herbs, floral compositions and natural oils have been dispensed by the team of volunteers who

are never wanting in great affection.

Currently, it has 70 volunteers who work to bring these treatments to the poorest people complementing conventional medicine and kept affordable to all. It has expanded its work to the regions of Viana, Porto de Santana and Minas Gerais.

## Prayer

We thank you Lord for the Augustinian Recollect family, whose charism has been incarnated in various parts of the world where each brother living in community of love becomes a manifestation of your love for all men especially the poorest of the poor.



# Aid to indigenous people

Taiwan

**6<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Thursday  
First Week of Advent



*“Our mission, like that of the Church, is a mission of peace, but it is also a mission of war”*

Saint Ezekiel Moreno

The Augustinian Recollects arrived in Taiwan in 1963. They focused their work on the Catholic minority and the most disadvantaged groups of the island, namely, the indigenous people and migrant workers.

The Taiwanese natives fled in the 20th century to the mountain areas of the island due to the massive influx of Chinese immigrants. They currently make up 2% of the total population. The Philippine Augustinian Recollects carry out an intense work of pastoral accompaniment of the indigenous population in their mountain communities, which includes comprehensive training, strengthening their ability to self-manage and defend their rights.

As for the immigrant population, mainly from the Philippines, an intense work of integral accompaniment of the immigrants is carried out: spiritual care, advice and support in relation to their residence and work permits, legal status in the country and dignify their working conditions.

In addition to helping indigenous people and the immigrants, the Augustinian Recollects carry out relevant social work in two other fields. In the sanitary area, they facilitate hospital care for people in precarious situations.

As for the care and preservation of the environment, they participate actively in interreligious program of coastal clean up to address one of the most serious environmental problems in the island of Taiwan.

## Petition

Lord, we ask you to bless all our missionary brothers in Taiwan, who surely have difficulty in announcing the gospel. We ask you to strengthen their faith and to open the hearts of the faithful to your word so that they may become like that man who builds his house on rock and keep them firm in their faith amidst the trials that may come their way.

# Health Center for the Indigents

Lima (Peru)

**7<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Friday  
First Week of Advent



*“The work of God is to save, to redeem, to liberate, to bring through, because the Lord gives freedom to the captives, the Lord opens his eyes to the blind, the Lord raises up those who are overburdened”*

Saint Thomas of Villanova



The parish of Santa María Magdalena, in Lima (Peru) of the Augustinian Recollects carries out social work in the San Ezekiel Moreno Medical-Odontological Office, which offers medical and dental services. Every two weeks between 300 and 400 people receive free consultations and follow up.

The Medical-Dental Office is a pioneer in parish medical care. The alternative to public health was the private centers until the creation of this center. Therefore, the challenge is to still further improve in quality and extend the medical services and the specializations, as well as the infrastructure and the equipment.

It has been of great help to a lot of people who need immediate medical attention and dental care since the place has difficult access to the same. Precisely the speed of attention is one of the characteristics that differentiate the medical center from public healthcare.

The goal of ARCORES is to expand and strengthen the current facilities of the Medical Office.

## Petition

We ask you, Lord, for those people who can not see, those who are physically and spiritually blind, so that they see and may become more responsive to their callings, attentive to the needs of others and learn to follow Jesus, in obedience and humility knowing ourselves as being loved in freedom.

The San Ezekiel Moreno medical center in Lima also offers complementary medical services such as podiatry, physical therapy and rehabilitation or nutrition. The treatment of the volunteers of the center is specific and personalized, giving a special attention to every patient. It is mostly free, although there are specific services that must be paid by the patient at a symbolic price.





# Halfway House for Minors

Maracay (Venezuela)

**8<sup>th</sup>** of december  
**Saturday**  
**Immaculate Conception**



*“Christianity has not taken a step forward without Mary”*

San Ezequiel Moreno

On May 24, 1905, in Maracay (Venezuela), saw the foundation of the first orphanage in the place named “Immaculate Conception”. From the start it is managed by the Augustinian Recollect sisters of the Heart of Jesus.

It began with nine children, in the middle of a precarious situation. The great faith in Divine Providence allowed the orphanage to continue to grow in the midst of constant vicissitudes, under the virtuous and wise administration of Mother Mary, the Augustinian Recollect in charge of the project and to which the girls have fondly called during these years “Mamaíta”. The project of social protection for minors has been possible during all these years thanks to the solid support of Father López Aveledo, who is fondly called “my dad”.

The school population of the orphanage has received during these years elementary instruction given personally by Mother Mary, who made the notebooks with used telegram paper. In the book of the foundation of the orphanage in Maracay, in 1905, Mother Mary wrote in her own handwri-

ting: “The aim of this orphanage is to receive, raise and educate orphans in the holy fear of God, in order to free them from the dangers to which they have been exposed due to their predicament; they will be taught in particular the doctrine of Christianity.”

Throughout history, this orphanage has been filled with girls of scarce resources and dysfunctional homes. Currently, it takes care of around 40 girls and / or adolescents, made possible thanks to the financing and support of ARCORES Venezuela.

## Prayer

Let us thank God for the generosity of the many brothers and sisters who, like Maria who went in haste to help her cousin Isabel, have readily extended help in favor of the many Venezuelans who are suffering because of the situation of the country.

# Protection of Minors Program

Spain

9<sup>th</sup> of december  
Sunday  
Second Week of Advent



*“Rejoice, poor people; rejoice destitute, for, though the world despises you, your Lord and His angels hold you in highest regard”*

Saint Thomas of Villanova



The nine educational centers of the Augustinian Recollect family of Spain cater to more than 9,000 students. For all of them, ARCORES has implemented during the 2018-2019 school year a child protection plan with the aim of guaranteeing the protection of their human rights and obtaining a healthy education.

The students, their families and the teaching staff of the Augustinian Recollect and Augustinian Recollect sisters' schools receive training and awareness workshops to safeguard education values.

This plan includes the creation of safeguard structures in the school environment so that the child is not abused and their families are assured that the school is their second home where they can grow, learn and be educated in freedom.

The plan has been launched jointly with the Augustinian Recollect International Educational Network, EDUCAR, with the objective of transforming the Augustinian Reco-

lect educational centers into spaces where a healthy education is carried out and the main values of the Augustinian school can be taught.

## Reflection

“Prepare the way of the Lord, pave his paths.” The advent season is an opportunity to prepare the way of the Lord and pave the paths, let us also prepare our hearts. It is time to open new paths to the God who comes with Jesus. For this we need to be converted to God, to return to Jesus, to return to the authentic God who is found among the poorest. It is time to find new ways in the world and in the Church. We need profound changes to put the poor at the center of our religion.



# Children's Home

Barranquilla (Colombia)

**10<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Monday  
Second Week of Advent

17 PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



*"Courage, you who are paralyzed inwardly. Together let us open the roof of the Scriptures to come down and stand at the feet of the Lord"*

Saint Augustine

In the southwestern neighborhoods of Barranquilla, in Colombia, the necessary means for the most basic well-being of people are lacking. Many houses are located in abandoned lands where there are no basic services. As a result, the education or health of children and young people are at serious risk.

Faced with this situation, the Augustinian Recollect Missionaries and the Brothers of the Sacred Heart joined hands in putting up the Hermano Policarpo Home, in the barrio of La Paz, in the southwestern part of Barranquilla. In this center, girls and adolescents living in a state of risk and vulnerability are cared for, giving them the opportunity to grow up protected and to have a solid education.

