



CON-SOLATIO  
A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

## Emma Kearney's Sponsor Letter #2 - October 2021

### BECOME LIKE A CHILD OF GOD



*"Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven" -  
Matthew 18:3*

Hi everyone,

I hope all is well with you! In some ways, life here has gotten easier. I'm learning more Spanish, and I'm not constantly nervous when going visits because I know the people better and feel a stronger relation with them. I can navigate through the streets and can pretty much do everything on my own. I have gotten into a daily rhythm of knowing what I need to do, and I have also truly come to appreciate homemakers, and mothers. I always knew my mom worked a lot to keep the home nice and to keep everything running smoothly, but I always assumed she had a lot of free time while us kids were all at school. Somehow during the morning hours when I am not in the chapel for adoration, and the afternoon after lunch, I could literally just be doing laundry for hours and still have something more to do. I have really grown to love doing little projects around the house to make it more beautiful, and to complete things that maybe had been put off for too long. It's nice because Marcos, Valeria, and I all have become accustomed to the way each one lives/does things, so everything runs smoother than my first few months here. But it has also gotten harder for me in a way where recently, my heart is almost always feelings heavy with pain. This is something that I think will only get stronger as time goes on. As we all know from experience, love is not just joy and fun. "Love is patient, Love is kind.... etc." Honestly, all the defining aspects of Love as stated in the Bible, are characteristics of sacrifice. It isn't easy any of these things all the time. But this isn't my point. The most difficult thing that gives me pain is this mission of only compassion. It's hard listening to Violeta (8 years old) bless our food and finish the prayer asking for God to always protect her father, and asking if he could come visit her one day. It's hard watching the mother of Violeta (same girl), Nina, Chichi, and Carlita, who brought them all into the world through prostitution, have their grandmother raise them all and only drop in when it is convenient for her. The generations of trauma and neglect is never ending. These kids were raised by parents who maybe didn't make good choices, or in fact made horrible mistakes at the cost of their children. It can be so angering watching the innocence of these children be ripped away at such a young age. But then I hear the stories of some of these older people, and realize they had the same experiences as kids. It is difficult to be the one to end the cycle. None of these people are even able to process their grief or try to do things to fix it. They just move on. When I watch Wilson play in the playground, he looks normal. He looks like all the other kids. But I know he held his dying father in his arms, shot, at four years old. Even with a lot of help, like therapy and talking through his grief that would be enough to affect his whole entire life. But no, his life just goes on without much to help. That's it. It can feel like I am just living in a swamp of bad history, but just watching,

and there is no hope. Any time I have time to sit and think about these things and even just let my own brain process everything I see and hear I start crying and can't stop. In our "school of community," we are reading all about hope, and it feels like it is meant for me. I pray all the time, in fact more than I ever have in my life, and even still it can be so hard. And I can find myself always wanting to talk about it with someone to ease my mind, and I am always thinking about things I could do to fix the way it is here. But I can't. Firstly, it's impossible for me to change someone for themselves, and secondly, my mission here is not to try to change people. I am here to be a different light for these people. Here for them to come to experience love they might not get otherwise, for a listening ear, for a shoulder to cry on, or even just to enjoy a cup of tea together. So, this is where I need to offer it all up to God. Really truly, talking to people about it or trying to give advice on how to fix their problems does not take away the pain. It is in trusting in God and coming to Him with my problems that I will find more peace. It is very much easier said than done, and is still a work in process that I will continue to struggle with.

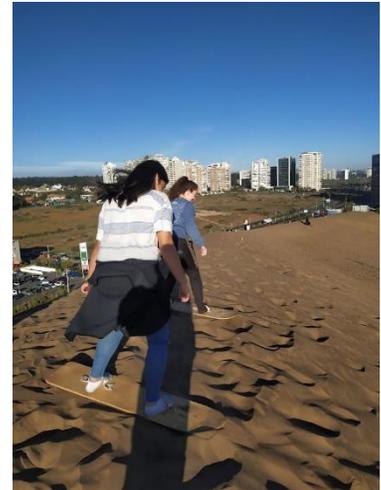


*Senora Olga's birthday. Vale and I went with Senora Olga's daughter (directly to the right of her), her four grandkids, and the little baby, her great grandchild*

