



# Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

## USA Province

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### LETTER FROM THE PROVINCIAL

Dear Friends,

#### *A seat at the table...*

When one thinks of this phrase, it almost immediately conjures up a feeling of belonging and sharing, taking part in an exchange of ideas – perhaps having a role in decision making. Whatever the interpretation might be, it resonates with a feeling of acceptance, hospitality, and inclusivity.

Now, imagine having a seat at the table with Jesus. What would you say to him? How would you react to having an exchange of ideas... thoughts... insights? Would you be open to hearing the words he speaks? Would you be able to honestly share your thoughts, your fears, the desires of your heart?

I ask these questions because by this time next year, we hope to offer you *“a seat at the table”* - the Last Supper table where Jesus shared the first Eucharist, a simple meal, with his closest friends.

As you will see in this newsletter, an exciting new project is in the works at St. Raphaela Center. The Last Supper Sculpture Garden and Path is quickly taking shape and will fulfill one of the dreams we have long had for the Center - creating an exterior space that is just as warm and welcoming as the space within our walls.

As Handmaids and Eucharistic women, our charism calls us to share in Christ's reparative mission. Where better place to start than at *“a seat at the table”*?

With hope and gratitude,

*Belén Escauriaga*

Belén Escauriaga, acj



## Hope Reigns in El Paso

The following article was written by Sr. Oanh Vo and details her experiences volunteering at “the border.”

Three days before I arrived to the small town bordering Juarez, Mexico for a two-week volunteer service the community of El Paso had just experienced a mass shooting that claimed 22 lives, including eight Mexican nationals. This atrocious hate crime brought greater national attention and chaos to this beautiful town that has already been known for having detention centers with substandard conditions. How does one find hope and light in this bleak reality? How does one offer hope while facing an administration that has made “America First” its goal and issued one policy after another to prevent refugees from entering the country?

Due to recent immigration policies, the number of people released by ICE to Catholic shelters in El Paso has dramatically reduced within the past few months from 700 to 1000 daily to roughly 100 daily. Consequently, only two out of twelve shelters are still in operation. The small shelter Casa Oscar Romero to which I was assigned is ironically located next to the Border Patrol Recruitment Office and ICE Processing Center! The majority of immigrants came from Honduras and Mexico. Others came from El Salvador, Brazil, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Cuba. I also encountered one family from Congo and another from Haiti. Most people came as families, made up of young single parents and little children. Many moms were pregnant. The vast majority took on average one month to reach the border. Once they crossed the border, ICE would detain them for three to seven days at a detention center for processing before they could be released to one of the shelters, where they would remain one to three days to arrange transportation to be with their relatives in the States. And within a few weeks they would have a court hearing for their case in the city where they live with their relatives.

While the daily responsibilities such as preparing meals, cleaning restrooms, doing laundry, accompanying to bus stations and airport, and attending the sick in the clinic consumed most of my time, I am most grateful for the opportunities I had listening to people's journeys, sharing their losses and sufferings, and praying with them. Some experiences just wrench my heart, caused me to lament to God of how much more could and should these people possibly endure in order to have a better, safer environment for their loved ones. One young family of four from Guatemala had to undergo all types of suffering on their one and half month journey, were completely stripped of their humble possession and treated “like animals” in the detention center for days, then twice failed to make to their arranged flight to be with their relatives. A young Honduran mother and her seven year old son took three months to get to the border. While trying to climb the 20 foot high border wall, she fell and fractured her vertebrae. She was with a body brace and a walker when she got dropped off at the shelter. Her eyes swelled up with tears when she recalled that the day of the accident was her son's birthday. A single, eight month pregnant woman in her 20's chose to leave the shelter for a 40 plus hour bus ride alone to be united with her husband despite of having constant abdominal pain. One young Salvadorian couple and their 5 year old son took three months to cross Guatemala and Mexico. They had to walk in the desert for six hours without food or water and with the son on the father's shoulders. They saw a dying person on the way but could not offer help without putting their lives at risk. The father wanted to give up half way due to exhaustion but the son encouraged him, “Papito, you can do it.” When they reached the border, one of the Mexican guards

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# Celebrate With Us



Join the Handmaids on April 22, 2020 to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Journey of Hope and the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day. We are planning to coordinate these two meaningful events in order to highlight the importance of the Handmaids' desire "to reverence the integrity of creation."

A highlight of this year's celebration will be the kick-off off of the newest project at St. Raphaela Center - a remarkably beautiful Sculpture Garden and Walking Path.