It caters to about forty girls and young women between six and seventeen years of age. Girls come from both urban and rural backgrounds. In the Home they are provided with transportation, food, primary and secondary basic education through the state centers; education in human values and Christian formation and

even internet. Two teachers work at the Home, one person in the kitchen and one director.

For many girls, this social work of the Augustinian Recollect Missionaries, which has the support of ARCORES, is the only way to grow up in a healthy environment, without health problems and with good personal and academic training.

## Prayer

Lord, grant that we may not cease to be creative, to risk ourselves even to do crazy undertakings like these four men of the góspel who climbed the roof to bring to Jesus the poor paralytic . May we, Lord, also seek a thousand ways to bring to you our brothers who suffer some paralysis.



# Pastoral Care for the Migrants

Reino Unido

**11<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Tuesday  
Second Week of Advent



*“Whoever thinks how great is the happiness of belonging to the flock of God, even in the midst of these tears and tribulations, is heading towards great joy”*

Saint Augustine



Many Latin Americans live in London. Due to different circumstances, thousands of people from Spain and countries in South and Central America have arrived in the United Kingdom in recent decades.

In the capital of England, the Augustinian Recollects are in charge of the Latin American Chaplaincy, an instrument of spiritual help in the Spanish language for all these Spanish-speaking people. It responds to the need of the many Spaniards and Latin Americans who could not understand the Mass in English. With the massive influx of immigrants, the need was more urgently felt.

Currently, the most important work is spiritual attention to the Spanish-speaking faithful. In addition, the Augustinian Recollects offer in the Latin American Chaplaincy courses of formation in the faith -which aims to approach the understanding of the Word of God-; prayer groups, reflection and interior advice on the many issues that may affect foreign citizens. Volunteer activities in which those who wish have the opportunity to

approach the poor and sick in some areas of London.

Since its foundation, the Latin American Chaplaincy has been a great spiritual tool for thousands of people who come to London looking for new opportunities.

## Reflection

The word of today is a word of encouragement and source of strength for those brothers who live outside their homeland. Today the Lord motivates them saying that no one gets lost, how ever far we have gone he will always look for us and find us. He is ready to leave the 99 and bring back to the fold (homeland) the one who is lost. Let us not feel alone, God always accompanies us, his greatest desire is to find us, and there will be much joy once we are found and carried by him in his shoulders.



# Social Assistance Program

Guatemala City

**12<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Wednesday  
Our Lady of Guadalupe



*“Grant me this grace, O sovereign God, through the intercession of the holy Virgin Mary, whose pious help we devoutly implore by saying Ave Maria”*

Saint Thomas of Villanova

The Santa María Goretti parish of Guatemala City - run by the Augustinian Recollects - is located in one of the forsaken barrios of the capital city. In order to alleviate the difficult situation of this neighborhood, a group of laity from the parish of San Judas Tadeo, also attended by the Recollect missionaries, decided to spearhead the Aguilas de Santa Fe foundation.

Under the slogan “Generating Integral Development”, the lay people from the Emmaus Group, carry out social support work for children from 6 years to 20, without distinction of gender for as long as they live in Colonia Santa Fe, most of them coming varied family backgrounds with hardly anything in life.

To all these children, Águilas de Santa Fe provides assistance, guidance and a place for these young people to carry out their school work; introduce them to the use of technology and some common programs; they open to them new horizons, showing them aspects of cultural and economic life of Guatemala; they work with the members of advocacy groups enga-

ged in recycling and caring for nature; and, together with the Municipality of Guatemala, they have set up community and activity workshops for parents. The objective is to develop programs that facilitate opportunities that benefit children and young people.

## Reflection

“Am I not here with you, I being your mother? Listen and understand, my youngest child, there is nothing that should scare and afflict you. Do not trouble your heart, do not fear that, or any other disease or anguish. Am I not here with you, I being your mother? Are you not under my protection? Am I not your good health? Are you not by chance on my lap? ... “ These are the words that Mary said to St. Juan Diego, and she addresses them to each one of us today so that we may always trust in her and in her Son. May Mary, our mother, who wanted to manifest herself in the Americas, continue to accompany and bless each one of us who form this continent.

# Mission among the Indigenous People

Kankintu (Panama)

**13<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Thursday  
Second Week of Advent



*“Culture covers the totality of the life of a people. Each town, in its historical evolution, develops its own culture with legitimate autonomy. This is because the human person, by its very nature, has an absolute need for social life”*

Pope Francis



In February 1964 the Augustinian Recollects arrived in Kankintú, in the Prelature of Bocas del Toro, in Panama. During all these years, the Augustinian Recollects have carried out many projects that have eased the lives of the inhabitants of this Panamanian region, most of them with economic and social difficulties.

The projects are varied. First their concern was catechetical, scholastic and university formation of the people. Currently, more than 1,750 children and young people receive education at the Saint Augustine School and the Mirónomo Krónomo parish school, where they are also given meals.

Kankintu is so isolated so that its communication with other communities has been a big problem. The population has no roads and communications with the outside must be made through the river.

In addition to the educational work, the Augustinian Recollects facilitat-

te the transport of school materials, food and people through their motor boat. Another boat was also provided to serve as ambulance to bring sick people to the hospitals and back. The help of ARCORES will surely strengthen these projects in Kankintú.

## Reflection

John's mission was to announce the Good News of salvation. Of him Jesus pronounced this great compliment that JESUS: “I assure you, there has not been any born of a woman greater than John the Baptist...” We pray that our brothers in the mission of Kankintu, Panama, may become bearers of the Good News for these indigenous communities, grow in the appreciation and respect of their culture, and get enriched in the sharing of life and experiences of faith with them.



# Dental Assistance to Vulnerable Infants

Los Angeles (USA)

**14<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Friday  
Second Week of Advent



*“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn”*

Rom 12, 15

The United States Government does not provide healthcare for all its citizens, which means that thousands of Americans can not have medical and dental insurance.

To cushion the effect of this predicament a group of lay people put up the Queens Care Health Centers. It is a non-profit organization that strives to provide accessible health care to uninsured and low-income individuals and families residing in Los Angeles County through a system of health care clinics and community outreach programs.

Cristo Rey parish, run by the Augustinian Recollects, in Los Angeles collaborates with this institution by providing a place to carry out its consultations and by encouraging some volunteers to participate in the work.

The Queens Care Health Centers is coordinated by the Augustinian Recollect Fr. Michael Stechmann.

One of the most important actions of Queens Care Health Centers is the Dental Mobile Unit. It was presented in February 2018. It is the largest

mobile unit in the United States and was fully funded by Queens care as part of the annual community health program. The unit will serve the low-income students in 11 public and Catholic schools in Los Angeles.

## Reflection

Today, Jesus says in the gospel: “With whom will I compare this generation?” He wonders why this generation is dissatisfied, because “we played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.” There is a lot of indifference. Surely Jesus will continue to insist. He will not tire. We know that not all young people are like that, there are many who are sensitive to different realities. Let’s ask God’s graces for all those young people who serve as volunteers in our International Solidarity Network.

# One Radio, One Loudspeaker

Chota (Peru)

**15<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Saturday  
Second Week of Advent



*“To communicate means, therefore, to become aware that we are human, children of God. I like to define this power of communication as proximity”*

Pope Francis



Radio Santa Mónica was born in the province of Chota, in the region of Cajamarca (Peru), in 1993. It was put up to support the evangelizing and human promotion apostolate of the Augustinian Recollect friars being carried out in the Prelature of Chota and Cutervo. Since then, five Augustinian Recollect religious have served as directors of the Catholic radio station.

Radio Santa Mónica is not only a means of religious information. In addition to educational and evangelization contents, informative programs on different issues are broadcast.

