

## Missionaries of Charity, Bronx, NY

### *Experiencing the love of Christ through Charity*

*Written by Seminarians Andrzejewski, DeCarlo and Summerlin*

Currently three of us from the Diocese of Lafayette are living and working in the Bronx, New York. We are living with the sisters of Mother Teresa's community, the Missionaries of Charity, on the fifth floor of a homeless men's shelter. We arrived mid-June, and we will be here until the beginning of August. The culture here is unlike any that we have experienced in our lives. The convent is in the middle of the city block with government housing projects on either side. During the night, we are often awoken by the blaring music across the street or the occasional gunshot on the street.

Here at the homeless shelter called Queen of Peace, life really lives up to its name. This haven in the middle of the South Bronx is very unique because it has a big garden with many trees. It also contains the private garden where Blessed Mother Teresa prayed during her visits to New York City. When we were picked up on June 11<sup>th</sup> we were taken upstairs and shown our living quarters. We began to meet the sisters, and they immediately made us feel right at home. They continually give us food and water and persistently offer food until we eat something, even when we can't eat any more! The Missionaries of Charity are very special because they consistently give of themselves to help all people, us included, experience the love of Christ through their charity.

So far, in the handful of weeks that we have been here, we have driven through New York City rush hour traffic all the way to Washington D.C., learned how to chop vegetables in the kitchen, how to efficiently wash dishes, and we have also improved our arts and crafts skills. We volunteer in the soup kitchen in the mornings at 9:30AM. The soup kitchen includes reading and sharing a reflection on the day's Gospel reading. We also take night duty with the nine men living in the shelter. This entails checking the men in each evening by looking for drugs and alcohol, serving them dinner and breakfast, and sleeping in the same room with them to make sure that things go smoothly during the night.

In our few remaining weeks here in the Big Apple, we will be volunteering with a Bible Camp for the neighborhood children ranging from ages 5-16. This camp will be split up into two-week sections based on age. The younger children will be in the first two weeks and the older children in the latter half of July. The typical day will include praise and worship music, games, sports time, and, most importantly, some catechesis on the Faith at a station the Sisters call "Meeting Jesus". There is a wide range of volunteers for the Bible Camp including the three of us, two Dominican brothers, three professed Sisters, six new sisters and various lay volunteers. The camp will begin on the ninth of July, and, after four weeks of preparation, the gym is finally ready for the kids!

The sisters are aged from 18 to 85, and they come from countries all over the world, including the United States. From this diversity they bring to the Bronx a spirit of immense joy, and they are able to share it with us during our interactions and conversations every single day. They are our mothers away from home, keeping a close eye on us to make sure we make it back by our curfew, noticing even when we miss it by a mere five minutes! Their joy and charity show us what it means to live a life completely devoted to Jesus Christ. This experience will be one that will bear much fruit in our future priesthood.



On July 6<sup>th</sup> Seminarian William Summerlin enjoys a breakfast of waffles and a coke in celebration of St. Maria Goretti, his parish patron.



Seminarians Christian DeCarlo and William Summerlin help with the dishes for the soup kitchen alongside another weekly volunteer and three Sisters.