But still, looking at the people I serve also gives me strength. God says that in order to enter the Kingdom of God, we must be like children of God. I have always been confused by this, because of course it makes sense, but how are we supposed to return to be children with innocence, when we have all experienced or seen such bad things that tear our innocence away? Especially in this neighborhood I live in, where many of the 10-year-old children have experienced worse than I think I ever could. But Señora Olga has shown me exactly what God means when He says we must be like children. Whenever I am with her and her grandchildren, all I can see is how childlike she is. Not that she is babyish or immature. She is quite the opposite. She raises the children very strictly, and is known for it. It

shows, as the kids are some of the most respectful ones in the neighborhood. She is also very respectable. She took on her four grandchildren as her own, and never complains. So how is she childlike you may wonder? Her smile. Her joy when we come and visit. Sometimes we dance with the kids, for example, they do an online Zumba zoom class and one time I was doing it with the girls. Señora Olga just sat there watching with the happiest face. One day I pierced her ears and she was so happy, just like a little girl who gets her ears pierced for the first time. Even still, I couldn't quite put my finger on why she is like a child of God. But as I am typing this out, I am realizing it is her never ending, never expecting, and completely pure love. I see it in the way she is with her grandchildren. She has given up her life for them. She feeds them, teaches them how to have respect, and wants what is best for them. And she treats us so well too. Señora Olga's birthday was a few weeks ago and without question, she consulted all the children about what we would all do that day. She was so excited. On the day of her birthday, we showed up to their house and all the kids were dressed so nice. Señora Olga had on a nice shirt, a new haircut, and couldn't keep her smile off her face. She asked me to help her change her first piercings into some pretty dangly earrings. Señora Olga's greatest joy is in her grandchildren. It is so beautiful; I can't explain it. She is a good example of someone who has persevered and has given me the inspiration to do the same.

Anyway, here are some small updates of things that have been happening since the last time. We have started going to different houses for our days of rest, which is the way it was before Covid started. So far, we have gone to two different families' houses and it's amazing how kind and welcoming they are. Before, we had been having our days of rest in our house, and I didn't realize how much of a difference it made to actually leave and go somewhere, as usually our "rest days" would end up having the little kids waiting outside begging to come in no matter how many times we would tell them it is our day off haha. One of the families has older kids, and they will come for our "School of the Community" that we have on Thursday nights. It is usually the three kids, who are 22, 25, and 28. The two oldest are in politics in Chile, and so we almost always talk about something having to do with that. One of the days we went to their house on our rest day, the oldest two took us to sand dunes near their house and we went sand boarding, which is way



harder than it looks and also gives you a good workout walking back up after. Recently, Marcos had his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. We celebrated his birthday over the course of a few days, with different people, having four cakes in total! One celebration with some teens, one with the elderly people, one with kids, and one at one of the houses where we go on our days of rest. It was so cute because all the elderly gave him gifts consisting of prayer cards, chocolate, socks, toothpaste and deodorant. We had a dance party with them after our lunch and they were all so happy. We also celebrated Milo's birthday, which he had been asking us almost every day, how many days left until his birthday, for probably about two months. The week leading up to his birthday he would individually ask Marcos, Vale, and I, what day and what time we were celebrating (even though every time we would tell him it was on his birthday at 3 o'clock lol), and he would change his mind about what type of cake he wanted with every conversation. The day of his birthday, I opened our gate as he arrived promptly at the time we had planned, and he ran and gave me a huge hug and continued to happily hug me as we walked in. We had lasagna just like he asked, and a cake with blue frosting, as he ended up deciding he wanted his cake to look just like the cake of Emilio, one of the ten-year-olds from a few months back. While he was here for several hours, he was bombarded by WhatsApp calls from so many of the previous volunteers of Chile, to wish him a happy birthday and catch up with him. His smile didn't leave his face all day.



*At Laura's house for Mother's day.*

One day, Vale and I were walking back to our house after visiting Laura, and we had a bunch of cake that she had given to us but we were so full, so we offered it to some men in the street. One of them was named Miguel Angelo. He is probably 50 or 60 years old, but he was telling all the other guys, who were also much older than us, to have the utmost respect for us. In Spanish, there is "Tu" which means you, in a familiar way, but then there is "Usted" which is what you use for elders and to have respect. He was using "Usted" for us, and told the others to use it as well. He said that we never need accompaniment walking anywhere as we are protected by God. Every time we see him in the street, he says we are blessed and is always so respectful. It always amazes me and makes me feel so humbled when people say these things. One day we were visiting one of our friends, and they asked us to pray out loud and bless them. These are the examples that remind me what I am here for: a very simple presence, that often I feel is so small, but I realize for these people, even people we just see on the street, it is so bright in their lives. One boy Patchy, who is 21 years old had left to go live somewhere else, but finally he returned after a few

months. We had been praying especially for him during this time every day. He finally returned to live in our neighborhood again, and one day came to our house and told us that he had been extremely suicidal, crying all day long, every day, and our prayers and him thinking of us was a reason he felt helped and was able to get better. I am always so happy and thankful when people come and tell us things like this, because even though I know that people need our presence, there can be long drags of weeks where I can start to doubt it, which I logically try to tell myself to ignore those thoughts, but as a human, I am bound to get them!