The aim is to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the listeners of northern Peru as a journalistic, religious and cultural proposal, serious, creative and entertaining.

As a means of communication, Radio Santa Mónica sticks to its esteemed values of truthfulness, punctuality, immediacy, creativity, teamwork, proactivity, solidarity, respect, quality and social responsibility.

Radio Santa Mónica currently has two challenges: to continue being a means of trust for citizens and to be able to expand its action to new online media.

## Reflection

Religious men and women “are challenged anew by the need to bear witness to the Gospel through the communication media”(VC 99). “In the media, the Church finds an excellent support to spread the Gospel and the religious values, to promote dialogue and ecumenical and interreligious cooperation, as well as to defend the solid principles that are essential in the construction of a society that respects the dignity of the human person and the common good”.





# Hospital Ship

Labrea (Brazil)

**16<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Sunday  
Third Week of Advent



*"The perfection of life is in charity, more than in austerity"*

Saint Thomas of Villanova

In order to improve the health of the riverside population of the Purús River, in the Amazonian area of the Prelate of Lábrea, a hospital ship makes a round to do its socio-health care campaign for three months a year with volunteers from all over Brazil.

During the months of May, June and July, since 2008, the campaign has visited 223 communities. It is the time of best navigability. It is also the timewhen the people stay along the Banks and when volunteers are more available. About 7,000 people live in the area stretched in enormous distances, very dispersed and the only way to get to them is by the river which is very costly.

The medical and dental care of the Laguna Negra Hospital Boat is completed with the prescription and distribution of medicines and other activities. In the 2015 visit, 3,040 consultations were carried out by the doctors and nurses, 1,900 dental interventions, 85 physiotherapy cases attended to, talks on disease prevention and oral health, psychological care, guidance on vertical gardens

and training on the environment. Each visit needs significant annual financial support for its fuel, repairs and medications.

## Reflection

The reading of today's Gospel invites us to be supportive. When was asked John what should be done, the answer is clear, direct and concrete - he who has two tunics must give one to who has none, and he who has food must do the same.

We can be attentive to those who have fallen into serious situations of social exclusion: incurable, deprived of proper health care, without income or any social resource... We must go forth to extend hand to those who are sinking into impotence and lack of motivation to face their future. Let us thank God for all those brothers who have collaborated with the hospital ship, because through them we are able to reach out to so many people who are excluded and have no social security.

# Housing for Social Upliftment

Yopal, Casanare (Colombia)

**17<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Monday  
Third Week of Advent



*“Whoever therefore hears these words of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a prudent man, who built his house on the rock”*

Matthew 7, 24



After a year of work and effort, 18 families living in poverty in the Colombian town of Yopal now have a decent home in which to live. The NGO Haren Alde, a member of the ARCORES International Solidarity Network, undertook in 2009 the project for the construction of housing for marginal families.

The dream came true and, after the work of the Augustinian Recollects of Colombia, the 18 families live happily in their homes. Each house has an area of 90 square meters with two rooms, a bathroom, a kitchen, a living room and a patio.

With this, families without resources in Colombia have managed to build a future of hope. Like them, the rest of the population has taken the step to get out of this situation and look forward with determination and enthusiasm.

## Reflection

According to the gospels Jesus was born stripped of everything, without better place to sleep than a manger.

God was born in the least appropriate place and manner. He grew up among the last and the least. Yet he came to save us, to transmit a message of hope and recover the dignity of the most despised people.

The homeless are not news. Aggressions or deaths of those living on the streets are a daily occurrence. With the cold of winter, snow and rain newspapers may dedicate a few lines to this reality that we do not want to see, because it hurts and puts us in front of a mirror of a world that is unjust and selfish, oblivious to the physical and moral suffering of millions of people we call “excluded people”, “nobodies”, “invisible”, “the poor” (Day of the homeless 2010, Caritas).



# Integral Formation of Students

22 countries

**18<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Tuesday  
Third Week of Advent

17 PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



*“In school, it is taught for the love of others, and it is learned by love of the truth”*

Saint Augustine

The Augustinian Recollect International Solidarity Network, ARCORES, and the Augustinian Recollect International Educational Network, EDUCAR, are committed to working long-term in values education to train people committed to building a more just and fraternal society.

To this end, they have agreed to develop various collaborative initiatives in the coming years.

In the first place, there is the awareness campaign of the Solidarity Day in all the educational centers of the Augustinian Recollect family. ARCORES provides materials to help the students in the classrooms understand the objectives of this celebration. Another activity is annual in nature integrated in the pedagogical-pastoral objective of each course. Likewise, EDUCAR and ARCORES consider volunteering as a priority activity in the education of young people and in social commitment.

That is why they will collaborate in the promotion of international volunteer experience, both for adults and

young people, and for social volunteering in their own local context.

Finally, both networks will collaborate in the elaboration of the pastoral plan of the center, through the realization of a pilot experience with one of the educational centers. In this sense, EDUCAR intends that the center is not a place where only academic results are obtained, but the priority is the acquisition of knowledge and education in faith and values.

## Reflection

The Prior General, Miguel Miró, said in a message sent to the inauguration of a school in Guatemala: “We know the importance of education and the demand for quality education for the educational community and for society but we also know that our schools are Catholic centers, which must serve for evangelization”.



# Temporay shelter for the Sick

Bogota (Colombia)

19<sup>th</sup> of december  
Wednesday  
Third Week of Advent



*"I was naked, and you clothed me; sick, and you visited me; in jail, and you came to see me"*

Matthew 25, 35



The Congregation of the Augustinian Recollects of the Sick was founded in 1985 in Bogotá. From the hand of the Augustinian Recollect Sebastián López de Murga, it emerged with the main mission of accompanying cancer patients in their suffering with material support - many of them also live in a situation of poverty - and spiritual help, inviting them to discover God in the midst of their pain.

With this objective, the Hogar de Paso de Bogotá was born in 2012, aimed at people who must go to the capital of Colombia to undergo medical examinations or treatment for cancer. To its beneficiaries, the Hogar de Paso provides spiritual and human accompaniment, as well as accommodation for the patient, food and occupational therapy.

It is a response to the need of dozens of cancer patients who live outside Bogotá and who have nowhere to stay when they come to the city to be treated for their illnesses. It is an added service to the work carried out by the Recollect sisters of the Sick at the San Ezekiel Moreno Foundation who

provide care and accompaniment to cancer patients in the Colombian capital.

## Prayer

Lord, you granted Saint Ezekiel Moreno the grace to consecrate his whole life as a tireless Augustinian Recollect missionary in favor of the poor, the sick and the needy. I implore you, through his intercession, to fill those who suffer similar disease with acceptance and strength. Keep us healthy and make us feel the peace of your divine mercy. Oh beloved Father, for the merits and intercession of Saint Ezekiel Moreno, grant me his protection and health of soul and body. Strengthen me with your Spirit, give me patience in pain and guard my faith. Let me feel consoled by you, and let me recover fully, if it is your will. I commend myself to Saint Ezekiel Moreno and to the mercy of your Son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever. Amen.



# Integral Accompaniment of the People

Atapirire (Venezuela)

**20<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Thursday  
Third Week of Advent



*"Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word"*

Luke 1, 26-38

In Venezuela, there are forgotten towns plunged into abandonment in the face of the serious political, social and economic crisis that the country is going through. Among them is Atapirire. There the Augustinian Recollect family is present thanks to the work of the Augustinian Recollect Missionary Sisters.

There are three brave sisters who have chosen to continue accompanying the people there, the most marginalized in Venezuela. Guadalupe Martínez, Teresa de Jesús Castaño and Lucelia Ramírez continue to give their lives and look for goods to share.

