

THE JOURNEY *El Camino*

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How has life been for our diocesan migrant community during the Covid pandemic?

Probably much the same as it has been for thus rest of us: filled both with anxiety and hope, with frustration and joy, with a sense of loss and a sense of possibility.

But there has been one constant for all: an unflagging trust in God's love and a yearning to celebrate that love together again, though the Eucharist, *in whatever way possible*.

For the migrant community *the way* was opened through Mass via YouTube beginning in March, for three months. By early June, celebrating the Eucharist with our migrant families was on grassy areas outside the camps, maintaining safe distances, wearing masks, and using hand sanitizer. By June 14, in accord with Diocesan and State authorities, we were able to celebrate the Eucharist in Our Lady of Guadalupe located in Marion. Each Sunday Mass was limited to only fifty people able to be inside at one time. Yes, we kept safe distances, wore masks, used sanitizer ... but we had neither missals nor song books. Nor any coffee afterwards! Mass in Geneva began a week later; in Leicester, a week after that on June 27.



In May, we were to celebrate First Communion. We had twenty-eight children in Marion, thirteen in Geneva, and siblings in both Brockport and Leicester. Because of the pandemic, though, that is when sacramental preparation began. For everyone's safety, classes were held in small groups of seven children. At times it was on-line lessons on their school computers. By late May, we were able to meet with the individual groups during the week. Parents took responsibility for the children's comfort, offering their patios for a meeting place and water for thirsty throats. The Mass of First Communion is now scheduled in Geneva for August 2. There will be Mass weekly throughout August for each of the small groups to receive their First Communion. During this time, we were also busy organizing pre-baptismal catechesis for ten children in Marion. Two of the children were baptized on July 18.

In Newark we shared the grief of members of the family of our friend Maria Rodriguez, who died on June 2. The grief was deepened by not being able to come together for a funeral Mass to celebrate the great faith of an enthusiastic servant who was part of our community, our migrant family. Only a few of us were there to bury her on June 5.

While the pandemic has disrupted the prayer lives of our community, it hasn't diminished it: quite the opposite. The People of God seem to be embracing the joy of their faith more warmly than ever.

The same cannot be said of their working lives. As essential workers, the majority continued working, facing varying levels of risk. Farmworkers in the fields run less risk because they don't work in groups. Those working in closed spaces such as greenhouses, packing plants, dairies faced much more. Some farm owners made careful preparations to protect their workers. Others, skeptical of the virus' threat, have done little. There have been some workers who themselves have been careless. In one of the Dairy Farms in Cayuga, a worker died from the virus, and various others were infected. Though they recovered, they fear for their lives. Two have tried to return to Guatemala, only to find out that Guatemala does not at this time permit entry to travelers from the United States. Farmworkers from the Brockport area returned to Mexico in early December. A small group returned to the States in May; a large group will return in late August.

There is a great need to find a way to bring the Mass to this isolated community. Dairy workers, typically having no means of transportation, rely on volunteers for a ride to and from church. The heightened fear of being in close quarters with others now makes traveling in groups impossible.

On June 13, our department of Pastoral Services held a Food & Supply Drive. The generosity of volunteers and donors – with food, supplies, gift cards and monetary donations – was overwhelming and deeply appreciated. With these blessings, our Hispanic Migrant Ministry Coordinators delivered food and supplies to 150 families in seven locations of the diocese. Thank you!

Donation of
68 BIKES & HELMETS
from
R COMMUNITY BIKES



Another gift tremendously welcomed was 68 bicycles donated by R Community Bikes, as well as helmets, for adults and children. Father Jesus Flores and Jorge Salgado brought them to Our Lady of Guadalupe; all were gone by evening. The children were the happiest. To know that after the quarantine they'll be able to venture forth on their own bicycle was a true surprise, much needed after the deprivations of the spring.

Thank you for your generosity!

We are grateful for your compassion and solidarity. If you would like more information or would like to make a donation, please don't hesitate to contact our office. For a donation, please make checks payable to Diocese of Rochester; and note Migrant Ministry in the memo. Mail to:

Diocese of Rochester,
Pastoral Services Department
Attn: Bernard Grizard
1150 Buffalo Road,
Rochester, NY 14624



**FOOD & SUPPLY DRIVE FOR
MIGRANT FAMILIES
HELD JUNE 13, 2020**

*600 bags of food & supplies
delivered to 150 families*



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Our Mission Statement:

"Catholic Migrant Ministry, rooted in the Church's teaching that we are all sisters and brothers, seeks not only to build up migrant workers as people of faith, but also to foster a mutual sharing of gifts, both material and spiritual, between all migrant workers and the other faith communities of the Diocese of Rochester."

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ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER