

Catholic high school visits Casa Misericordia

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The author volunteers at Verbum Dei Jesuit High School, an all-boys Cristo Rey Network preparatory school in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, California. This article, published with permission, was originally shared with faculty and staff of that school and details a visit by a small group of students to Casa Misericordia in San Diego.

On Friday, May 8, eight of our Eagles traveled to San Diego's Barrio Logan to learn more about many aspects that encompass the immigration issue. Our host was Sister Mary Waskowiak, a Sister of Mercy who established Casa Misericordia (originally on the campus of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish) to assist immigrants with the myriad of issues and obstacles they face.

The day started with a quick stop at Chicano Park just below the start of the Coronado Bridge. The support pilings and adjacent area are painted with a rich history.



Sister Mary welcomed us at Salon Tepeyac, originally a facility that housed immigrants overnight, and now serves meals, provides support, camaraderie and kinship.



Fr. Scott Santarosa, SJ joined us to share about the parish's rich history with the immigrant community and ongoing efforts on their behalf.



We then ventured a few miles south to the “Border Wall” as Sister Mary shared stories about the wall, crossings, and interactions with U.S. Border Patrol and ICE. We didn’t have time to climb the hill for an overlook of the entire area and see where the wall juts out into the ocean.



We returned to Salon Tepeyac for a traditional homemade Mexican lunch prepared by parish staff. We received a visit from an immigrant woman who was a victim of trafficking. Her story of abuse as a child and then being trafficked as a young girl provided us with an opportunity to see the face of such trauma and ask questions. She was amazing with her openness and is admittedly still seeking therapy in her healing process. She now assists and counsels others who have suffered similar experiences. It was an eyeopener!

Then it was off to the newly established Pope Francis Center that will provide services for immigrants, refugees, and those seeking asylum. Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish is using their former convent to accommodate the services as a part of their parish outreach.

Fr. Scott met with us again to share more details about all that goes on in the “Barrio” parish intended to serve the immigrant community. As this was the former Casa Misericordia location, Sister Mary took us on a tour to see the entire facility.





Back at Salon Tepeyac, we were paid a visit by a University of California San Diego senior, originally from El Salvador, who shared the nightmare situation she and her mother experienced there. They traveled by bus and by foot to the U.S. seeking a better life. As could be expected, her story was eye-opening. We were able to ask questions and learn more about her experiences. It was gratifying to know how far she and her mother have come since making the move.

Before departing, we visited the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, adjacent to the parish church.



And what would a thirteen-hour day be – with five hours crammed into a van – without a little session of “boys being boys” at Chicano Park. Gotta love these guys! A lot learned, and all of it so relevant today. And finally, a stop at In-n-Out in San Clemente.



Thanks to Sister Mary Waskowiak, RSM, Fr. Scott Santarosa, SJ and our courageous speakers, we had a great day. Sister Mary has invited us to continue to offer immersion trips to our boys. She even piqued their brains about ways to make it even more valuable to them.