To address some predicament of the country, the Augustinian Recollect International Solidarity Network, together with the MARs, is engaged in a feeding program benefiting 80 children.

There are many people who, moved by this project, have grown in generosity, donated milk, helped cook and serve and fill the containers with the meals of children who are not preschoolers.

However, the help provided by the MAR in this place is not only food. They provide comprehensive assistance to children and their families. In addition to the fight against hunger among children, help is also extended to their mothers, to avoid maternal and child malnutrition.

Likewise, through ARCORES dozens of minors receive education, without closing the doors to the human growth of the people inspite of the situation in the country.

## Petition

We ask you, Lord, for the Augustinian Recollect Missionary Sisters who carry the message of Jesus to those who have not yet heard of You in these border places and who incarnate it with the example of their lives abiding by your word always like Mary, the perfect disciple of your Son Jesus.

# Housing for Families Without Means

Labrea (Brazil)

**21<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Friday  
Third Week of Advent



*“...and that house did not fall, because it was founded on the rock”*

Matthew 7, 25



Ten years ago, the Augustinian Recolects, on the initiative of Fray Manuel Piérola, in collaboration with the municipality of Labrea, obtained the lands intended for the project ‘Tierra Solidaria’. The aim was to provide houses for the homeless families from in the place and those displaced from the Amazon rainforest.

Thus, in 2008, the construction of more than 100 unifamily homes for Brazilian families without resources began. It was possible thanks to the financial contribution of individuals and families -who paid half of the housing cost- and of the public institutions.

In recent months, once the construction of the Tierra Solidaria housing was completed, the Augustinian Recolects began providing sanitation services for drinking water and hygiene.

The objective now is to make Tierra Solidaria a place of residence. Therefore, the work is now focused on the training of the neighbors so that they may obtain ownership of their homes, organize themselves in an association

of homeowners and make the place dreamed by the augustinian Recolects a neighborhood where you can live happily.

## Reflection

Mary was in haste to go to the house of her cousin Elizabeth with the intention of helping her in her needs. Thanks for having enough space and a decent home she was able to accommodate Mary, the mother of God. How many people and how many families would like to have a home where they can welcome and celebrate life with their loved ones. Our own selfishness has made this dream far from being realized for a lot of men. Let’s ask the Lord to touch the hearts of the governors and all the authorities who have the responsibility to help these brothers of ours to have a decent home, and enjoy that space where to welcome, meet and come together with your loved ones in order to eat and celebrate life.



# University Volunteers

Bacolod (Philippines)

**22<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Saturday  
Third Week of Advent



*“Every time you did it to the least of these my brethren, you did it to me”*

Matthew 25, 40

The University of Negros Occidental - Recoletos, the educational center of the Augustinian Recollects in the island of Negros, has over 6,000 students. All of them are invited to participate in the outreach activities carried out by the Resource-Handumanan, for active-involvement and volunteering.

There are many programs carried out by Resource-Handumanan in different areas (housing, health, education and vocational school), all of them aimed at helping the most vulnerable people and underdeveloped communities in the city of Bacolod.

Resource-Handumanan organizes training courses for leaders in community and of the neighboring areas. This program is carried out since 2016 to open up the communities' awareness of their rights. For this vulnerable population, the social action center organizes street markets with second-hand objects at a lower price than usual, which allows them to have clothes or other objects spending much less. In line with AR-CORES Filipinas in the care for the

environment, they organize with the beneficiaries the establishment of the community-based organic farm.

For the students and members of Resource-Handumanan there are also activities related to religious activities, youth formation in social action. In order to foster camaraderie, the friendly basketball tournament with the 'Youth Resource' is organized annually.

## Petition

We pray to You, Lord, for young Catholics, especially for volunteers from the Philippines. Do not let them abandon their longing for a better world. Let them not cease in their efforts to do good. May they continue to help the Church in its mission. We entrust to you the work of the young people in the Church, to be an active part of the community. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

# Defense and Promotion of Human rights

Chachapoyas (Peru)

**23<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Sunday  
Fourth Week of Advent



*“Mary with her obedience, remedied the damage that Eve did with her disobedience”*

Saint Augustine



The inhabitants of Chachapoyas district, in the Amazon region of Peru, live in a chaotic situation. Its population runs the risk of being marginalized, due to its ignorance of human rights and their rights as citizens.

For this reason, the NGO Haren Alde, a member of ARCORES, together with Cáritas Chachapoyas, launched in 2016 a series of workshops and courses aimed at all the citizens of the district with the aim of strengthening their democratic and civic values through citizen participation.

In this way, ARCORES has managed to defend human rights in this area and promote them among the citizens of Chachapoyas.

Due to these efforts of the Augustinian Recollects there is now greater awareness and participation in the affairs of public interest. Good governance, the importance of the person, the common good or solidarity are some of the values strengthened by ARCORES in Chachapoyas.

More than 1,000 people have benefited from this project based on social education and values, which reduces injustices and inequalities in society.

## Reflection

Mary was not only open to the will of God, but she was also open to the needs of others: the Gospel today tell us how Mary without being told by the angel to go to her cousin Elizabeth promptly offered herself to help her anticipating her need for help. And she spent three months helping her cousin. It is fidelity to the designs of God, at all times and in all circumstances.





# Care for the Migrants

El Paso, Nuevo Mexico (USA)

**24<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Monday  
Fourth Week of Advent



*“Show therefore love to the stranger,  
because you were strangers yourselves in the land of Egypt”*

Dt. 10, 19

“It is time for our parish community to do something, knowing that they can feel the enormous inner peace of doing the will of God,” said Rafael Castillo, an Augustinian Recollect and parish priest of the Parish of San Antonio in the town of Anthony (New Mexico, United States), urging his parish community to do something for the migrants.

Due to the enormous difficulties that the United States has placed on its borders last year, the parish opened its parish halls to accommodate families with young children who have been released by the Customs and Immigration control along the border with Mexico.

After studying their background and health conditions, these families are given permits to enter the United States on the condition that they will appear before a federal judge who will determine whether or not they meet the requirements for the right of asylum.

In the parish they are able to rest, eat and clean themselves up thanks to

the donations of the community. The objective is that they receive shelter for at least 24 hours prior to their trip towards their final destination.

“We must practice charity doing good especially to those who need it the most,” explains Rafael Castillo. The parish asylum center opened for the first time last July 9 and since then people kept coming.

## Prayer

Father of Mercy, God of Consolation, we know that no one is a foreigner to you and nobody is ever far from your Love. In your kindness, do care for the immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, those who are separated from their loved ones, and those who have been exiled from their homes. Send your Holy Spirit upon our rulers, so that they may enact laws and policies commensurate with the dignity of every human person. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

# Solidarity Day

22 countries

**25<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Birth of the Lord



*“Blessed are those who work for peace because they will be called children of God”*

Matthew 5, 9



In 2013, the NGO Haren Alde – now integrated into the Augustinian Recollect International Solidarity Network (ARCORES) - celebrated the Solidarity Day for the first time. The same has been celebrated during the years that followed around the same date of December 5, the day of the birth of the Recollection. It was intended to celebrate the OAR day in the spirit of solidarity.

Solidarity Day presented two projects last year, for Venezuela and for Sierra Leone, carried out by the Augustinian Recollect family in the world, thanks to the generosity of the faithful and the participants in the Journey. The practice and exercise of solidarity truly manifests the the Augustinian spirituality.

