

# **A Light for Thousands of Children**

We share some reflections from Fr. Carlos Núñez, Vicar of the Delegation of Monterrey, Mexico, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Ciudad de los Niños (City of the Children), a social initiative that, with its work of education and formation, has helped many families with limited financial means find happiness.

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The Ciudad de los Niños is the fruit of the effort of so many people who, in different ways, have been the “face” of the institution during these 7 decades, and helped create a bond of affection with the people of the city of Monterrey, Mexico.

Its founder, Fr. Carlos Alvarez Ortiz, over 70 years ago made known to the then Archbishop Tritschler his wish to create a charitable institution to assist the street children of Monterrey. Both traveled to Rome to explain the project to Pope Pius XII. The Holy Father replied to Fr. Alvarez's appeal with the following words: “the priestly ministry you have chosen is the best furrow for sowing, for it has the best soil, that of children.”

In 1951, Fr. Alvarez began speaking about the “City of the Children” project on radio stations, with business leaders, and even among

some Mexican communities settled in towns in southern Texas. The response was so favorable that money was soon raised to begin constructing the City of the Children on land in the foothills of the Cerro de la Silla, donated by the Sada Gomez family.

In 1987 the Prelature of Opus Dei was asked to take over this social work, offering doctrinal orientation and spiritual help for the educational communities and families involved. Over the years it has become abundantly clear how great the need was for a school for poor families in the region of Monterrey.

As Pope Francis wrote: “Our world is being torn apart by wars and violence, and wounded by a widespread individualism which divides human beings, setting them against one another as they pursue their own well-being. In various

countries, conflicts and old divisions from the past are re-emerging. I especially ask Christians in communities throughout the world to offer a radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 99).

Now with the celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City of the Children, we can appreciate this great social work as a witness to fraternal communion. It is an “injection” of optimism and joy in providing help for thousands of children and their families through an integral formation in human and spiritual values. At present the City of the Children benefits more than 1400 students, boys and girls from approximately 1000 families.

Many of us at times can feel the temptation to become discouraged by so much bad news around us; the

many negative stories that reach us through the media can lead us to feel that we are surrounded by darkness. But that is a deception; the reality is much different. Light is stronger than darkness and good more powerful than evil. Saint Paul wrote: *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good* (Rom 12:21); and also: *let us not grow weary in well-doing!* (Gal 6:9).

The City of the Children is one of the many good works being carried out for the good of society in the Monterrey region, contributing directly to a greater social equality, raising the standard of living of so many people who live by our side, and, what is key here, helping to strengthen families.

Congratulations to the City of the Children!

*For more about the Ciudad de los Niños and the centennial of Saint*

*Josemaria's birth see: "The Centennial Medical Unit"*

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