



"Kimberly did an amazing job of staying actively engaged in the conversation with such a heavy load of shame" (from p. 10).

When shame overwhelms us, we involuntarily become either full of adrenaline and locked into "fight or flight" mode; or we withdraw and shut down, physically and relationally. The girl pictured has withdrawn totally after being corrected in front of her peers. This can cause problems in the future if not resolved.

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do not see with such clarity until their late twenties or thirties when many other complications (compulsions, addictions, shattered relationships, etc.) force them to take stock. The story might have ended there with a bright ray of hope – but there was more.

The very next day, immediately after Mass concluded, Nena burst into the sacristy followed by Kimberly, with big news. As they were walking to Mass, they came face to face with a woman walking toward them on the sidewalk. Traffic was so congested by unregulated parking on the narrow street that even the sidewalk was

narrowed to one lane. It turned out to be Kimberly's mother who was pressing herself against the building in order to allow them to pass by and be on their way. Kimberly grabbed her hand and announced enthusiastically to her mother, "It's all right. I have already forgiven you. After Mass yesterday I forgave you." The woman was taken aback completely. Her family of origin left the Catholic Church years ago. As she passed on her way, the mother admitted that perhaps she should start going to their Church. ✝

La Semilla

the hope

of the harvest is in the seed

Summer 2022

The CDF Pilgrimage

Our first stop was Brescia, after landing in Milan, because Giorgio and Maggie Zecchini are such a part of our history stemming from the late 1960s in Akron and the Charles de

Foucauld house which everyone still refers to as *CDF* or *the CDF house*. In that house the bishop permitted us a Eucharistic chapel so that, according to St.

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A joyous reunion for Sr. Casey and Hilary after many years. Hilary lived for a few months at El Rancho Nazaret when she was a single woman, discerning her vocation. Now married, she and her husband Wally have a five-year-old son, Benjamin. Sr. Casey popped in on Hilary in Brescia during the pilgrimage for the canonization.



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Charles' spirituality, we could "live a Eucharistic life in the midst of men". Maggie Stuart, a single woman from Akron came to know the members and was attracted to their service to the poor. She was dating Giorgio Zecchini, a professor at the University of Akron, and they both became enamored of the Lord Jesus as they experienced His love

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asked. "For pushing me."

"What else?" "For not wanting me. For giving me away."

"Then you can say, 'Lord Jesus, I forgive my Mom for not wanting me, I forgive her for giving me away.'" And she repeated it more formally.

"Anything else?" Again, Nena had some gentle but inspired suggestions and Kimberly continued forgiving.

"Sometimes you wonder if your heart has really forgiven, so it is good to ask a blessing on the one you forgive. Try this, 'Lord Jesus, bless my Mom...'" Kimberly repeated and followed a further suggestion,

"... to know You better and better, Jesus."

And after the girl repeated it, I asked, "Any other blessing?" "... To be a good Mom for the ones still at home."

"Do you need to forgive yourself?" Kimberly forgave herself for cursing,

for giving into discouragement and hopelessness and for considering hating her own life.

We were done after ten or twelve minutes. I mentioned that this had been very good for at least two reasons. Kimberly was very pleasing to Jesus, doing just what He taught us in the Our Father. I too, was very proud of her. And secondly, her heart would be at peace. Whenever I feel like I don't want to live anymore, or if I ever think about suicide, I should ask the Lord, "Who do I need to forgive?" Many times, He has to help me at least to forgive myself.

Kimberly volunteered that someday she ought to forgive her father, too. So then and there, we did a simple but thorough session that Jesus would help her to forgive him. Such an amazing moment in the life of a young child. Most often, people

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Take all three girls to the funeral. They had for some reason stopped at the house of Kimberly's biological mother before departing. The mother, already overly embroiled in some other domestic crisis, was taken aback and over-reacted with effusive energy to a simple call at the front door. In the scuffle the mother dropped a tray of pencils and crayons which spilled over in every direction. Everyone spontaneously crouched down to help collect them from underfoot and under chairs and a table. The next moment unfolded with the mother pushing Kimberly at the shoulders, sending her on her heels backwards, out the front door. "Get out of my house. You don't belong here." Then to Nena, "Don't bring her back here again. I gave her to you, she's your problem."

As she looked down beyond her coffee, I asked Kimberly how that made her feel. She answered, willingly but not very articulately. Then Nena broke in and did a tremendous job of taking the child back through several diverse episodes.