This year, the ARCORES International Solidarity Network is again urging the entire solidarity family for the Solidarity Day. On this occasion, the theme revolves around the Sustainable Development Goals marked by the 2030 Agenda.

Pope Francis with his encyclical ‘Laudato Si’ made great contributions for setting these goals. In his letter, the pontiff calls each Christian to commit himself to our world as basis of the Catholic vocation. The earth is a divine work, created by God. That is why it is our duty to take care of creation and all its inhabitants so that injustices do not occur. In this line, ARCORES carries out its solidary work contributing to SDG.

## Reflection

The first reading of the day says, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings Good News, who proclaims victory, who says to Zion: “Your God is king!” What joy we get from those people who come to us and give us good news, that makes us all meet people who are happy and who are always instruments of peace, that we too can be an instrument of peace, good news in so many places that it seems that what reigns is the ear, the war.



# Care for the Indigent Children

Marajo (Brazil)

**26<sup>th</sup>** of december  
St. Stephen  
Christmas Octave



*“He who welcomes a child like this in my name welcomes me”*

Luke 9, 48

The Amanecer Feliz (Happy Dawn) Project is the heir of the old “Cruz del Sur” Project, financed by the Southern Cross Association of the Dioceses of Italy. Unfortunately in December 2016 the Italian association stopped the financing of the Project when the sponsors of the children withdrew.

Faced with this situation, the parish of Santa Ana, of the augustinian Recollects, began to mobilize the community to keep the Project alive. This time the NGO Haren Alde - member of the International Solidarity Network ARCORES-, assumed the social work under a new name: amanecer Feliz. It seemed like a new project was born as new hope was injected into the same social project.

The promotion of the people in need is a priority of the Amanecer Feliz program. In the Project, only children of families in need are cared for, in order to respect the priority established by the program. It is obvious that the Project is not sustained even with its own resources. To continue the work, the Project depends on fi-

nancial support of the ARCORES partners. The children participate in the activities organized by the program; they receive school materials twice a year - at the beginning of the first and second semesters; they receive a school uniform at the beginning of the school year, in addition to the Amanecer Feliz uniform; On Wednesday and Saturday they have the opportunity to have a snack in the center. At Christmas they also receive a basket of goods and a gift of shirt and shorts to add joy to their christmas celebration.

## Prayer

Lord, we want to enter into your Kingdom. But we realize that the only condition is to be like children. Lord, You know our immaturity and our childhood egoisms and our desires ... Make us grow through the intercession of Saint Stephen, martyr, so that we know how to abandon ourselves like a child in your lap, just as he gave himself to the executioners to inspire us to offer our lives at the service of others especially those who have the least in life.



# Integral Help for the Youth

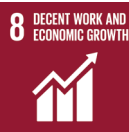
Vitoria (Brazil)

**27<sup>th</sup>** of december  
St. John the Apostle  
Christmas Octave



*“Then the other disciple also entered, who had come first to the tomb; He saw and believed”*

John 20, 2-9



It was in St. Rita de Casia Parish, in Vitoria (Espírito Santo) where the history of the Community Involvement-Commitment Service -Secri- began. Its roots lie in the social and evangelizing actions of the Augustinian Recollect religious, who worked together with other congregations and members of the local communities on the periphery of the parish in favor of a more just society. The vision behind was to establish an evangelical fraternity, where the poor find themselves especially favored.

In 2018, after turning 30 years of existence, the Secri has served 2,080 people among children, adolescents, and young people, in the age group of 4 to 21 years, and their family groups, through three Programs: Family Structuring, Believing with Hands and Youth.

The focus of action of the Youth-SE-CRI Program has been the development of programs together with adolescents and young people aged 13 to 21 years, expanding access to opportunities for personal and professional development, contributing

to the construction of their life projects through the knowledge of their reality and Christian formation for collective participation.

Currently, 88 adolescents and young people with cultural activities are cared for; writing workshop; support and orientation group for adolescent and young mothers; life training groups; preparation and routing for the labor market, among others. These activities are offered in association with the social-welfare network of the municipality of Vitoria (ES), volunteers and three paid educators.

## Prayer

Our God, through the Apostle John, you wanted to show to us the depth of life and of love of your Son, help us to know and love Jesus Christ even more each day, he who lives and reigns, for ever and ever. Amen



# Contemplative Nuns Join ARCORES

Nine countries

**28<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Holy Innocents  
Christmas Octave

17 PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



*"Innocence reaches the joy of dying for justice. These innocent children are the flowers of the Martyrs and the first crowns of the Catholic Church, wrought by the ardor of the most violent passion in the winter of infidelity and dragged by the hurricane of persecution"*

Saint Augustine

The Augustinian Recollect family is strengthened spiritually by an extensive network of monasteries of the Federations of Augustinian Recollect Nuns from Spain and Mexico. They are present in Spain, Mexico, Kenya, the Philippines, Brazil, Guatemala, Colombia, Costa Rica and the United States. There are almost 50 monasteries, united in constant prayer, with each other, with the whole Augustinian Recollect family and with the whole Church, thanking God and interceding for the faithful, especially the most needy.

All the social works of ARCORES are nurtured and reinforced through the persevering prayer of the Augustinian Recollect nuns.

Their quiet work is also expressed through the indefatigable concrete commitment. They respond faithfully and permanently to all the calls for solidarity they receive, through campaigns, projects, activities and diverse initiatives, contributing economically for every proposed project.

In the last months, two new convents have been added to the contemplative work: in Guatemala, belonging to the Federation of Spain, and in Colombia. In this last country, the Augustinian Recollect nuns have also become part of the ARCORES Colombia.

## Reflection

We are all aware that in the world there are millions and millions of children who never reached adulthood due to illness, malnutrition, exhaustion or violence. Countless innocents have paid with their blood for the crimes of others or not even crimes: simply for belonging to another ethnic group, people, gender, social class, religion or ideology some find pleasure in seeing them die or parents suffer out of biases or indifference. Let us ask the Lord today for all those innocent children so they can grow, physically and intellectually.

# CEAR Social Undertakings

Six countries

**29<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Saturday  
Christmas Octave



*“They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us”*

First letter of Saint John 2



The Augustinian Recollect Spirituality Centers -CEAR- emerged in 2014 in Mexico as a tool to open the Augustinian Recollect charism to the laity. The first centers were in Mexico City and in Queretaro and spread out to Cuernavaca and Costa Rica.

During these four years, hundreds of people have actively participated in the spirituality courses and workshops they have organized. The five areas of action of the CEAR are Foundation and Human Growth, Augustinian Recollect Spirituality, Accompaniment and Discernment, Leadership Formation and Solidarity.

The CEARs are avenues of formation in justice, solidarity and service to the poor from the Augustinian Recollect identity, where solidarity and work for justice can be carried out. Along this line, the centers organize basic training workshops on St. Augustine and solidarity, emigration or ecology. All these are ARCORES concerns.

Likewise, CEAR members are formed to become Christians with the

heart for the poor, trained in integral and supportive humanism or the SDG Objectives.

Likewise, CEARs offer the possibility of participating as mission volunteers or committing to the solidarity of ARCORES by being a partner or Project-based support group.

## Reflection

Today the gospel tells us about the presentation of Jesus in the temple. Mary and Joseph went to fulfill what the law established. Today we realize in Mary and Joseph that it is not the great preaching, it is not the great works of apostolate or the great social projects that arouse true admiration among men. The admirable thing comes when the man is shown to draw his life from God, and has learned to humbly present himself to God and to others. Joseph and Mary did it and they are our bridge in taking our works to a good port. All it takes is a free decision and enthusiasm for what we have to do.



