

Grace Mittler

When my parents signed me up for the mission trip I was upset because I didn't want to go and get sweaty and spend a week with out air conditioning. I was worried that no one would like me. My feelings changed when I walked into the door of the drop in center. Everyone was so welcoming and it made me feel special. Sitting in the bus for seven hours made it even better because I got to know the teens better. When the bus drove in the parking lot it didn't hit me that I was in Cairo. That night I was upset because I wanted to sleep in my own bed in my own house. I got home sick and I just didn't want to be in there. The first day when I worked on Ms. Martha's house I was so excited because I thought we would be painting and stuff. I was so wrong we scrapped the whole time we were there. It didn't bother me though because my small group made it fun. I also realized that I was helping someone who needed the help. Those two days of scrapping I learned team work. I couldn't have done that house by myself. We needed each other for the support and encouragement. Then when I worked at kids club it was amazing because I saw kids with shoes that didn't fit them and torn shirts but they were still so happy. They were running around and having fun. The kids acted like they had everything in the world. That week was the most amazing week of my life and I will never forget it. I had a change of heart that week. Yes, I went to church every Sunday but I didn't really act like a Catholic outside of church. I think God placed the people, kids, and TNT group in my life for a reason. Without the TNT group I wouldn't be where I am today. I probably wouldn't have been on the mission trip. I know for a fact I wouldn't have meant the teens I did and I wouldn't be close to them. The people and kids in Cairo helped me change my life around. They showed me that you can be happy without all the riches. They showed me that I can do anything I want to do as long as I put God in my

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life. I thought I would have the worst time in my life that week but I loved that week. I meant a lot of new friends. I learned new things about Cairo everyday. I saw a whole new perspective on things and I was so emotion when I was leaving because I knew that the people enjoyed having us and that they would never forget us. I know that I will never forget them and I will keep them in my prayers.

Mission Trip 2008

In Cairo, Illinois this year I experienced the hope in the young children in poverty. I got a new look on the poor neighborhoods of Illinois, realizing that even though they have little to nothing, most of the time they are grateful for the things they do possess.

Our mission trip in turn made me more grateful for the life I have and the environment I live in.

FROM THE ASSOCIATE PASTOR

I was transformed, I was inspired by the people we met and even more by our youth group – I was inspired to be a better person, to be a better priest, to be a better witness of Christ.

This is the second time Fr. Steve has given me his column, so I am going to use it to write down the top ten reasons why you should love your associate more than your pastor.

Wait, no, I am sorry I am saving that one for the next time, this week I am going to share with you something better - my Mission Trip experience.

What is a Mission Trip?

Well, it's a one week trip; a time of prayer together, a time of hard work on different projects (scraping, painting, fixing houses) and a time of caring for children (age 5-12) in a needy community. It's a time of forgetting about yourself, getting out of your comfort zone and sharing your love with others, those less fortunate.

A Little Love Can Change the World

Two weeks ago a group of 50 parishioners of St Julie (44 teens and 6 adults), including myself, went down to Cairo, IL to share their love, to change the world.

Within this relatively short period of time I saw powerful, incredible things happened. I saw different Christian denominations united by service; I saw people spontaneously praying for and with each other; I saw our teens working very hard, caring for people they

didn't even know; I saw LOVE changing the world.

A Little Love Can Change Us

This was my second trip and so I already knew that these trips are often more life changing and impacting for participants than those you come to serve; I knew that I was not going there just to help others but more importantly to help myself, I was not going there to change something but to be changed, and it really happened. I was transformed, I was inspired by the people we met and even more by our youth group – I was inspired to be a better person, to be a better priest, to be a better witness of Christ.

Thank You

I completely understand now why Deacon Ed has been taking one week of his own vacation time to organize and go on those mission trips for the last 14 years. You give a lot but you receive even more! Thank you Ed!!!

I would like to close by taking this opportunity to express my gratitude for all your support. Thank you for all your prayers and generosity. Thank you for supporting our Youth!

May God bless you!
Fr Artur

And WEEE're Marching! We're Marching! We're Marching!
Here we go! Here we go! Here we go!

Let me see your Boogaloo!
What's that you say?
I said let me see your Boogaloo!
What's that you say?
I said let me see your Boogaloo!

If you haven't experienced a Boogaloo, you don't know what you are missing. Truly.

It's a very fun way to show off something you've done or learned that day or maybe a funny mishap and it always ends with Praising God, shoulder to shoulder. Life should be more like that.

As with any trip or event, it would be easy to say this could have been done better or the staff should have done things this way, but in the end, mission work is mission work and it comes in all different shapes and forms. Just as God creates all of us. We were never meant to be cookie cutters and none of us are perfect, thank goodness.

