

Three of us journeyed to La Mesa, a prison here in Tijuana, where we wanted to see the setting



of the book the book Prison Angel. We arrived and learned that the associated sisters to the Prison Angel, who have a prison ministry, live only two blocks away, so we went there. We met a wonderful nun, who was only too happy to tell us about the Prison Angel, Mother Antonia. Mother Antonia founded a prison ministry 25 years ago, when she moved into that prison and lived in a cell. She arranged for clothing, food, and other necessities for

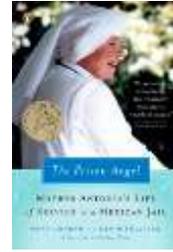
many of the inmates. In this prison, the family is expected to care for the person in jail, and depending on how much your family has to offer, you may live like a pauper or a king. Mother Antonia paid fines getting many people released who only had minor infractions, but who would have stayed in prison for an inordinate amount of time. She paid for dentistry, doctors, lawyers, never judging the person she was helping. She once quelled a prison riot that was poised to be a shootout with the certainty of many deaths and harsh treatment for a long time thereafter. Instead, she arranged for two-way talks that lead to better treatment. She cared for everybody and not got to know them but their families also, including those of the warden, guards, and inmates. She even eventually befriended every police captain in Tijuana, campaigning for better treatment of people who were arrested and awaiting their day in court. She became highly respected and loved, to the point that she even changed the lives of some of the cartel big shots who did a stint in jail. She got the approval of the bishops of Tijuana and San Diego to start an order called the Eudist Servants of the Eleventh Hour, where women who were at a stage in their live, whether they had children or not, and without regard to age, could take vows and enter into service.



It was that order that the 80+ year old sister we visited belonged to. She has been with the ministry 15 years and accompanied Mother Antonia for 9 years (Mother Antonia died in 2013). She has 4 children and 6 grandchildren. Mother Antonia raised 7 children, before starting the onsite prison ministry. There are now 6 sisters doing the prison ministry in Tijuana, but the order has prison ministries in Nebraska, Texas, Massachusetts, and California. She still visits police stations, but says she is not as good as Mother Antonia. They solicit

donations, including from hotels, who give them sheets and blankets. They teach catechism, accompany people to court, even those not sentenced yet and give them a piece of candy, because that might be the only good thing that happens to them that day. When we asked the sister for a favorite story, she said that there are so many because Mother Antonia was always

teaching by her example. Once the sister could not find one donated Nike tennis shoe, and she was distraught, looking everywhere, even calling the donor to confirm that there were two. Mother Antonia finally said, stop worrying, and give it to a person with one leg. When the security door of the sisters' house was stolen, the sister was so angry, complaining about such a person that would steal from the sisters. Mother Antonia quelled her anger saying that at least that person's family would eat tonight.



Many people here in Tijuana know of Mother Antonia and it is common to talk to someone who knew her personally because they visited someone in jail.

As another example of the youth ministry here reaching outside the boundaries of the parish, over 40 of our Oblate parish youth represented our parish at a deanery event. There were some 200 youths from 6 different parishes, joining together to begin their Lenten journey. They listened to talks about the origins, purpose, and practices of



Lent. They concluded with a Holy Hour, here called a Sagrado Corazón. Such an event opens eyes and hearts about how the Church reaches beyond the local community, and how we all serve the same God and celebrate the Eucharist and Mass as one family.



Meet Ricardo Munive Rodríguez, who is studying administration and logistics thanks to his donor Margie Maseda. Ricardo is a single father with a 5 year old son. Ricardo says *"The challenges that I have are to fulfill my tasks and responsibilities within the classroom as well as in my work, to arrive early and not to miss any workday under any circumstance as well as to maintain my grade point average. My professional goals are to graduate with honors and acquire all the knowledge necessary to help my community."* Ricardo is a co-leader of our immigrant outreach

ministry. Whenever we plan an outreach event, he coordinates the logistics. Good training!

