

Children of the Immaculate Heart



A MESSAGE FROM THE STAFF

JMJ

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

I write this to you as our Church comes out of the first week of November, a time which is shrouded in two major –and generally unpleasant– themes: death and the unknown. The first day of November, we celebrate All Saints, a day for us to call to mind, the Saints yes, but particularly those who remain unknown to us, and have no official recognition by the Church yet. Just after this great feast, we celebrate, more somberly, the feast of All Souls. We remember in our prayers the ones who are waiting in Purgatory on graces merited by us to free them from the debt of love they owe the Father due to sin; that ancient and purifying wait of the Church Suffering. Their suffering is perhaps the worst kind: a painful wait of an unknown length.

Some of us at Children of the Immaculate Heart have experienced these same themes at the Refuge since opening two months ago. I write this not just to you, gracious friends, but to our staff too, as a reminder of the work that we've chosen to be a part of, either in a direct or indirect manner. The Refuge is a place with a significant painful waiting for an unknown length of time.

The devil spends great efforts to crush our hope, to make us believe that death has the last say. There is also the death of self; every day, walking through the doors to the Refuge and loving the girls demands from each staff member a death to themselves, which in reality is life in Christ! Our clients daily become a mirror to our own souls, revealing to us our own imperfections and wounds. When Providence allows for a trigger or crisis to arise, the depths of their misery often call out our own. *"Deep calleth on deep at the noise of thy floodgates."* (Psalm 41:8) And this is not just one moment in a day, but a series of moments that often increase in intensity, one after the other. But also, it is more true to say that the depths of our misery are calling out to the depths of the Mercy of God!



Requiescat in Pace!

NOVEMBER 2020

When the heaviness of our cross seems too great, we can fall flat on our face, crushed by the weight of others' burdens, to say nothing of our own. It can be easily mistaken that this crushing is the end: that all physical and mental energies are emptied to their very dregs. I remember though, hearing our Executive Director Grace Williams say this in reference to a staff member she was so

edified by during their training:

"She will know when she falls and her face is in the dust, that it is under the cross that she has fallen, and that it is Jesus Christ who will raise her up." We must rely on Him who was not afraid to fall as He carried the cross!

This painful wait truly is The Cross. In pain, we wait for the unknown hour of the Resurrection in these girls' lives, even if just a glimpse. Painful and burning wait that it is, it is nonetheless Our Lord's Love purging all of us. In The Refuge burns so hot a purifying flame amidst the noise and struggle, that little can match it, save the quiet purification of the cloistered religious life. Both places are similar in the intensity of life and self-knowledge gained before God.

Truthfully, I expected to end this letter here, as a sort of encouragement for all of us who live a time of waiting. In the middle of my writing this though, something amazing just happened at the Refuge and I return to my chair after witnessing how deeply God has begun His work in our girls, both of whom displaying virtue that surprised all of us; little lavenders that grew in secret, and none of us saw! After tonight's incident, Grace quoted St. Thérèse to me, whom I think should be the one to end this letter: *"O My God, You have surpassed all my expectations!"*

In Corde Mariae,

Christian Lovetere
Marketing Associate

HELP US KEEP THE REFUGE!

~ CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO PURCHASE ~ OUR MINORS HOME

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Thank you for all you have done up to this point for our mission and clients. We are counting on our supporters' generosity and praying for God's providence to Keep the Refuge for our treasured girls.

To give stability and longevity to our residential program for teenage girls for years to come, **we are now moving forward with our Keep the Refuge Capital Campaign to purchase the home that we fondly call the Refuge.** This is a major endeavor that we are embarking upon, but it is desperately needed. The State of California's Department of Social Services has provisionally licensed this facility that has taken thousands of hours of work to meet Community Care Licensing's regulations. Our landlord wants to sell the property. *The consequences for our current and future clients, along with our program's present and future viability could be cataclysmic if we do not do not purchase the Refuge.*



Here is our Phase One Strategy for the Keep the Refuge Capital Campaign:

Secure the deposit for the purchase contract – \$50,000 – with your support and God's grace we completed this first step last month