The people of Cairo were wonderful. Absolutely beautiful, welcoming and as kind as could be. Almost to the point that you wonder why the area isn't thriving. We met the folks from Two Rivers Ministries. Gary was so upbeat and his prayer walk was one of my highlights. We walked throughout the city of Cairo praying that the abandoned homes be filled with loving families and that the empty churches be overflowing with worshippers and vibrant liturgies and that the businesses that left may soon return and prosper and renew the once booming community again. Even now at home, I still pray each day for all of those gifts.

Another event was the evening Scavenger Hunt that led us through town searching for historical markers. Our van survived an attempt by Fr. Artur and his Seniors to try to capture one of our team members, but we not only turned them away, but *we may have brought with us a Senior's shoe and hat*. We remained focused on our task and in the end it led us to an amazing cross that stood towering over our entire group. As if on cue, then came the most beautiful sunset you've ever seen. God sure knows how to paint a breathtaking picture.

My Small Group amazed me!.....Olivia, Mike, Alyssa, Dan C, Mary, Kristina, Alex, and Karianne! They worked so hard and meshed so well together! I was very proud of them as they without a second thought included the Iowa church that we were grouped with. If a stranger walked up there would be no way to tell who was from where! You guys made my first trip so easy.

There are so many more details that I could write about but instead what I would like to say is that this group of teens are simply remarkable. They cleaned, they cooked, they got up at 6:45 am and were in bed by midnight and they worked extraordinarily hard at the worksites and Kids Clubs for the better part of the day. There really isn't much free time and I didn't hear a single complaint, not even in the heat that we endured. They did everything that was asked of them and more. St. Julie Parish can be extremely proud of these young men and women for the work they accomplished and for the manner in which they represented our parish community.

On a personal note, as a parent, it is such a unique and special privilege to be able to see my child participate in a week like this. To watch her in action and give of herself so freely is a gift, pure and simple. It is worth more than anything you could ever wrap up. I would encourage any parent if they have the opportunity to try it. It definitely gives you a different perspective of each other and it gives you a glimpse into yourself. For instance, I am pretty willing to reach out to people in Cairo because I am on a mission trip, but will I do the same thing at home? Will I bring my mission experience into my everyday living? That is part of the challenge for me and one I hope to keep working on. It really extends into the way we treat each other whether we are at home or at work or on a mission trip. It shouldn't matter where we physically stand at any particular moment or whom we

are with, we are all created equally and should be treated with the same respect and dignity.

The last detail I want to mention and perhaps I am biased but I will mention it anyway is that this parish and this youth group are so exceptionally blessed to have a deacon like Deacon Ed. These mission trips would not happen if it were not for him. Fr. Artur recently made a comment that before he himself went on a trip he thought Ed was crazy to not only give up vacation time from work but to pay to go on a mission trip every year with 50 teens. After he went last year, he said now he understands why he does it. Being a deacon is definitely a calling and his is a rare one. The number of lives that have been touched in the last 14 years is endless and continues to grow every day. It was quite humbling for me to watch him lead our group throughout the week. His patience, compassion, sense of humor, pre-trip organization and leadership were exactly what is needed for such a large group. I consider myself twice blessed because I get to go home with him.

If you get the chance to go to Cairo either on a mission trip or you are just passing through, I think we can all highly recommend the Dairy Hut. The ladies who work there are the friendliest and most patient you ever want to meet. I personally would suggest the Hot Fudge Malt. *Oh my gosh.....it is heaven on earth.* Thank you to our parish for your generous donations. You can probably envision how ice cream hits the spot after working in 90 to 100 degree heat. However, more important than the ice cream, if you can imagine, we appreciate your prayers and continuous support of our youth. It and they are priceless.

Oh, by the way, the end of the Boogaloo goes something like this.....

Here we go! Here we go! Here we go!
What's that you say?
Let me hear you Praise the Lord!
What's that you say?
I said let me hear you Praise the Lord!
What's that you say?
I said let me hear you Praise the Lord!
What's that you say?

Praise The Lord!

Indeed we did.

Mrs. P :)

Mission Trip Reflection

Well oh well, what to say about Cairo 2008? The trip was full of new experiences to say the least. This was my 2nd mission trip, but that didn't stop god from making this trip entirely different than last year. Even in the car ride there, from grace's imaginative mind to the making of "Small Orange Sun", I knew that this would be an experience I wouldn't forget. We arrived on the first day, full of energy and ready to start working. I remember the first two days of working being so tough. We had to scrape paint off of Mrs. Martha's house, and it didn't seem to be making progress at first. But by the time we finished on Tuesday afternoon, we could see all the paint we successfully chipped off of her house, and so could Mrs. Martha. I can still remember the look of such joy on her face when she saw the job we did on her house. It was amazing. We did something so small, but to her, it meant to much. The next two days were kids club, and that wasn't an easy task either. Kids of all ages chased us around all afternoon, playing games and having a good time with all of us. The first kid I really got to know was a little boy named D'Eric. He thought that it would be funny to try and untie everyone's shoes and then run away. We did a lot of things together, but I remember one in particular. We were told to make tout bags and decorate them, so we all did. When he was done with his, he showed it to me. It read, "Danny + D'Eric = Best Friends Forever". I felt so touched by it. I remembered that one of our goals for mission trip was to change someone's life. When he showed it to me, I really felt like I had made some sort of impact on his life. It made me feel so happy, and like I was accomplishing my task by being on this mission trip. After work each day, we would take out time to do things for fun, like write our praise notes or have a basketball game with Fr. Arthur. That was also good, but at the end of the day, when we went to club, I felt so close to god. We sang songs and we did all sorts of activities, all of which made me feel like I was doing his will, and serving him and his people. It was like I traded places with one of Jesus' disciples for a week. The whole experience was something indescribable, which makes it hard to write a reflection on it. But whether it was the foot washing, or going to the cross, or even the scavenger hunt, the entire week was something amazing. I once thought that one person couldn't make a difference. I guess I proved myself wrong.

Danny Benz

Anthony Pena

Cairo Mission Trip Reflection

Attending this trip was amazing. I was able to experience things that I wouldn't normally do, and talk about things that I kept inside for so long. Some of these events opened my eyes. I saw people who do not have the things I have. The citizens of Cairo taught me to appreciate what I have, and to stop and think about others.

When we first got there, some of the things I saw were somewhat surprising. When my group was assigned to Kids Club, I was a bit hesitant. When Dishon told us that some of the kids might get into fights, and others might use sexually explicit language I was a bit worried. If I had a problem like that I wouldn't know how to handle it. When we arrived at kids club, we had to start planning out the day. I decided to join the group who was handling the skits. After we were done, we started to prepare. We needed a couple of people to take attendance of the kids that had shown up. Dishon had told me to look out for this one who was too old for kids, and he had lied about his age. I got a little scared; I thought that if the kid had shown there was going to be a little trouble. As the kids started arriving, I saw the look of excitement in their faces. As I thought this was the only fun thing they had. Although some of the kids were crazy, most of them were pretty nice. They listened pretty well. Some of the kids were pretty smart for their age.

On the second day, my group went on a prayer walk. It was pretty interesting. Our leaders had us pray out loud. I'm not really the one to pray out loud, but for some reason I felt more open. I'm not really known for opening up, usually I'm quiet and I don't participate much in activities such as this. Some of the houses that we had walked past looked like they were about to fall down. After we were done we were, my group was

sent to work on a community garden. I thought it was nice, we had planted tomatoes and other plants. A little work couldn't hurt anyone. When we arrived for our last day of Kids Club, I was a bit nervous to actually talk and get to know the kids. But, I learned to relax and keep my cool. This kid Thomas was so nice, and he understood what he was supposed to do during the art project. He interacted well with, so did Don Don. Overall my experience at kids club is something I will remember forever.

Now the work cites totally different story. We were told that previous visiting groups had worked Ms. Martha's house, but when we arrived there was little scrapes here and there. It wasn't until towards our lunch break that we realized there was four coats of paints. It was difficult until we found this awesome scraper. It made the scraping a lot easier, and finishing a panel went by a lot faster. I have to say I drank a lot of water. The lady was so nice; she gave us lemonade and let us come in her house when we wanted to cool off. Scraping her house helped learn how to work with others.

Basically this whole trip changed as a person. It changed the way I act around people, and it made me appreciate what I have. And, if I could I would have tried to make Cairo back to the way it was during its prime days. I hope that the town will get back on its feet, so that future generations will have a better life.

Ashley Megan O`Donnell
Cairo 08`

This summer I went on a mission trip with my church. It really made me think about things and why god put me on Earth. We did things to help the town of Cairo, like help Mrs. Martha scrape her house and the kids at kids club build relationships with God, or even just cleaning up. I had fun, not only because I was with my friends, but because I was helping other people too. At first I only wanted to go because of the friends that I met, but it was much more than that in the end, it was the friends, but also the people you help, and the friends you make. I can honestly say that after the mission trip I had thirty new friends.

At Mrs. Martha`s house we scraped and scraped, but it was fun. Mrs. Martha is a really sweet older lady that needed her house painted, but first we had to scrape. I had the best feeling after it was done, just looking at all the work we put into this house.

