

Barrio Edgar Munguia 2001: Our Mexican sisters & the courage to be present

The love, joy and welcome for others that the sisters live and bear in their hearts, shines more brightly than the pulsing red lights atop a nearby cellular telephone tower dominating the night sky.

Children from nearby streets who often come to visit the sisters and people who come to join them for morning or evening prayer know the same experience of welcome that was offered to us.

In the dusty and rutted streets of one of Managua's poor barrios, we encounter a place of Gospel welcome where there is room for each of us beyond the limits of physical space and practical considerations.

Hospitality here is a privilege, not a problem.



Sisters Fidelina, Yerenia, Carolina

Inside this little house, there is an atmosphere of deep peace and quiet.

There is the time of quiet prayer, when each sister finds a little space to be by herself.

There is the time of common prayer, when the neighbors and especially the little children flock to join them.

And there is time for the sisters to study and sing and dance together.

And all around, there is so much happening! This neighborhood is buzzing with activity, and the sisters are a vital part of it.

The presence of the sisters in Managua raises for us a question.

What does it take to be fully there with enthusiasm and life?

What does it take not to wander off and to escape the present moment, the present place?



Sisters Fidelina and Matilde

Looking at the life of the sisters in the barrio, it is clear that they could have chosen to live elsewhere, outside the barrio.

Or they could choose to spend time at the nearby newly constructed mall — a place where wishful consumers can hang out even if they don't have the money to do the consuming.

Or they could have a television to fill in the quiet spaces and to blot out the noise of the neighborhood.

But they choose *to be living in the neighborhood*, to be present there.

What kind of courage does it take?

It doesn't come through as rigidity or stubbornness, or just will power -- is it something that comes from the 'coeur,' the heart? Is it something that comes from fidelity, cultivated trust?



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