



## March 17, 2020 Weekly Report from Oblate Youth Ministry in Tijuana.

We had one of our health fairs at the parish. The Lions Club helps sponsor these and students from a local college with a medical program come and provide the various tests and checks. We had about 60 students come and a hundred attendees. There were the usual health checks plus some dentistry. The



schedules of these youth who volunteer to do the fair are typically so busy, that it is quite a sacrifice to come donate their time. A talk on procedures for protecting yourself from the corona virus was given, stressing clean hands and social distancing. Unlike the US where attending a health fair might be just a casual second check on your health, here the health fairs are addressing problems for many people. For example, you might get a tooth filled or you might receive instructions on taking care of a wound or infection. Sometimes the events include blood checks, hearing tests, virus screening, etc.

We learned this week the Church in Mexico is having the bishops consider canceling large gatherings, including Sunday masses. They are asked to have exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on an all-day basis, allowing people to attend at different times. We expect to hear from the local bishop soon. Our SEARCH retreat, we have been preparing so hard for, has been postponed. Schools are going to close, and colleges and high schools may have some distance learning alternatives until schools reopen. We are considering the possible impacts on our people if there is a border closure, since so many people depend on being able to cross for work, health care, family, banking and other critical matters. We also are thinking about the impacts on so many



vulnerable people here, if there is an economic downturn that could affect factories and general employment. And, since so many families include senior persons in the household, the virus could be especially bad if it spreads. Generally, there is not great fear here in Mexico, but we need to prepare our social ministry efforts for greater needs.



Our migrant team went to help in a house for migrants in Tijuana called El Puente. This facility is somewhat new and currently houses about 20 people, including some from Central America. Beyond cleaning, the team helped build a couple more rooms, including a bathroom. This place was started not long ago by a migrant, just trying to help other migrants. It is very basic, so each trip our team makes, improvements are made. The team brought food, blankets, and for the children, shoes. One migrant from El Salvador told us that selling goods in the streets, he could make \$20 a day there. That is more than factory workers in Tijuana make.

His rent was only \$30 a month and utilities were only another \$22. So, he was doing very well. Then a few years ago the gangs and violence became prevalent. First, everything he owned got stolen, then his family started getting harassed. That is when they joined the caravan in September 2018 to migrate north and start over.



This week we spotlight Nora Montalvo, whose scholarship is provided by Pat Boren. Nora is majoring in psychology. She has been serving in SEARCH for four years and now helps in leadership roles. Unfortunately, the SEARCH retreat for adults that just got postponed, was going to be enhanced by her mother's attendance. She is a regular with her young adult group visiting families, orphanages, and migrant shelters, as was highlighted above.