Next, secure the remaining down payment funds for the loan – an additional \$150,000 needed between now and December 31, 2020

We need your help to Keep the Refuge in order to continue to serve these girls who suffer immensely from past wounds, including believing the lie they are unwanted and unloved. Here is how you can help:

First: Make a special gift or a monthly pledge today! The more we have in the bank and in pledges to show the lenders that we have the means to repay the loan, the better our chances of securing favorable terms on the loan. To make this special gift or start your monthly pledge, please visit <https://app.donorview.com/NzG9Z>. **Second:** Donate appreciated assets including bonds, stocks, and property. This is easy to do by contacting us by call the office at 619-431-5537 to be walked through the process. **Third:** Add us to your employers Matching Gift Program (our EIN is 46-3954106). Contact us if your company has a preferred charities designation list.

Most importantly, you can pray for this campaign. All of us at Children of the Immaculate Heart know to combat trafficking through the Refuge, we will need the Holy Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Saints to be interceding for us. We will be launching Spiritual Bouquets to have you pray for this Campaign's success in your prayer.

Help spread the word to Keep the Refuge. At the same time as we are raising money to purchase the Refuge, we are also committed to meeting all of our expenses in our St. Bakhita's Adult Program and our Minors Program to continue providing holistic care that transforms these women and children's lives. Through these means, your prayers and financial support, we will help turn this house into a home and provide a refuge for these girls to find healing, freedom, and abundant life as He did for Saint Mary Magdalene. Will you join us in this battle?

In Iesu Christo,

Amy Vance
Board of Directors - Vice President

Cody Thompson
Development Associate



HERMIT TO HARLOT TO HOLY: THE EXPLOITED SAINT OF EDESSA



People, both secular and Catholic alike, are familiar with the story of Mary Magdalene. You could call her the posterchild of a Christian converting from a sinful life; especially a life of sexual exploitation. Whether it be in conversation, or in art, people seem to have a fascination when meditating on her story: one of a women who once lived in a place that even secular society sees as too dark to escape, to a model of penitence and heroic virtue. We know a good number of Saints like this in our Church. Allow me though, the pleasure of introducing to you a little-known 4th century Saint of the same kind, whose conversion will resonate, I think, with many in a way that most stories of the Saints have not. To start, the scene of her life is first set by another Saint, Abraham of Kiduna. After refusing to go through with a marriage arranged by his parents, he went off to live a life dedicated completely to God as a hermit, to pray and sacrifice for the Church. This eventually caught the attention of the local bishop. On seeing the man's piety, he ordained him a priest, and sent him off to convert a pagan city; a task in which he well succeeded.

Years later, his brother died, leaving behind a 7-year old daughter; the subject of this story: Mary of Edessa. St. Abraham, taking his niece in, brought her up in the ways of the spiritual life and ascetic practice. It was not long before she was regarded as a living saint, by virtue of the life she lived because of her uncle's guidance.

For 20 years as a sort of hermitess, Mary met regularly with her uncle for counsel. When she was 27, they were visited by what the hagiography calls "a monk in profession only". The otherwise devout-looking visitor showed himself to be very attracted to Mary, which was unknown to Abraham. He would sneak up to her window in her cell attached to the church and speak illicit invitations to her. After rejecting many times his advances, she locked herself further into her cloister, saying not a word of these shameful things to her uncle. Perhaps it was an unmet need for emotional closeness to a masculine figure, an pattern of thinking that she could resist on her own, or some other unknown reason, but as the days went on, the monk was able to get her to consent to his invitation, and so, they passed a night in each other's company.

After the monk went his own way, Mary was left alone again, thinking of what she could possibly do next. "I am a sinner full of sordid uncleanness", she said, "how shall I even try to speak with my holy uncle? If I even dared to attempt it, wouldn't a blast of fire burst from him to burn me to ashes?" She ran away and found a different life, convinced it was the only role for her, to be a prostitute in a foreign country. The following night, Abraham had a dream. In it, he saw a white dove being devoured by a dragon. Thinking that the dream was about the Church falling into heresy, he prayed fervently asking

God to prevent it. 2 nights later, he had another dream; he found the dragon dead with its gut opened and the dove alive and moving about inside, which he then pulled out. After waking, confused, he went to consult his niece about its meaning, only to find her cell empty. God then made him understand that the dream was about the plight of Mary. He set to find her. It was 2 years before he could track her down and find the inn where she worked. Disguising himself as a traveling soldier and borrowing a horse, he rode off.

