



## March 30, 2022 Weekly Report from Oblate Youth Ministry in Tijuana.

We related a story some months back about a family we met when we selected their house for a new roof. The father had lost his job during COVID as a bus driver because children that were



riding the bus to school were now staying home. He had worked there 17 years. Feeling depressed he had started drinking. The mother got a job as a security guard in a factory. She works 12 hour shifts six days a week and commutes another hour and a half each day. She can do little more than sleep when she is home.

There are four children, including Octavio (19) and Gustavo (18). These two oldest brothers are mentally handicapped have hearing and speech difficulties. When they tried going to school and suffered because of their learning challenges, they were made fun of and even hit sometimes. The parents took them out of school. Adriana is 17 and stresses over having assumed many care taking roles in the family. She tries to help her father with his problems, cares for her older brothers, and especially tries to help her younger sister cope. She is about to finish high school and says she wants to be a doctor. She decided this after meeting some of the girls in our medical program who are studying to be doctors, and she now realizes that this is a possibility for her too.

A recent development is that an uncle has stepped in to help, taking Octavio and Gustavo and the sisters into his home to live with his family. The uncle is close to the church and now endeavors to get the children close to God also. They attend mass on Sundays, and we are starting to see more smiles. The uncle, being familiar with the programs offered by the Oblates, got the two brothers enrolled in the special needs school (see two boys on right), and we are told they are happy to be in such a school.



Well known Colombian singer and song writer, Diego Cardona, visited our parish a fourth time, providing a night of praise worship.



About 150 people attended and enjoyed his style of involving the attendees in a sing along style. He sang “Un Corazón Sencillo”, “Conectados con el Cielo” and his new single, “El Silencio de Dios”. Diego quickly connects with the people by having them learn movements to accompany the songs. Everyone was standing, dancing along, and singing praises to the Lord.

Diego has a great love for the SEARCH program and realizes the youth program at Mary Immaculate Parish has grown through the program. He gratefully tells the youth, his song “Un Corazón Sencillo”, is his gift to them and SEARCH.

Diego was able to work with our parish music coordinator, Israel, and adapt his style to Israel’s. Israel was very impressed by his humility to do this. Israel also commented that Diego’s love for God and knowledge of the Bible were very apparent. Diego says that he tunes his guitar and God tunes his heart.

The adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a very moving and powerful part of the evening. As Diego sang people knelt and joined in the praises. The evening ended with the song “Connected with the Sky” which the community loved and joined in singing and dancing in adoration of the Lord.

Diego gave thanks to God and to this special parish, which he obviously has great affection for. The affection was mutual as many people clamored to talk with Diego and have their picture taken with him.



*Story of Diego written by Rosario Avitia.*

Last weekend our parish hosted a massive covid vaccine campaign. We had a crowd of 850 people across Saturday and Sunday. The government has been using parishes in Tijuana to put



on these clinics to encourage more people to get vaccinated. Our medical team did all the set up and the government provided doctors, nurses, and other helpers. Our medical team was instrumental in getting so many people vaccinated by going to our 9 chapels the week before and promoting the vaccination.

There had been a few incidences of theft at other clinics, so the government arranged to have a military presence. However, in our parish everyone seemed to be thankful to have this service calling to mind our Oblate motto to always give a nice welcome to our visitors, whether rich or poor, Catholic or another denomination.

Many people asked if another weekend could be arranged to get more of their family and friends vaccinated, but the government said they have too many commitments in other parishes.





This week we feature student Dulce Raquel Merino Estrada in her own words.

*“I am 20 years old and studying English Escuela Normal Fronteriza Tijuana B.C. I am a bit outgoing, and I love learning. I am also taking courses in education and nursing on Saturdays. In the mornings I go to school, and in the afternoons, I work to be able to help cover my university studies. Unfortunately, my parents have not been able to support me with school expenses since middle school.*

*I was helping by giving English classes in my parish, but when I entered the school in person, I had to look for a job that would allow me to cover some of my transportation and school material expenses. I am already teaching as part of my service, so I must buy a lot of materials to be able to teach.*

*Thanks for giving me the opportunity.”*