

2004: Moving forward in solidarity

The approaching end of the year is an occasion to summarize some social initiatives that were taken in 2004. They all have in common the concern to help others that is part of St. Josemaria's legacy: "Don't be indifferent to the pain of another person. That relative, friend, colleague--even someone you don't know--is your brother" (The Furrow, 251).

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Canada: helping the handicapped

For the past four years, the "Sunshine Shops" have been brightening Saturday afternoons in southeastern Montreal. These shops are available to women who are intellectually or physically handicapped. Young and old come together to learn a skill--cooking, singing, small crafts--intended to help them grow and develop their ability to communicate with others.

Costa Rica: special classes for mothers in manual arts

In the La Carpio district of San Jose, many Nicaraguan immigrants make up a large part of the population of 28,000. More than half of them live in conditions of extreme privation. The

Social Work of La Carpio began in July 2003 as a personal initiative of several young professionals and college students who take part in the activities of Lari, a supplementary education center. Their objective is to put Christian social principles into practice.

Ecuador: among the natives of Imbabura

Fifteen college students have undertaken various tasks as volunteers in San Pablo del Lago, a native village in Imbabura province, northern Ecuador. One of the students, Washington Rodriguez, attends business school in Quito. For him the experience was "positive and gratifying."

El Salvador: a professional development center for women

Soyapango is one of the most densely populated sections of San Salvador.

Among its half-million inhabitants, a social enterprise--Sirama-Prusia--has begun to thrive as a training center for working women.

Spain: occupational classes for unemployed immigrants

The EIFOR Foundation is seeking to help Valencia's unemployed immigrants become socially and economically productive. Among the classes it organizes are Spanish, job-search skills, and social development. Thanks to cooperative arrangements with businesses in the city, many immigrants have been able to prepare themselves to work in such diverse jobs as waiter, bartender, bricklayer, plumber, and electrician.

United States: a training program in the Bronx

Every year 200 young men attend an educational program offered by the

Crotona Club with the goal of learning to think about and work for the needs of others. The human virtues they acquire through the generosity and companionship of their participation in the life of the club are meant to extend beyond it to the surrounding society--which they come to see as everyone's job.

Philippines: a baking school

On the island of Laguna the Foundation for Professional Training, Inc. (FPTI) has opened Aniham Technical School in the historic town of Calamba. Its two-year program in Food Service with a specialty in baking includes courses in culinary techniques and the rudiments of business and management.

France: a special education project

Ten Parisian students devoted two weeks of their summer vacation to the assistance of youngsters having

difficulties in school. Their purpose was to provide practical methods necessary for successful completion of high school.

Mexico: an international cooperation project

Canadian and Mexican students took part in a cooperative project organized by Fonteneige, a student residence in Montreal that has initiated a number of such projects over that past fifteen years.

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