

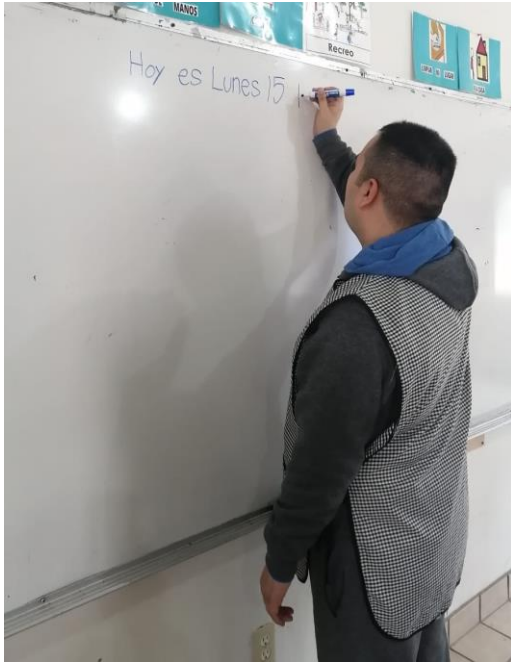


May 19, 2023, Weekly Report from Oblate Youth Ministry in Tijuana.

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## *“Life got more difficult.”*

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Guadalupe is the 45-year-old mother of three boys; ages 25, 24, and 7. Mario is the 24-year-old and is a student at the Oblates school for children with special needs (CARES) in Tijuana. He has been at that school for the last 10 years. Mario has autism.

Guadalupe says Mario’s biggest accomplishment was learning to use the bathroom on his own. But today, he has learned to do math, read, and write plus other skills.

When Mario was born, his older brother Brandon eventually came to resent that Mario was getting so much attention. Through therapy, it was explained to him that Mario needs more attention. Brandon came to accept that and one year told his classmates about Mario. The teacher invited Brandon to bring Mario to school with him so that he could learn to play with other children his age. That worked out well, quelling his mother’s anxiety.

After Mario was born and diagnosed, she was told by the doctors that there was a good chance that her next child would have a similar condition. After years, and because of Mario’s success in the school, she did have another child. That child has ADHD, but at age 7 he can read, loves numbers, and wants to go to school. He would like to go to CARES because he loves the activities and costumes and thinks it would be great fun. Guadalupe explains to him that Mario needs a school with a different environment.

A few years ago, life got more difficult when Guadalupe learned she had breast cancer. Her thoughts were all about what would happen to her children...Brandon still in college, Mario with his special needs, and the youngest with ADHD and ready to start school.



Guadalupe was having to make hospital visits for radiotherapy 5 days a week, but now it is down to 2. Fortunately, her husband's work insurance has covered the cost. However, the family is under financial strain and has not been able to make house payments. The Oblate school has not charged her since she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Guadalupe's husband worked in the US for 10 years with a work visa but had to return when the visa expired. During that period, he had an affair and Guadalupe says beyond her dismay, the energy has never been the same in the home. And if that wasn't enough, Guadalupe's mother has moved in with

them and has her own health problems.

Guadalupe keeps her focus on Mario first, her mother second, and says she really doesn't have time to dwell on the negative. She is quick to mention that the CARES school is the best school Mario has been in and she feels supported and listened to there.

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***“You must unconditionally love your children.”***

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Maribel is a 46-year-old mother who takes care of her granddaughter, Madeleine. Antonio is Madeleine's father. When Antonio's girlfriend found out she had a baby with disabilities, she abandoned Antonio and Madeleine. Antonio moved back in with his mother.

Madeleine's condition is called Angelman Syndrome, which is a nerve condition that rendered Madeleine unable to walk or speak.

Antonio works hard to provide financially but wants very little to do with his daughter. Maribel tries to get him to take time to play with his daughter, but Antonio has been tired and angry for the 4 years he has been living in this situation.

Maribel has been needing a hysterectomy due to cancer. Not having insurance, the expense is too much for her. Antonio is further angered by this, saying he doesn't believe his mother can't afford it, and suspects her reason for not having the surgery is so that she can abandon him just like his ex-girlfriend did.

Maribel explains that Antonio's anger has been with God. He blames God for giving him a child that he can't enjoy and play with. How could God do that to him?

Madeleine goes to the Oblates special need school (CARES). Occasionally, the Oblates hold a mass for the school. Recently, Antonio attended one of those masses. God know why he happened to have a day off and would have ended up attending that mass. Fr. Jesse OMI talked about the fact that having a child with special needs isn't a punishment for sins nor a curse. Rather, these children are a blessing and, while it can be trying and challenging, you need to unconditionally love your children.



Antonio says he felt like the priest was speaking directly to him. He asked God's forgiveness. Just a few months later Madeleine took her first steps and Antonio's response was to go to mass and give thanks. Madeleine now tells her dad she is an angel.

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## *“Featured student.”*

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Yajaria is our featured student and is completing high school. She plans to pursue a career in education. She says she has long wanted to teach children. She helped start a youth group in one of the tougher communities in the parish. This area is known for poverty and gang activity. She lives in this area and people respect her bravery and consider her a role model for the community.