"Remember you were crying one day as we sat at the table eating dinner?" Kimberly's shoulders slouched and her chin dropped down. She stared down at the table, but not looking at the food. Nena prompted her very gently but with clear precision that Kimberly had said, "No one wants

me. I don't belong." Then further prompting, reminded her she had remarked that she doesn't want to keep living. Kimberly did an amazing job of staying actively engaged in the conversation with such a heavy load of shame and self-consciousness and so many in the audience. Each one around the table assured Kimberly of a personal heartfelt love for her. Frida showed her texts on her telephone which she had already sent to several of the others who had been worried about them for six weeks – calling them to rejoice that they were all home, safe and sound.

When the others had left the table, I suggested to Kimberly and Nena that we could pray if they wanted to. They were agreeable, so I suggested that I would start us off and then if Kimberly wanted to, she could forgive her mother. She followed quite naturally.

"You can say it like this, 'Lord Jesus, I forgive my Mom...'" Kimberly repeated, "Lord Jesus, I forgive my Mom..." "For what?", I



Photo above: l-r, Mary Patt Pirie, John & Eileen Patton, Patty Sherman (her husband John the photographer for this shot), Sr. Casey, Fr. Tim and Magdalen (Magz). Previous page: John Sherman with our gracious hosts in Brescia, Giorgio & Maggie Zecchini. Mary Patt, a consecrated woman and member of Regnum Christi, lives in Rome and helped us with communications and other practical needs. The shot is taken in the exuberance of St. Peter's square, immediately after the conclusion of the Canonization Mass.

in their own relationship and in their brothers and sisters in Christ. They married and became part of *Bread of Life Community* which grew out of the *CDF House*. They had two children, Paul and Hilary (pictured on page 1), when they discerned a call to live in Brescia, Italy, Giorgio's hometown. In Italy they had two more boys, Ampelio and Giovanni, bringing their family to four

children. They also continued their journey living "communion of persons" in the *Focolare* movement. St. Charles de Foucauld wrote of the Universal Brotherhood and lived that aspect of his spirituality amongst very poor, nomadic Tuareg people in the Sahara desert. He respected their daily acts of prayer and piety expressed in their Muslim faith.

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Living a prayerful life, emphasizing Eucharistic devotion, he worked with his hands and made himself available as a neighbor, always available to show hospitality and charity when there was opportunity. He longed and prayed fervently to live a shared life of brotherhood with others who would join his apostolate. He began writing a *Rule of the Little Brothers*, but he never saw that vision realized. After his death in 1916, at the hands of a band of anti-French tribesmen, others picked up his writings and began living his ideal. Religious orders of men and women have sprung from his witness, called respectively the *Little Brothers* and the *Little Sisters of Jesus*. They aspire to live as he did—among the poor, working alongside of them, silent witnesses to the Gospel through their love, prayer and very ordinary life of hard work and Eucharistic adoration. There is also an association of diocesan priests that come from his influence, called *Jesus Caritas*, and numerous other associations and movements inspired by St. Charles.

Giorgio and Maggie received us as pilgrims and showed us the

love and warm hospitality which has matured in their own marriage and family. An ideal of the *Focolare* movement is to strive for unity with all persons and cultures – very much akin to Brother Charles' universal brotherhood. Members of *Focolare*, called *focolarini*, taking their inspiration from Jn 17:21 and Mt 18:20, they very specifically and intentionally strive “to keep Jesus in their midst” when they are gathered as brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as when showing hospitality to those of different faiths. Giorgio and Maggie introduced us to their friends, Remigio and Tina who are *focolarini* who warmly received us as family and gave us rooms for the night.

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Sister Claire, of the Little Sisters



of Jesus, gave us a tour of her museum exhibit. See page 6.

Mission Needs

A big grateful shoutout to St. Martin of Tours Parish in Valley City, OH, who sponsor *Servants of the Cross* via a monthly collection. Through generations of pastors, youth leaders and family members, you all have been so loyal and faithful to our mission. Even COVID could not suppress your heart-to-heart contact with us. (Golden anniversary blessings upon Tom & Judy Rundle.)

Some current needs:

- A used sewing machine for the single women.
- A (used) glider-rocker for evenings on the terrace which are not too hot and sultry.
- We need \$150 to purchase a secure metal storage box for our sound equipment.
- 2 Zoom accounts (\$160 each). Even after COVID we need more accounts to accommodate various courses.

