



November 16, 2023, Weekly Report from Oblate Youth Ministry in Tijuana.

“It took 5 days to get her to a hospital.”



Micaela is a 52-year-old woman who has been afflicted with a serious condition for 5 years, which has rendered her bed-ridden. Her mother, Angela (age 72) helps her eat, changes her diapers, and gives her baths. This condition came on rather suddenly where

over just a few days Micaela started walking slowly, had inhibited speech, her arms and legs became numb, and she could hardly move her head and mouth. It took 5 days to get her to a hospital. This was because at first, they thought Micaela was faking, but also because they live in a remote 4-wheel drive area, and Angela and husband needed help lifting her.

Just a few months ago the parish social outreach team learned of Micaela. They started by helping the family make ends meet with diapers and food. The parish Medical Team then visited the family and was able to treat Micaela's bed sores. They also taught Angela how to help Micaela with some exercises that would prevent bedsores. They also helped Angela with her hypertension (blood pressure) and pain in her knees, especially aggravated when their house is cold.

A hospital bed was donated to the parish, so the Medical Team chose Micaela to receive it. Such a decision can be hard because they have multiple bed-ridden

people they visit. The bed has been very helpful because now they can elevate Micaela, which helps get her into a wheelchair for baths and time in the sun.



The Medical Team often must make tough decisions about where to spend their time, how to distribute resources, and how to treat various conditions. As always, we ask for your prayers for our mission.

“These eleven children should have a place to go to mourn.”

November 2 is the Day of the Dead, a tradition celebrated in Mexico. While this sounds negative to other cultures, in Mexico it is generally a joyful day that honors those who have gone before us. It is a way of saying that you are not forgotten to loved ones. People typically set up a little place in their homes, churches, schools, and even government offices acknowledging deceased friends and relatives. In this place they might put pictures, food, drinks, books, or a memento such as a guitar if the person liked music. You may have seen some parts of Mexico the town comes together to hold community celebrations such as a carnival.

For myself it has been a sad day. My father died in prison when I was 5 years old. I don't know where he was buried, so I have no place to go to set up something in



Altar in the St Padre Pio Chapel in Tijuana. Pictures are of the founder of the Oblate of Mary Immaculate Tijuana mission, Fr Robert Callahan OMI, former pastor, Fr. Juilo OMI, and Sister Lucia who worked at the parish for over 15 years.

his memory. When I ask my family about his grave site, they just say they don't know where it is because no grave marker was used. I wish I could have at least marked his grave with a decent headstone.

A few years ago, I wrote about a woman name Maria Belen, who was faced with having to choose between her life and the life of her unborn 11th child. She chose the life of the baby, but the doctors refused her request saying that the child probably wouldn't make it anyway. That led to Maria and her husband delivering the baby at home. They named the baby Leon Juda (Lion Judah), saying that he would have to fight for his life.

It was shortly after this that our parish social outreach program got involved. Maria had now been diagnosed with terminal cancer and was not given long to live. To at least fight for her life she entered the hospital, so a blood drive was organized to help defray the costs. Several of our parish youth went multiple times to donate blood as well as some friends from the church that Maria and Mauro belonged to. Maria died a few months later.

Some of those that had been helping the family and myself were invited to the funeral. We learned that Maria had instructed her children that she was going to die and that she wanted them to celebrate her life. She told each of them in age-appropriate ways, that she was going to heaven and from there she would always be with them and would be watching their progress through life. At the funeral each of the 11 children were dressed in white honoring her request.

Mauro had asked us for \$150 so that he could buy a proper grave marker for his wife, saying that the children needed a place to go when they needed to cry or just talk to their mother. Being responsible for trying to meet peoples' needs in our social outreach program, I thought to myself that my father had no grave marker and I had not found it a big deal. I told Mauro we would see what we could do, but I really didn't want to ask any donor for this money.

I talked with my spiritual director, an Oblate of Mary Immaculate priest, about this. He reminded me that I had previously mentioned missing my father and wishing there was a gravesite, and didn't I think that these eleven children should have a place to go to mourn. I later came to understand after further spiritual direction that after a person has died, it is not too late to say I am sorry, or I forgive you, or thank you and to let go. And it does not matter whether you think the person was deserving of that prayer. The prayer is about your heart.



“Feature student.”

Gabriela is studying to be a psychologist thanks to the Oblate scholarship program made possible by many donors. She is in her second year at university. Gabriela has been an altar server at our parish for 14 years and has been a leader in the youth group.



She says she likes to dance, serve, and do makeup for herself and others. Gabriela has a long history of illnesses, which have interfered with her studies. Not having to work to help pay for her education has been a great relief. She looks forward to the day she can give back to her community as a way of paying forward what has been done for her.

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