In line with the Handmaids' reverence for creation, the project will incorporate a blend of the existing features with new elements that are designed to enhance its natural beauty. A four-sectioned walking path is planned around the St. Raphaela Center perimeter, extending through both treed and open spaces. While always appreciating the beauty and serenity of our grounds, this journey through nature will offer many more opportunities for reflection and prayer. The Path will lead us to Mary's Grotto and to the Last Supper Sculpture Garden, with benches along the way for rest and contemplation.

## Some exciting changes to this year's event include:

An outdoor setting (Weather permitting)  
Casual, comfortable dress (Yes, jeans and tee shirts are more than acceptable attire)  
Appetizers and finger foods that offer exquisite culinary couture  
Expanded array of Silent Auction Items  
Affordable Ticket Price!!!

## JOURNEY OF

# HOPE

### *Last Supper Sculpture Garden & Walking Path Major Commemorative Gift Opportunities*

Walking Path (4 sections)	@\$15,000
Last Supper Sculpture	\$50,000
Last Supper Table	\$14,000
Apostles' Stools (12)	@ \$3,000
Garden Benches	@ \$1,000

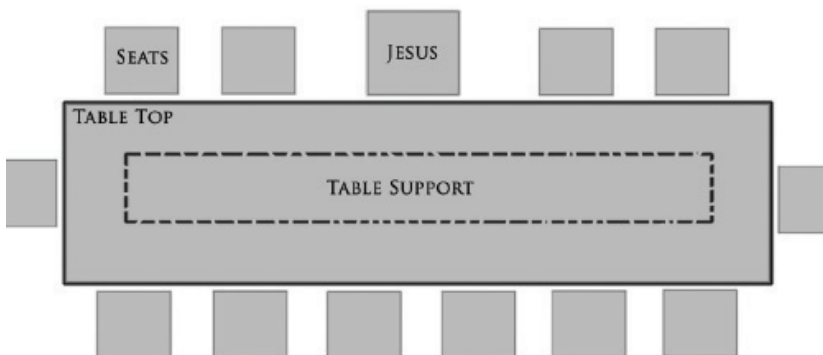
THE ACJUSA WEBSITE  
HAS BEEN RECENTLY  
REDESIGNED. PLEASE  
VISIT [WWW.ACJUSA.ORG](http://WWW.ACJUSA.ORG) TO  
SEE OUR "NEW LOOK."



The signature piece that will be a central focus of the outdoor garden at St. Raphaela Center features an extraordinary bronze sculpture designed by renowned artist, Timothy Schmalz. Fittingly, his design of The Last Supper captures the essence of Christ's sharing His last meal with his friends. Highlighting the Handmaids profound devotion and reverence of the Eucharist, its addition to the Retreat Center adds a dimension of unparalleled beauty and inspiration. Once in place, this spiritually and physically interactive masterpiece will serve to enhance the opportunities available for prayerful reflection, contemplation, and conversation with God.



LAST SUPPER TABLE



The diagrams pictured show The Last Supper's layout and design. The table will be fabricated in Its length will be 152 inches with a width of 38 inches and a height of 30.5 inches. The seats will be made from the wood salvaged from a magnificent tree that was removed from the property in 2017. Each seat will be 20 to 21 inches in height.

physically abused the mother as he tried to prevent her from crossing the border. Once they had successfully crossed the border, they were asked to return to Juarez for one month until their court date. The young father concluded, "It is purely because God's mercy that we are here."

In spite of the immense losses and sufferings that these immigrants and refugees have had to experience, their courage and resilience were palpable! Their trust in God's fidelity and hope in a better future have empowered them to leave their beloved home and country and sustained them on their journey. Their humble dependence and trust in the goodness and generosity of the other was an invaluable lesson. Equally admirable was their constant gratitude for the goodness of God and others that naturally impelled them to praise God and bless others before offering their own needs. It was so moving to see some families wanted to know how make donation to the shelter, and one family even donated some of the little money they had before they left, insisting that they had received so much.

On the one week anniversary of the mass shooting in El Paso, a local parish's choir led the congregation in hymns of inclusion, love, and hope like All are Welcome, Hold on to Love, Tend the Ground. This Eucharistic celebration became the lens with which God wanted me received and shared this graced experience of encountering "from below, from within, and from up close". The message "Be not afraid! Don't give up because I am with you" became more audible as I saw how many religious women and lay volunteers coming from different parts of the country to generously and passionately respond in whatever capacity to the cries of immigrants and refugees. Hope in the goodness of humanity displaced despair and prejudices when I heard the story of an ICE officer who bought a pregnant refugee a meal before dropping her off at one of the shelters and expressed how grateful he was to the volunteers. Compassion and generosity displaced selfishness as I witnessed time after time how hard some of TSA officers and airline assistants tried to help the people.