On finding the inn and going inside, Abraham was given a table to eat and drink with the innkeeper. Mary happened to be chosen for the table, and began to try seducing Abraham, but when she encountered what she called "the smell of an abstinent" she became extremely agitated. After being calmed down by her uncle (still in disguise), the innkeeper arranged for them to have a room together. Upon being alone, Abraham revealed himself to his niece, who on seeing him, stood petrified throughout the night. Being moved by his great love and tears, Mary was resolute now to return home with him. One account describes Mary's penitence on the journey

home, which says that God, on seeing her contriteness, brought her soul to a higher height of sanctity than she ever was before in her previous ascetic/spiritual practices. On arriving home, they both passed the rest of their years together in the same hermitage. 10 years later, Abraham died, followed by Mary 5 years after. Abraham passed his life "living every day as if it were his last" as the hagiography puts it, and Mary too, was greatly revered for her piety and mourning. During her last years especially, many were drawn to her, seeking counsel.

The life of St. Mary of Edessa is an unusual story for those who read the lives of the saints. The progression from deep spiritual practice, to years of sin and darkness, to a holy life that set her beyond even her initial purity, can be difficult to wrap our minds around. For us who like the cookie-cutter hagiographies, it's an awkward story. Unusual as it may seem to us, it really should not be. The Mercy of God only ever allows sin/setbacks when they can be used for a greater good, though we may never see exactly how, and His Forgiveness is as conditional as our own willingness to accept it. For those of us who feel like we are on a track that seems unrecoverable, or not like this Saint, or that one, a story like Mary of Edessa's bears remembering.



KEEP THE REFUGE

~ CAPITAL CAMPAIGN ~

#GIVING
TUESDAY

Giving Tuesday Telethon Event:

December 3rd, 2020 is Giving Tuesday! Please consider supporting Children of the Immaculate Heart for your charity! More details to come on how YOU can impact the survivors we serve. Please stay tuned as announcements to be made via email, social media, and under our events tab on our events page. childrenoftheimmaculateheart.org/events. To volunteer with us for this event, reach out to our supporters at the office or from the comfort of your home, please contact Cody Thompson at cody.thompson@ciheart.org for more details.



REFUGE - JOB OPENINGS

Children of the Immaculate Heart is looking for individuals to fill our open **Day & Night Childcare Worker** positions. For these positions especially, we are particularly looking at candidates with interior maturity and especially spiritual lives that see Our Lord calling them to work more directly with the broken and abandoned. Minimum requirements are a Bachelor's degree, and prior experience working with teens. Bonuses include prior education or experience in psychology, or having a Master's Degree in psychology or social work. If you believe you are or know anyone like this, please visit our careers page at childrenoftheimmaculateheart.org/careers and email the Job Application and your Resume to: rachel.beck@ciheart.org.



It is the responsibility of the Day Staff at the Refuge to help each girl follow her respective schedule, as well as provide motivation and encouragement. They will be required to attend to the girls throughout the day, which includes, waking them, cooking, as facilitating group and individual discussions, as well as discipline when appropriate.



Night Staff at the Refuge are tasked with helping the girls coast from their day routine to the evening. Duties include household chores, counseling residents, getting them ready for bed, medication dispensing, etc. Staff are also expected to follow a regular check of the girls throughout the night to make sure they are safe in their rooms.



CAR DONATION PROGRAM

Please consider donating your vehicle to CIH! *Car Easy will come pick up your car, boat, or trailer whether it is running or not!* Cars can be donated from anywhere in the country. To start the process just call **855-500-7433** or type <http://careasy.org/details?4567> into your web browser. Proceeds go to support our programs!

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