



Jan 8, 2020 Weekly Report from Oblate Youth Ministry in Tijuana.

In Mexico Christmas gifts are given on January 6th, in honor of the visit of the three wise men. In keeping with this tradition, several groups from the US visited the mission this last weekend to distribute gifts food, clothing, blankets, tarps, and toys. The youth ministry assists by assigning a team to each US group to assist them in their events. Generally, tickets are issued during the week preceding the event by those involved in doing social ministry and know who is needy. However, sometimes we just canvas a poor area and go door to door. In doing so, we learned about 2 more families with special needs children and two more families who have medical needs. Sometimes we are met with a bit of skepticism or bewilderment as we explain not only the upcoming event, but what services are available to them. A ticket to such an event can open doors and, of course, kids are thrilled by the toys.

We talked to the mother and a 16 year old boy, who could not go to secondary school, because he lacked a birth certificate. He was born at home. For \$150, you can get a DNA test and get a birth certificate, but that is out of their reach. His 10 year old sister got excused from school because she failed to bring in school supplies as required by the school. Through our donors we are able to help with school supplies, so it was good to discover this situation. We also met a man and his wife who recently moved into this community. He is a double amputee. The battery in his wheel chair is failing. Recently his wheelchair gave out and began rolling down hill and a passerby rescued him. We mentioned to the mothers of the special needs children we met, that the Oblate mission here offers a free school, where



children can learn to be more independent. As we visited the different households, we especially liked listing the programs available (English classes, Taekwondo, scholarships, SEARCH retreats, social ministry opportunities, psychological services, weekly youth mass, music, etc.) when we encounter teens.

At the main event, over 60 youth took turns escorting a family through the line to get food, supplies and toys. Then the youth help them carry the bags. Can you imagine the impact on the younger kids seeing older youth, serving with gratitude and smiles?

One family we help is that of Señor Alberto, who is 50 years old and a stroke victim, leaving him paralyzed on one side of his body. He worked in a welding shop with his brother until he had his stroke about a year ago. His wife has been amazing learning what needs to be done to help his rehabilitation. And it has paid off. We have watched him go from completely bed ridden to now getting dressed every day and being able to move around to different places in the house. He even occasionally rides a stationary bike, albeit with one leg not working. His wife sees this all as a test that helps the family become closer. They have 8 people living in the house, including 5 grandchildren. Their 23 year daughter had quit school so she could work to help the family budget. So we help with occasional visits where we bring food, medical supplies, and just visit the family. Señor Albierto also needs speech therapy.



Carolina Rangel Rojas is the 23 year old daughter mentioned above. When we learned about her quitting school to help with the family's financial hardships, we got her to apply for a youth center scholarship. She is now back in school studying to be a flight attendant. She still works some, babysitting at a playground and selling apples in the street. We often find her sitting at the table doing homework when we visit. She hopes to someday inspire other youth to really dream big and try to do more than they think they might. She is very happy to have such a supportive family and a scholarship donor, Mitch Bredefeld.



This exceptional student is Alejandra and she is majoring in education, especially to be a math teacher. She is nearing her final year thanks to her scholarship donor, Joan Slimocosky. She recently realized a dream to study in another country when she won a two month scholarship to study English in Canada. She also is studying Italian and hopes someday to travel and learn more about other cultures.