# Care for the Abandoned Elderly

Muqui, Espiritu Santo (Brazil)

**30<sup>th</sup>** de diciembre  
Solemnity of the Holy Family



*“Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and whoever glorifies his mother is like one who lays up treasure”*

Sirach 3

The care home “Fray Pedro Coat for the Elderly” de Muqui was founded in 1964 by the Augustinian Recollect Pedro Domingo Izcara, at that time a parish priest of the San Juan Batista de Muqui parish, a small town in the south of the province of Espiritu Santo, in the southeast of Brazil.

The administration of the residence for the elderly is done by a group of volunteers who are lay people of the parish itself. The care home Fray Pedro has the mission of caring for elderly who are victims of abandonment or breakdown of the family bond.

Currently, there are 39 elderly living there, who come from several municipalities in the province of Espiritu Santo. They are assisted by a team of almost 25 professionals and service providers in the area of nutrition and food; physiotherapy and social assistance.

The Fray Pedro Home is maintained with the parish’s own resources and donations from the parishioners themselves. Its work will be strengthened with the creation of AR-CORES Brazil, which will hopefully

bring in more resources to the Home. On Sundays the Eucharist is celebrated with the participation of the Ecclesial Community together with the elderly.

## Reflection

Today’s first reading gives us clues on how live as a family. In the book of the Ecclesiasticus we find this exhortation, which is addressed directly to the children: that we should honor our parents, especially in old age, we should not abandon them while they live. Nowadays the tendency of us young people is to take our elderly parents to a nursing home, because they are a burden to us, as if they were a hindrance in our life.

Hopefully we take into account this word of God so that we accompany our parents until the end of their lives, because there is also a promise from God today: “The father’s alms will not be forgotten, it will be taken into account to pay for your sins,” that is, accompanying our parents to the end will help us reduce our sins.



# Health Center for Indigent Patients

Maracaibo (Venezuela)

**31<sup>th</sup>** of december  
Monday  
Christmas Octave



*“Love therefore your neighbor, and try to find out within yourself the origin of that love; in it you will see, as it is now possible, the same God”*

Saint Augustine



The San Onofre Integral Center is one of 27 projects carried out by ARCORES Venezuela. Together with the San Onofre de Maracaibo parish of the Augustinian Recollects, the medical team of volunteers offers specialized medical services to the community of San Onofre, where people of limited means can be treated with dignity with voluntary contribution.

This Center of specialized medical attention offers its services to the common masses of San Onofre and other impoverished sectors of Maracaibo. People from indigenous ethnic groups of very limited resources are attended to without cost.

The medical specialties offered: general medicine, internal medicine, obstetrician-gynecology, pneumonology, cardiology, neurology, gastroenterology, laboratory, ophthalmology, surgery, traumatology, nephrology, psychiatry, psychology, child psychology, psychopedagogy, urology, otorhino, nutritionist, pediatrics, dentistry, echograms and special studies: cytology, colposcopy, biopsy, spirometry, Doppler echocardiography, holter.

## Reflection

Today the Gospel tells us about the prologue of Saint John. I would like to highlight the phrase “he came to his people and they did not receive him”. God always comes to us and we can receive him by welcoming our brothers who suffer. By so doing God is present again in our lives. God does not want to stay away from us. Because of this, his Word came even closer and became present in our midst in the person of Jesus and now in the person of our brothers. May we know how to welcome God into our lives and be open to the newness of his presence.



# Values Education

Quito (Ecuador)

**1<sup>st</sup>** of January  
Tuesday  
Mary, Mother of God



*"You are the salt and light of the world"*

Matthew 5, 13

In the year 1951, the Augustinian Vicente Salgado founded the Professional school of dressmaking "Virgen del Consuelo" in Quito. Years later Salgado would ask the Augustinian Recollect Missionary sisters to open in Ecuador and take charge of the small school he founded.

Thus, in 1963 the MAR began to carry out their pastoral work in this educational center. Since then the school continues the mission of helping the needy.

The school offers Infant Education, and Primary, Secondary and Baccalaureate levels as well. In addition to the educational offer, the sisters offer prepare them for Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation.

The Augustinian Recollect International Solidarity Network ARCORES supports this work by offering scholarships to a group of poor but deserving students. ARCORES thanks its members and donors whose help has opened promising future to these children.

During the school year various activities are carried out, some of them requested by the Ministry of Education. Others are according to the plan proposed by the Pastoral Commission, emphasizing the Augustinian celebrations, as well as the main liturgical celebrations.

Through educational work, the Augustinian Recollect Missionaries want to instill in the children and young people the spirit that made Saint Augustine a man passionate for God. In an environment in which young people seem to ignore Him, they share with them their missionary charism and love, their lifestyle and faith, joy and hope, filling life with meaning and be happy.

## Petition

Let us ask the Lord for all the Augustinian Recollect Missionaries, so that their authentic testimony may make Him known to others and that they may always be faithful to Him who one day called them and sent them to announce the good news of salvation.

# Network Education for Better Formation

Philippines

**2<sup>nd</sup>** of January  
Wednesday  
Christmas Season



*“He who loves his brother remains in the light and does not stumble”*

First letter of Saint John 2, 10



The Augustinian Recollects Sisters, founded in 1725 under the protection of the Augustinian Recollects, are a thriving and vital branch within the leafy tree that constitutes the Augustinian Recollect family. In accordance with the Augustinian Recollect charism, they have developed a flourishing educational apostolate over the centuries. As a result, the ARS now has 24 educational institutions in the Philippines, spread across the national territory that cover regulated education centers from pre-university to university level, orphanages and institutes.

All these educational establishments have formed a network: the Augustinian Recollect Educational Apostolate, AREA.

The network offers its educational services to over twenty four thousand Filipino children and young people, most of whom come from humble families: fishermen, farmers, etc., as well as families at risk of social exclusion.

The purpose of AREA's education is the integral development of the stu-

dents so that they may become personally involved in the social discourse and contribute to the development of their country, as people who treasure the following characteristics as a result of the education received: to become excellent professionals; be innovative; be generous and helpful people who give themselves and put their resources at the service of others and be people who form community and work for the community.

## Reflection

Lord, may we recognize you in the brother in need, and may our works proclaim you as the Messiah (Savior) of our lives. May we be the heralds of your word, receiving from you the Holy Spirit, accepting you as Father, creator and savior in imitation of your Son. May we Lord walk in the truth, because whoever is in the lie, as Saint John says, he is denying you as Messiah and Savior. Whoever denies Jesus the dignity of Messiah, that is, who has been anointed by God to reconcile man with God, is called anti-christ. Keep us, Lord, in the Truth.



# Assistance to the Immigrants and Migrants

Chihuahua (Mexico)

**3<sup>rd</sup>** of January  
Thursday  
Christmas Season

**10** REDUCED INEQUALITIES



*“Through religious practices we remember God, we serve him and we love him, but if they are left, little by little the love of God is extinguished, and the light of faith is extinguished”*

Saint Ezekiel Moreno

Groups of migrants frequently arrive at the parish of Christ the High Priest of Chihuahua (Mexico), run by the Augustinian Recollect. They are mostly Mexicans, who asked for food or clothes while they waited under the bridge of the train for the night to arrive and leave for the border of the United States. Since last year the majority come from Central America, fleeing from violence and hunger at home. There are also many Haitians, who often end up begging in the streets.

The Pastoral Care for the Movement of Peoples of the Archdiocese of Chihuahua is composed of lay people aware of the grave situation of these migrating masses. Although they currently have a dining room and small shelters, the goal is for the entire diocese, including the parish of the Augustinian Recollects to obtain a larger shelter.

