

"They are girls who need a lot of affection"

Sofia Miguens teaches in Buen Consejo School, located in an impoverished district of Buenos Aires. Cardinal Bergoglio had a special love for this school and visited it several times.

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"Teaching is a constant call to grow and rise above myself, so as to pass on my enthusiasm to my students," Sofia says. Now 28 years old, she has

been working as an elementary school teacher in Buen Consejo School since 2007.

Buen Consejo, located in the Buenos Aires district of Barracas, was founded in 1918. The school draws students from an area that is quite depressed economically. Through the education and formation that it offers, it seeks to help the girls go on to higher studies and find a worthwhile job, while also striving to help further the cultural and spiritual atmosphere in their families.

While students pay what they can, even if quite minimal, the city government pays the teachers' salaries and donations help cover many other expenses. As regards the spiritual formation offered, the Catholic education and spiritual care of the girls and their families is

entrusted by the archdiocese to the Prelature of Opus Dei.

"The students come from families with a lot of problems, both economic and social. They are families suffering greatly from poverty and delinquency," Sofia says. "They come to school looking not only for learning, but also for affection and stability. The moment I enter the school grounds, I find myself confronting hundreds of young faces seeking a smile from me. They are girls who need a lot of affection, someone who will listen to them and who will look them in the eye when they are trying to tell you something, who will pay attention to them, but also who will set clear limits."

Sofia says that the girls are all seeking to know what is good and what is bad. And their reference point becomes their teacher. Sofia

stresses that respect for authority is quite strong in the school, which makes her even more aware of the responsibility she has. "You become an example for them, and you realize that whatever you tell them, they may never hear it again. It is very gratifying to see how just a few words can open for them a whole panorama and enkindle great aspirations."

Last year, over thirty of the young girls at Buen Consejo went on to study at various universities in Buenos Aires. "In most cases, their parents only finished elementary school, so getting a university degree has enormous importance for them and their families. Their whole life takes on a new direction and they can now assist their families and set higher goals."

"I try in my work to serve society by doing so many small things with a lot

of love," says Sofia, who became aware of her teaching vocation when, in high school, she helped give remedial classes to young people in an impoverished district of Buenos Aires. She was also always the one who was willing to help her classmates understand better what they had heard in class.

Sofia says that she has no interest in working anywhere else. "This is the path that God planned and chose for me, that spurs me to grow and make progress a bit more each day." One of the greatest satisfactions the school offers, she says, is knowing that nothing she says or does remains fruitless. "None of the good you do here is in vain, nothing is wasted," Sofia says with a smile.

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