



June 12, 2020 Weekly Report from Oblate Youth Ministry in Tijuana.

Burning debris around the outskirts of Tijuana is a common phenomenon because the make-shift



housing developments do not have garbage service. The danger comes in the summer when dry grass can carry a fire. And the danger becomes extreme when the Santa Ana winds blow. In the parish overall perhaps some 20 or 30 houses burned this last week. Eight houses burned just a block away from our parish. The fire started early in the morning when garbage was being burned under the cover of darkness. The fire consumed 8 houses in our parish before



being contained. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate mission church responded by bringing food, blankets, sleeping bags, toiletries, etc. and offering to allow the displaced to use church facilities to clean up and shower. Even worse than losing your home, is losing your documentation, especially if you are an immigrant. Without those documents, it becomes difficult to work, and one becomes susceptible to being exploited. Replacing the documents is an arduous, if not impossible, process.



This week we visited an extraordinary woman/mother/Catholic. A few years ago, her house



burned down as a result of a neighbor under the influence of drugs. The woman and her two children stood on the street and watched their house be devoured. Other neighbors were outraged at the neighbor who caused the fire. But the woman defended him, saying that it was similar to an accident in that he was not in his right mind. The neighbors were amazed at her forgiving attitude and rallied to rebuild her house. Two years later the brother of the arsonist hanged himself. His family was devastated and in disarray. The woman invited them into her home

to comfort the family. The arsonist declined at first saying that it wasn't right, given what he had done. The woman insisted, telling the man that he needs to do it for his brother and to give his family a place to grieve.

During this period, the woman has battled cancer. She showed us that her hair used to be down to her waist, but today is only an inch long, having grown out a bit. With a smile she explains that her distended belly makes her look pregnant, but it is really caused by the cancer and a related hernia. She took us into a small courtyard to see her Marion garden. There are statues of Mary, St. Joseph, and Jesus beautifully surrounded with horticultural excellence. She explained that while the whole of her house burned, this garden just outside the front door was not damaged. A sign on her outside gate lets the passerby know that a Catholic family lives here.

The group at the church that was formed to help migrants got a donation of an ice chest full of cooked chicken. The owners of the rotisserie set up business only 6 months ago on a street where there was already three other places selling chicken. They arranged to have their new business blessed by the Oblates. Their church community was loyal to them, and the business has done very well.

The tasty chicken was taken to the migrant shelter where a long line formed. No one said that a dog can't be a migrant and can't have chicken. He probably has walked a long way.



Our wonderful youth leader, Mildred, has completed her studies in psychology thanks to her sponsor Paulette Bartlett. She lacks the necessary documents to be able to exercise her career due to the corona virus disruptions, but still plans to start looking for options in her anxiousness to realize her dream profession.