On a sadder note, our friend Joseph (who I talked about in my last letter) who is 20, has gone into a phase of heavy drug and alcohol use, and has started to hang out with a bad group of friends. He hasn't come around since probably May and I miss him so much. I've seen him walking around the neighborhood a few times, and he doesn't say hi or respond when I say hi. He is either with his group of friends or walking alone with a bottle of alcohol in his hands. We pray for him every day and I hope he eventually comes back to visit us. Apparently, he always goes in and out of these phases; a few months with us then he will disappear for a period of time. This can be very hard for us, as it can happen with a bunch of different people here, without any warning. It can be easy to always have a fear for him looming over my head, as there is so much violence involved with the drug use, and no mercy is given to anyone. Even though it is very sad for me that Joseph never comes to our house, and even more painful when I see him in the street and he doesn't talk to us, it gives me peace to see him and know he is still alive.

Our friend Oda passed away after a difficult and long fight with her health. She had a very bad health history already, and then she got Covid a few months back. She had been in a coma for a few months then she finally woke up and eventually came home but we still couldn't visit her as she was very weak. She was having dialysis every day, and about a week ago she passed away during one of the dialysis treatments. We were able to go to her funeral mass that was held at her house with all her family and friends of the neighborhood. After, we went to her best friend's house Rosa, who has been a friend of our community for many years now. She used to cook at our house all the time for older missionaries. Now, she takes care of two of her grandchildren, as their mother disappears for long bouts of time due to drugs. Rosa is also the grandmother of Joseph as well. She has another grandson Hector, who I just met recently. He's 18 and right now, he is in a phase of spending a lot of time with Rosita and his two siblings. He lives with Joseph in a different house, but before he had to leave and live in Santiago (about two hours away) for a long period of time because someone in our neighborhood was looking to kill him because of drug and gangs he was involved in. I had heard about Hector before, because Joseph used to always talk about him. It's so hard to believe and heartbreaking to finally meet him, a small, timid, sweet and cute teen, who deserves so much more than the life situations he has been surrounded by and has fell a slave to. It can be so sad to see these people who have kind hearts, pushed out by society due to the things they have fallen slaves to. There is a part of one of the streets we walk on that has a line of chairs that all the alcoholics sit on. These people are all very sweet and polite, fighting a tedious and hard battle. One of the men in particular, Pato, has such a big heart. He walks around selling fish as his job. He always talks to us. One day Vale, Marcos, and I were on the bus and he got on the bus as well.



*All of us (plus one boy who stayed with us for 10 days, training to go on a mission in a different country) with Pato. We were waiting for the bus one day when he passed by and of course stopped to talk with us. Fish isn't very expensive here since we live right next to the ocean and seaport, and also a plus is that it's always extremely fresh!*

He was sitting with us and talking, most of which I couldn't understand. He said to Vale, "Listen and tell the gringa everything I say later." One man selling candies came on the bus and Pato bought each of us one chocolate. We all said thank you and I told him he was very kind, which he replied saying "He is working, so I buy it from him to help his job." Along with being very kind hearted, he also is very funny. When we were getting off the bus, I said "chau" and he said to me "wow at least you learned how to say goodbye." HAHA (also the only reason I knew anything he was saying to me during this time on the bus is because Vale would repeat what he would say to me after). It's funny because I can't understand a lot of the peoples' slang or rapid talking with a heavy Chilean accent, so a lot of times Marcos and Vale will repeat what the person said (still saying it in Spanish) and somehow, I always understand them. Lastly, we have had an oven that has been on the brink of breaking since I got here. Well, it was broken. We would have to light it with matches and then shove a metal rod to keep it in place. We couldn't adjust the temperature or anything, and so every cake or bread or anything we made would always come out black on the bottom or half cooked, etc. Our French partner non-profit took pity on us and we had a new oven donated to us!! It's funny because there are so many things, I never considered being so excited for, like a new oven, or if we go to someone's birthday and they have cheese that is a little better quality than the cheapest cheese we buy.

I got to talk to Charlie B. last week, a former missionary who finished his mission in Chile about a year ago. It was so nice to talk to someone who personally knew all the people I was talking about, and also who speaks in English! He told me about different people and how life had gone with them when he was there, and explained different situations of people I hadn't known before. A very sad thing for me is that none of my family or friends will personally know these people, but I am sure that they will feel like they do when I come back and talk their ears off for hours!! :D

I hope you all can enjoy this letter and can understand more of my life here! If anyone has any specific questions for me, if you are wondering about something or someone, or if you just want to say hi, please email me at [emmakearney56@gmail.com](mailto:emmakearney56@gmail.com). I will get back to you when I can! All of you are in my prayers every day and will continue to be!

God bless and thank you for your support,

Emma.



*Us three missionaries with Cami and Maxi in front of the mural that Vale painted free hand in under a week. "Porvenir Bajo" is the neighborhood we live in and the green "SW" sign in the center is for the Soccer team of Valparaiso, Santiago Wanderers. "Valpo" is what a lot of people call Valparaiso.*