One person even asked me how he could donate some clothes to the shelter. Most powerfully, inclusion, solidarity and empowerment were generated among the immigrants and refugees as they shared their common struggles and dreams while helping with meal preparation, sharing their recipes for certain dishes, washing their clothes, cleaning dishes and mopping the floor. In the face of incomprehensible darkness and immense sufferings, I learned that it's not that I have to generate hope but to simply recognize and receive the ever-present Hope and Light in our midst. Truly, Hope is found when each of us come together to share our stories, our sufferings, our brokenness, our gifts, and the dreams we have for ourselves and for the world. It is with this Hope that we dare to take a step further and complicate our lives, while hearing "Don't quit for I am always with you!"

## IN THE HANDMAIDS' PRAYERS

### ***Please pray for the souls of our dearly departed including:***

Nancy Abromaites, Michael Arter, Sr. Stephen Bednar, IV, Harry Bellwoar, James Boyle, Sr. Kathleen Brabson, Lisa Brady, Thomas Brady, IV, Geraldine Breslin, Bridie Burke, Mary Louise Burke, Lisa Buschmeier, Dominic C., Kathleen Campbell, Dolores Carroll, Vera Christiano, Mary Coleman, John Curtin, Margaret Daly, Louise Della Porta, Betty Demke, Anthony DeNatale, Jr., Andrew DeVita, John DiGiralomo, Evelyn DiTrollo, Clarence Doney, Jack Donnelly, Gloria Dugan, Isabelle Duca, Phil Duffy, John Dunwoody, Patricia Dwyer, Doris Egan, Mary Ann Espenshade, Catherine Farnan, Rita Ferrandino, Judy Fittipoldi, James Fitzpatrick, James Foo, Rose Forrest, Raymond Fuchsel, Craig Furkas, John Garrett, Charles Gavin, Michelle Gentile, Edward Gutowski, Vincent Green, Jr., Maria Harrison, Joseph Hewett, Charles Interrante, Mike Ivanisik, Michael Jansen, Barbara Kammer, Joseph Katarynick, Helen Keichline, Don Keiser, Bernadette Kelly, Lois Kelly, James Kennedy, Henry King, Mary Lodes, Angie Loughrey, Lee Manning, Frederick Marcantonio, Clare Marron, William Marsh, Lydia Mastrangelo, John Matthews, Jeanette McCreesh, Gerald McDevitt. Sr., Jean McDonald, Charles McGee, Fay McNulty, Mary Meehan, Karl Mikkelsen, Joseph Morris, Dennis Mullin, John Myers, Margaret Myers, Edward Nadrotowicz, Nora O'Dwyer, Francis O'Hanlon, Sr., Mark Palermo, Allen Peck, Rosemarie Perry, Barbara Platt, Rosemary Poppert, George Prendergast, Claire Pretsch, Kathryn Remaily, David Ricci, Edward Roach, Mark Roe, Ivison Rowland, Cecilia Salvatore, Jimmie Santangelo, Erving Simmons, Robert Smith, Jaime Soler, R. Dale Stevenson, MD, Rosalie Stickney, Dolores Stingel, Maryann Subick, Mary Tarquino, Lawrence Tobin, Joseph Tomasetti, Eugene Troxell, Benjamin Undercuffler, John Venezia, and Patricia Woolley.

### ***Please pray for the requests offered on behalf of:***

Eileen & Rich Bottari, Elizabeth Campbell, Yvonne Chamberlain, Christine De Frehn. Jonathan & Carmen Edwards, The DiGirolamo Family, Rev. John Farry, Wanda Finke, Mary O'Neil Gentile and Family, Col. Fred Goodenough, July Howard, Maureen Howe, Patricia Hyland, Frank Iannone, Dorothy Jabel, Anthony Jones, Pat Kensey, Sr. Rita Josepha King, SSJ, Philip Longo, William Lorkey, The Mahoney Family, Rev. James McBurney, Jean McDonald, Marilynn McGrane, Rose McKenna, Lisa Mecknes, Suzanne Nagle, Frederick Pietrefesa, Teresa Pietrefsa, Ed Rafi, Amanda Razzano, Sharon Richardson, Agnes Romano, John Rudolph, Fr. Anthony Russo, Edna Savage, Phyllis Striano, Edith Tavani, Claire Thomas, Joyce Warren, Patricia Westerberg and Family, and Theresa Yeomans.