So far the parish is able to give them food, clothes, medicines and rest. Mexican temporary migrants, who seek work in agricultural areas, live

in deplorable situations and confined in limited spaces. In the shelters of the Archdiocese they can sleep. The indigenous migrants from the mountains seek hospital care. Meanwhile, they also need shelter where to rest.

## Reflection

Everyone who dwells in Him does not sin. Brothers, now Saint John says that we are God's children. As such let us act truly as free men, pardoned and forgiven and no longer enslaved or tied to sin. Loved by God we now see others as brothers, being also God's children, and find in them neighbors and no strangers. For once in our lives let us take this bold step and truly be a member of God's chosen family.



# Keeping Company with Cancer Patients

Castelo (Brazil)

**4<sup>th</sup>** of January  
Friday  
Christmas Season



*"I knew you only by ears, but now my eyes have seen you"*

Job 42, 5



The Castelo Cancer Support Association for People with Cancer (APEC) is based in the city of Castelo, in the state of Espírito Santo (Brazil). Back in 2001, given the high number of people suffering from cancer in the city, the population felt the need to create an association that would give moral and financial support to cancer patients and their families. The Augustinian Recollect religious Egisto Cansian led this project.

On September 22, 2001, APEC was born, taking the name of Association of Friends of Families with Cancer of Castelo -AFACA-. The objective of the association was to give affective and financial support to the people carrying this disease and their families.

The mission of APEC is to carry out actions that improve the quality of life of people with cancer, in situations of social and personal vulnerability, and their families. APEC has among other purposes to assist children, adolescents, young people and elderly people with cancer in a vulnerable social and personal situation; promote actions to improve the

quality of life of these people; give assistance to their relatives; make it easier for the patient to have access to treatment and information related to their rights; and to sensitize the Castelan community to the prevention of cancer.

APEC now has seven employees: four social workers, a psychologist, a driver and a secretary.

## Reflection

In the letter of Saint John, the Lord invites us to get out of our situation as slaves, or rather to be free from the shackles of sin and live according to the will of the Father. Let us pray that we may love one another. In the gospel, Jesus, the teacher invites us to go and see where he lives. This invitation is also made to each one of us today; He invites us to follow him to go where he lives, brothers and sisters, let us open our hearts to the Lord, so that we can see him and let him show us the wonders of the kingdom.



# Better Kitchens

Chota (Peru)

**5<sup>th</sup>** of January  
Saturday  
Christmas Season



*"Your best servant is the one who loves with charity and gives himself without expecting anything in return"*

Saint Augustine

The Andean Communities of the province of Chota live, in most cases, in precarious situations. Their houses are made with light materials and mud, which directly affects their health. Kitchens are a source of disease for lack of hygiene.

For several years now, ARCORES has been carrying out a program to improve the hygiene and basic housing of the peasant families of the Chota Department. Through an experienced local team, families are offered a personalized program to improve their home, accompanied by training sessions on healthy habits.

In order to alleviate this situation and improve the lives of the families of these communities, since 2009 ARCORES, through the NGO Haren Alde, a member of the Augustinian Recollect International Solidarity Network, has built 10,000 improved kitchens, benefitting over 50,000 people. The ARCORES technical team in Peru designed kitchens with better hygiene and health in mind.

The project for each house includes the provision of own kitchen with three burners of varying diameters and an adequate smoke extractor. All this is built in bricks, which conserves heat better and consumes less. Likewise, an entrance of natural light is facilitated - no house has it -. The kitchen includes a laundry room, a pastry or pantry and micro-fillers - systems for waste disposal in an ecological way.

The construction of the house is accompanied by a training plan on healthy food and health.

## Reflection

Charity is the weapon most used by men, preferred in adversities and taken up in abundance, is always the best strategy to fight against the greatest evil of man: indifference.

# Scholarships

10 countries

**6<sup>th</sup>** of January  
Epiphany of the Lord



*“Herod fears, magicians desire; they wish to find the king, who feared losing the kingdom. Finally, all seek him: those, to live for him; the other, because he wants to kill him”*

Saint Augustine



For almost 20 years, ARCORES - formerly through the NGO Haren Alde - has continued to carry out its star project of giving out scholarships to thousands of children since its inception. Hundreds of people and families have sponsored during these years the academic and personal development of many young ones.

The program requires constant initiative on the part of the anchors or intermediaries, a faithful commitment of the sponsors and godparents, a special effort in learning of the beneficiaries and a careful attention in the management by the organization.

Behind every sponsorship is a large number of people. It requires a great effort of management: godparents and godmothers, staff at headquarters, anchors in each place where the program is present, families and volunteers who help in the necessary activities to achieve the goal of the sponsorship, which is always the promotion of education.

The sponsors make it possible for their “godchildren” to go to school, receive school supplies or have a gift at Christmas,

In 2017 the Star Project served 1,210 children in 21 centers located in nine nations. In total, the scholarship program for the ARCORES scholarship has 1,119 sponsors. Of these, 836 come from different points of Spain, while 283 of the city of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).

## Reflection

The goal of educating the heart is not so much to fight ignorance as to learn the exercise of virtues. Chains must be broken, seeds thrown, wounds healed and joy kept alive to improve mental readiness and make this process effective and enjoyable.



# Repair and Fixing of Homes

Salvaterra (Brazil)

**7<sup>th</sup>** of January  
Monday  
Christmas Season



*“You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water”*

**Psalms 63**

The community of Baiano is a Quilombola community formed by 15 families. They are descendants of black slaves that scattered throughout Brazil especially in the north and northeast and they are characterized by their own cultural traits. They live in a situation of socioeconomic precariousness.

The community does not have electricity, drinking water, school or health center, nor livelihood training.

Many problems have been detected, although the inhabitants of the community and the prelature of Marajó have concluded that the highest priority is the wellbeing of the families and addressing their health problems. The challenge was then to ensure safe drinking water and sanitation.

That is why ARCORES launched in 2018 the habitability and sanitation project in the homes of this community of Salvaterra. The project is building a water tank of 5,000 liters and 15 bathrooms with a masonry pit.

Thanks to the project all families have now access to water in their homes and they have hygienic bathroom or toilets. With the provision of this small infrastructure, health and family hygiene will be significantly improved, as well as water for their farms, which will generate income and employment and ensure a healthy diet for the fifteen families of the community.

## Reflection

Pope Francis in the encyclical *Laudato Si*, reminds us that all have the basic right to safe drinking water enshrined in the universal human rights to guarantee the survival of the people. He says that to “defend the earth, and defend the water, is to defend life”.

# Recycled Tires for Children's Parks

Bogota (Colombia)

8<sup>th</sup> of January  
Tuesday  
Christmas Season



*“Educate in a lifestyle based on an attitude of care for our common home that is creation”*

Pope Francis



In line with the SDG Objectives, with the care of the environment and the child care, the Vice-Rector for Human Development of the Universidad Agustiniana de Bogotá carried out the construction of several playgrounds made of recycled tires as part of the academic program of Industrial Engineering college with the theme - “Not to be thrown away, not to be burnt, but to be played with”. It is in line with the fourth semester course process and product design.

The project uses abandoned vehicular tires which end up being environmental hazards and use them in playgrounds both for creative structures and for beautification.

It was implemented in the village of San Joaquín, Municipality of Casanare, for more than 120 children and families. This is a case where helping the children is also caring for the environment.

In this way, the project complies with two of the thrusts of the solidarity of the International Augustinian Recollect Solidarity Network ARCORES.

