

FALL 2009

CATHOLIC HERALD
MY FAITH SECTION

...others in the group encouraged me to not think about what I wanted from the trip, but rather what God wanted for me.

CROSSING BORDERS

Mission ~ North Carolina

In my freshman year at Marian University in Fond du Lac, Wis., a student group from campus ministry (of which I belonged) was planning a mission trip for spring break. They were going to Tarboro, North Carolina where Sister Mary Ann Czaja, CSA, ran a homeless shelter and food pantry.

As I listened to discussions about the trip, it sounded interesting, but being somewhat shy, I wasn't sure if it was something I could actually do. It was far from home, I didn't know most of the people who were going, and I had never been on a mission trip before. However, when one of my close friends decided to go on the trip, I got the courage to sign up, too.

I still wasn't quite sure what to expect from the trip, but the others in the group encouraged me to not think about what I wanted from the trip, but rather what God wanted for me. They reminded me that if I was open to what God had to say, he would lead me in the right direction.

During my week in North Carolina, I was presented with a variety of new opportunities, including helping with the food pantry, beginning renovations on a house, and even creating a mosaic on the front of a garage. I soon found that the hardest part for me was getting over my tendency to keep to myself and to instead try to get to know some of the people.

Prior to this trip I had rarely, if ever, come across a homeless person and wasn't quite sure how to act. I quickly realized that most of them had amazing stories to tell. I heard so many tales about tragedies and difficulties,



but also about hope for the future and gratitude for the help they received from Sister Mary Ann. Talk about a woman who was open to doing whatever God wanted of her! The people who came to the shelter couldn't say enough good things about what Sister Mary Ann had done for them, and yet she was able to accept their gratitude very humbly. It was a wonderful thing to witness.

I'm glad to say that this mission trip was the first of many that I would go on during my years at Marian. I've traveled to many places across the United States, from southern Mississippi doing Hurricane Katrina relief to Pennsylvania working with Habitat for Humanity. The one thing I noticed everywhere I went was the hopeful "attitude of gratitude" that I first saw in Tarboro. So many people have been through disasters and truly trying times, and yet they have such a positive outlook and are still able to thank God for the good things

in their lives.

By opening my mind and heart, I have been blessed with the opportunity to not only serve others in God's name, but to also receive the inspiration others have to give. I always have to smile when people tell me how wonderful it is for me to give up my break to go on a mission trip. They don't realize how much I get from these trips. I have taken so much away from every trip, and I am so grateful that God gave me the strength and courage to go beyond what was comfortable for me and participate in the first mission trip that started them all.

— Heather Hummer