At Kids Club we helped all the kids with their relationships with God grow closer. It really wasn`t hard watching the kids because they wanted to stay with you all the time. They were just so sweet and kind to us. At first I have to admit I was scared to know that these kids did things that kids around Tinley Park or Orland Park would not do or even know how to do.

Before club we usually had an activity planned out for us. The first night we didn`t have one because we had just arrived. The second night we went bowling. The third night

Stephanie Davis

Reflection.

When I first thought about writing this reflection, I didn't know how I would start it or what I would put in it, but that was before the Mission Trip. Now, I have so many things I want to put in here, but most of the feelings, and things I experienced are hard to put into words. Being in a neighborhood like that, it really made me realize how lucky I am to be living in such a good community. I couldn't imagine living in a house like the one we painted, but they live there like it's a normal thing, and for them, it probably is. I just couldn't imagine walking down the street, and being really close with my neighbors, or looking at all of these houses with chipped paint. Back at home, it's like, you walk down the block, and you might know, and talk to every one of your neighbors, but you're defiantly not going to see houses with chipped paint, or messed up gutters. It's hard to believe they don't have a hospital for at least 20 miles. After seeing all that, I am so much more grateful for everything I have. I really, really liked doing Kid's Club too. With the kids all excited to see us, it made it that much better. All of the kid's were completely different, so you got to experience a lot of different things. I feel like I really bonded with some of the kids. I met a little girl named Maddie, when we had the kids draw a picture of where they live, she couldn't remember her house, because she was living with her grandma. I didn't think much of it then, but now I realize if I ever forgot what my neighborhood looked like, it would probably make me really sad, but she wasn't, she shrugged it off like it was nothing. She drew me a picture of a flower, and I still have it. It was probably on of the greatest days of the whole trip. I couldn't believe how happy the kids were, it was as if they didn't even know what was happening around them. I loved how we went on that Scavenger Hunt. It was such a great way to see the town, and downtown Cairo was really surprising. I didn't expect it to be like that. This Mission Trip changed the way I see things. I can't

Stephanie Davis

wait until next year.

Mission Trip Reflection

My trip to Cairo Illinois was a great experience. Painting a house for two days was fun, and I enjoyed doing the work. It amazed me how generous the people living there were, considering how little they have. Even though what they did have wasn't much, they offered us pretty much all of it. They even offered us their shower. That's what god looks for in people, and I know that one day they'll be rewarded. Kids club was a blast. The kids were so open to us, and they were so excited that we were there. I began to realize that they must not get much attention from their parents at all, because they strived for attention so much around us. It was a great feeling to know that they look up to us, and that we were teaching them the word of god. The leaders at youth works couldn't have been any more open either. They were able to get in front of a large crowd and tell us about the rough times in their life. That was something that I found to be really brave. It was great getting to know the community, and it was even better getting to know each other. Many strong relationships were built throughout the week at Cairo. Everyone was there for each other when someone needed a shoulder to cry on. These trips always bring me so much closer to god and I am so lucky to have a group like TNT.

By: Mary Benz

When I was first asked to chaperone the mission trip this summer, I remember not hesitating to say yes after I knew the dates were ok. After saying yes, I did wonder why I was so willing to give up a week of my summer vacation to spend more time with high school students. It wasn't until the cook-out at the end of the week when I realized that my saying yes made a difference to the people in Cairo. At the cook-out, I walked passed a table of women enjoying their food and conversation. One woman turned and stopped me. She had asked where our group was from. I responded with Chicago, Colorado, South or North Carolina, and Iowa. The woman's eyes lit up as she said, "Colorado! People came here all the way from Colorado!" Another woman jumped in and asked, "So you all will be here next week, right?" I told her no. All the women at the table grew silent and their faces were filled with disappointment. Then that same woman sadly replied, "You mean no one will be here for us on Thursdays anymore". I then smiled and said that our group would be leaving, but a new group would be coming to help out. All the women were relieved. Then the first woman that stopped me said "so this is like a vacation for you all." I responded, "No not really. We've be working really hard for you down here this week." The woman thanked me and said, "We need a lot of help here in Cairo, God bless you!" It was then that I looked at the other women who were all in agreement that Cairo needed help. They wanted help! This quick conversation made me realize that all the scrapping, painting, gardening, visiting, and spending time at kids club was both a necessity and was appreciated. I could tell from these women that they looked forward to the Thursday cook-out every week, and I was glad to be a part of it just that one time. There are so many other stories I could share and write about, but I think this one put an end to my week in Cairo.

Ms. Tricia B