On the one hand, caring for the environment, reducing the environmental impact and recycling the waste; and in turn facilitating the conditions of childhood, improving their possibilities and making their environments safer.

## Petition

Lord, we turn to You as our source of love. Love gives life. We ask you to help us to love as you love. We want to care for nature by recycling things that contaminate it. We entrust all the young people who take part in this social work so that the University can continue with these social projects.





# AIDS Awareness and Prevention

Cebu (Philippines)

**9<sup>th</sup>** of January  
Wednesday  
Christmas Season



*“Health and even life itself are of value inasmuch as they allow us to love and serve God our Lord”*

Saint Ezekiel Moreno

Central Visayas, where Cebu is located, is one of the regions of the Philippines where HIV-AIDS cases are high, and in recent years spiked considerably.

Out of its sense of social responsibility, the University San José-Recoletos, of the Augustinian Recollects and member of ARCORES Philippines, launched a program of prevention and awareness against this disease that is acquired through sexual transmission.

Students, teachers and psychologists from the University do information campaign to raise awareness among the population of the dangers of contracting AIDS, a disease that indiscriminately affects children and adults.

The team of the university, made up of volunteers, informs the target groups about the prevention, symptoms, cure or control of the disease.

The program is managed by the INFECOP institute of the University. This institute also helps people without resources with the “Mesa de

San José” project. Each week, students of the University dedicate their time to prepare and serve food to children and their families.

## Prayer

Oh, God, we ask you to make us your instruments so that the sick may not lack help and medicines. May we all always have a sensitive heart similar to that of Jesus, that our hands and eyes and all other senses be turned to the needy and the sick. Give us Lord, the grace so that the care and affection for our brothers who suffer the disease will never be lacking and they will not turn into despair. Amen.

# Social Action Volunteers

Panama City (Panama)

**10<sup>th</sup>** of January  
Thursday  
Christmas Season



*“May your charity not be a farce”*

Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans 12, 5-16



The Augustinian Social Service (SSA) is an educational activity for the eleventh and twelfth grade students of the San Agustín School in Panama. In line with the Educational Project of the school, the students are taught about social commitment and from there work with the people and groups that suffer from some type of social marginalization, in order to eradicate the causes altogether.

The Social Service emerged in 2002 as a social outreach project. Its administrators, Lorenzo Pérez and José María Aguerri, took the initiative of organizing a group of students, who voluntarily wanted to make a small “adventure” with a great goal: to help the needy.

They do the outreach in the Prelature of Bocas del Toro, a mission entrusted to the Augustinian Recollects.

After receiving training, students collaborate in the communities of this region with the construction of sports courts, classrooms, bathrooms, dining rooms, perimeter fences or reservoir for water. Volunteer work lasts

for two months in summer during the students’ holidays.

## Reflection

Today’s first reading invites us to love God, by first loving our brother: Dear children, We love God, because he loved us first. If someone says: ‘I love God’ and hates his brother, he is a liar, because he who does not love his brother, whom he sees, can not love God, whom he does not see. Let us not deceive ourselves by saying I love God, but I treat the brother with indifference, or I do not care about the pain of the one who suffers, or you are not able to support any social project, justifying that nothing can be done. Let’s focus on the gospel of today so that we realize what the program of life of Jesus was: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring the good news to the poor, to announce liberation to the captives and the healing of the blind, to give freedom to the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s grace”.



# Health Center for the Indigent

Bajos de Haina (Dominican Republic)

**11<sup>th</sup>** of January  
Friday  
Christmas Season



*“Do not lose hope, then. You are sick, approach Him and receive the healing”*

Saint Augustine

Bajos de Haina is one of the most contaminated settlements of the planet, due to the power plants and factories that discharge lead or sulfuric acid. 93% of the population are diagnosed with asthma or bronchitis.

in the working team, among whom are medical specialists who provide their services voluntarily and free of charge.

## Prayer

In 1995, the Augustinian Recollects thought of doing something for this city of the Dominican Republic. Hence they put up San Agustín Medical Center, opened more than 20 years ago, to relieve the pain of the haineros. It is linked to St. Augustine Parish of the Augustinian Recollects and one of the largest in the country.

Lord Jesus, today we want to ask you to cleanse us from that leprosy that afflicts all of us, the leprosy of lack of love in our lives and hearts. Let us discover You in our encounter with the misery of the world and in our service. Help us to bring our brothers and sisters who suffer from any type of leprosy back to society and let them feel once more their dignity.

The medical center counts on the voluntary work of doctors and nurses, who do consultations in this ARCORES center for free.

Its main beneficiaries are people who have no insurance and cannot afford to go to other medical centers. Due to its bulk of work the center has evolved to become an independent entity from the parish.

The center treats around 30,000 people a year. There are 27 professionals

# Assistance to the Indigenous Communities

Tapaua (Brazil)

**12<sup>th</sup>** of January  
Saturday  
Christmas Season



*“Only Jesus can fulfill all my desires and fill all my hopes”*

Saint Ezekiel Moreno



Riverside and indigenous communities in the municipality of Tapauá, Amazonia, Brazil, do suffer from many problems. The territories where they live are government lands open to other settlers. This has disturbed their enclaves and they do not know how to face this new situation. There is absence of policies on sustainable development just as there are no basic health and education services.

Government agencies do not seem to care. In recent years developers have come and invaded their lands, exploiting their trees and securing pasture lands for big farmers.

Worse is that fact that these original settlers are unable to organize themselves and get informed about their rights and defend them.

ARCORES Brazil supports these communities by providing seminar workshops so that they can move forward and create representative bodies and develop health and education systems.

## Reflection

The first reading invites us to place our confidence in God. “Dear children: The trust we have in God is that, if we ask something according to his will, he will listen to us. If we are sure that he hears our requests, we are also in possession of him and what we ask of him.” Many times we feel a great weight in our lives, difficulties everywhere, problems at work, a poor salary, and endless concerns that seem the weight of the whole world is on us. In those moments, it is when we are most desperate and find ourselves ready to “throw in the towel”, get discouraged and lose confidence in God. It is in those moments when we need to go to God and not let ourselves be dragged by despair, but rather to renew our trust in Him.



# Education for Personal Growth

Laoang, Samar (Philippines)

**13<sup>th</sup>** of January  
Sunday  
Baptism of the Lord

**3** GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



*"John's baptism was like who John was: just baptism to come from a just man, but man [...], on the other hand, the baptism of the Lord is like the Lord; the baptism of the Lord, then, is divine because the Lord is God"*

Saint Augustine

Laoang is a municipality of over 61,000 inhabitants, composed of 56 barangays or municipal districts, in the Northern Samar province, Philippines.

Economic activity in Laoang is mainly fishing and agriculture. 70% of the population lives in poverty and 10% in extreme poverty. Public services are insufficient to serve the population. Laoang has only one hospital, one health center and three community pharmacies. Water supply is a problem. Most of the population depends on rainwater for drinking and washing.

Education is the only way out of this poverty and predicament. Laoang has 12 public and two private educational centers, among them the Santa Teresita College of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters.

The school was established in 1946. Since then it is an engine of culture and development in the town. It currently has 2,100 students. Its main problem at the moment is expansion

due to the demand of increasing number of students.

## Reflection

Today is an opportunity that God gives us to renew our baptism, many times we celebrate the birthday of our birth, but hardly we celebrate our birth as children of God. Let us remember our birth to the fullness of life with God, with a renewed commitment to become another Christ. Let us put into action the Christian life through the Holy Spirit we received during our baptism, since without the Spirit the mission is forgotten, hope dies, fears grow, the following of Jesus ends in religious imperfection.



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