

Guatemala Reflection — Madisen Hane



When I first heard about Sion's trip to Guatemala, I was slightly skeptical. I was worried that there wouldn't be a way for me to make the kind of impact that needed to be made in a community like the one that we were serving. San Andres Itzapa is so far removed from anything I had ever experienced in my life before. How could an unskilled and sheltered person like me possibly make a difference?

Immediately upon arriving at the convent, my fears were dissipated. Each of us were welcomed with warm and open arms by the *hermanas* of the convent. The sisters were true examples of silent servants; we could not communicate with them very well because of the language barrier, but we expressed mutual gratitude all the same. I was inspired by the kind hospitality of the sisters and how grateful they were for us. I realized that I wanted to emulate their attitude of love into my own attitude towards service.

Being able to meet with and work with the two Sisters of Sion on our trip was perhaps my favorite part of this mission. As a student of a Sion school, I have been taught the charism and mission of Sion in nearly all of my classes over the last four years. I thought that I had a previous understanding of Sion until meeting these two sisters opened my eyes to so much more. At times I forget that Sion is more than merely a high school that I attend in my community. The spirit of Sion echoes throughout the world in the work of the sisters and in those that believe in the ideals of interfaith dialogue and a care for the poor.

In building stoves, mixing concrete and meeting with families, I caught a glimpse of the spirit of the Sisters of Sion. The two Sisters of Sion on our trip were full of strength and a desire to connect with the American Sion students on the trip. Attending this trip at the end of my formal Sion education as a senior in high school made me realize that my relationship with Sion will not end after I walk across the stage to receive my diploma. There are so many more people who hold the same values - the same charism of Sion - that I have come to identify with.

Through meeting the coordinators of our trip, Phil and Melinda Smith, I encountered two examples of people who personally exemplify the values of Sion. Each day in Guatemala it became clearer to me just how amazing these two people are. As lay people, they have come to devote their lives to this community far away from their home. It was beautiful to see firsthand how they had formed relationships with the translators and other workers from the community that they hired to work with us on our trip. As members of the Sion community, Phil and Melinda are leaders I look up to.

I left this trip knowing that I was able to help touch the lives of those in need, even if just in some small way. At the same time, I know that this trip will never truly leave me, but that it will live on in my new knowledge of the mission of Sion and everything that it is becoming. Being able to witness the collaboration of the “family of Sion” with Sion students, parents, teachers, Sisters of Sion and a Sion Associate was remarkable. It is through the help of the family of Sion that I was able to help make a difference in Guatemala.

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