



CHILDREN OF THE IMMACULATE HEART



Dear Friends in Christ,

Christ is risen! During this Easter season, we have reason to celebrate that God in his infinite wisdom, through the Church, has given us 50 days to celebrate his glorious Resurrection – stretching from Easter Sunday to Ascension Thursday. While the 40 days of Lent can seem long, the joys of Easter are even longer! Is this not like our lives, where we have to face suffering for a time, but know that the joys of eternity will never end?

This is a concept that little by little we hope to pass on to the women and girls we serve, but it can be a long and hard road to heal wounded natures to get to this level of hope. One thing that has struck me this past year working at The Refuge is seeing how many youth with developmental delays have come through our doors. I attended a presentation once at a research conference about how people with disabilities are more at risk for trafficking and had seen it with one of our adult clients, but it is something I have seen consistently over the past year working with teenage girls. We have had at least four teenage girls in the past year who struggle with some sort of developmental disability and then have also been sexually abused and at high risk for or confirmed cases of sex trafficking. One cannot help but feel a righteous indignation that the forces of evil take advantage of these girls who are even more vulnerable to exploitation because of their disability on top of their being foster youth. Here we truly understand that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, and that it is our sacred duty to do our best to protect these girls and help them grow and reach their full potential as young women.

Here you will find some words from one of our staff about her first days working at The Refuge. We humbly ask you for your prayers and financial support as we strive to serve the women and girls entrusted to us.

Yours in Christ, Grace Williams Lionello

CIH President/Executive Director

Starting off at The Refuge was exciting, but also scary. I knew I had a lot of responsibility on my hands and influence over these girls, so I had to be the best version of myself. I wasn't sure how I was going to do that, but I will say management and staff have definitely guided me and shown me ways to react, support, and problem-solve in a caring, safe way. I have been learning so much from medication logging to how to deal with high-stress situations. I love how the team members support one another by having weekly meetings to improve how we handle certain situations. Since I've participated in the weekly team meetings, I've noticed how well communication has improved between staff and also with the residents. Management is very professional, which I appreciate because it helps everything run smoothly. I am really enjoying my time here at The Refuge and excited to see where it can take me.

Destinee Gastelum
Childcare Worker

OKTOBERFEST

SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, September 16 | 6PM to 9PM
St. Mary's Catholic Church, Escondido

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His Excellency
Auxiliary Bishop
Ramon Bejarano
(pictured left)
graciously
blessed our new
office in April for
which we are
truly grateful.