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grade, her hair has been cut short so that the frequent delousing sessions might go easier. This past winter the infestation was particularly stubborn and widespread. She is still self-conscious about having short hair.

We were trying to maintain one coherent conversation at the breakfast table, competing with Nena's tendency to exuberant monologue. Meanwhile, Kimberly drifted into half-murmuring to herself about the hardships of their trip. No more music running through

her eyes or gestures, she was self-absorbed. You could see she was feeling shame. I asked her what she was feeling in such a way that everyone else knew I was redirecting the whole table conversation.

The name Kimberly is somewhat rare in the States, but nearly unheard of in Mexico. She was undoubtedly named, not after a saint, but rather a somewhat recent soap opera starlet. As the hardship narrative unfolded, it seems Nena had been planning to

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information, only the same litany of questions.

Nena is a piece of work. Despite a limited primary school education, she reads pretty well. She loves the Lord and can give you (and anyone in earshot) six or eight testimonies of how the Lord is blessing people since yesterday without taking a breath, all while leaving you breathlessly hoping she will slow down and blend in just a little to everyone else's wavelength and volume. Some would like a sip of coffee in between news items; others prefer a cup. Her occupation and her mission in life is to visit the sick and pray with them, distributing some of the collected food items from the parish. For many years, she and her other two live-in granddaughters (15

and 12 years old) have lived on the Divine Providence that trickles in from this apostolate. Certainly, less than ten per cent of the sick people she visits live above the poverty line. But still many Mexican barrios have neighbors who look in on one another and observe all comings and goings in their sphere of the neighborhood. They make sure people get what they need to eat if they're poor.

A little over a year ago, Nena heard of a little girl who was homeless and so, Kimberly was taken in and integrated into the family.

Recently, the bright little girl has caught up with her age group in school with the help and encouragement of her new older sisters. Like some of the girls in her



Every family, even the most holy and happy, will suffer wounds, shame and traumas because of our fallen state of Original Sin and therefore living in this "Vale of Tears". A pre-COVID snapshot of Aurelio and Selma with their two boys, Aurelio Jr. (right) and Angel (left).

Kimberly's Journey

Ten-year-old Kimberly, beaming an ear-to-ear smile, danced into the kitchen of the rectory with her grandmother. After a six-week absence, she gave heartfelt hugs to me, the closest to the door, then to our cook, Frida, with whom she has a warm and trusting friendship. Then she showed a little ambivalence between sitting at her usual place or greeting the other two priests seated at table. Nena, her grandmother, who entered with Kimberly, helped her complete the greetings as first priority. The girl was attending to the coffee which already had plenty of milk and she began to load it with heaping teaspoons of sugar. The music still animating her dance-

like movements, even if inaudible, sparkled through her eyes. At the rectory there is peanut butter on the breakfast table, so she became absorbed in spreading modest amounts on small shards of a crisply toasted tortilla which she had broken.

Nena had her customary, non-stop, up-to-the-minute news from the neighborhood sick and elderly who needed to receive a visit from the priests, interspersed with curiosities and quips from their recent excursion to Vera Cruz, in the south. We had not seen them for six weeks and knew only that Nena had gone to her brother's funeral. Nena had disappeared as soon as she heard the news. She doesn't own a phone and never thought about leaving a contact number on either end of her circuit.

Had she taken the three children with her? Did she leave any contact information? How long did she plan to stay? For the entire six weeks we were calling and asking anyone who might know; but everyone had no

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Some of Kimberly's school mates have hair which is staring to grow out after being bobbed pretty short. Others continue to need delousing sessions.

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We pilgrims were very aware of the Lord reminding us of His plan for our mission, *Servants of the Cross*, which grew out of the *CDF House* and *Bread of Life Community*. The Lord was assuring us that the seeds He planted in our lives more than fifty years ago still carry great hope for the harvest that He envisions. And the love which The Lord Jesus continues to inspire in Giorgio and Maggie's family and in *Focolare* are sure signs, spiritual confirmations, for us that we are not part of a small isolated endeavor. Rather, of a powerful witness of the Body of Christ in the world today. ✝

Sister Claire designed the museum display for the city of Rome in preparation for the canonization festivities. She loves the three murals hand-painted by Saint Charles for his chapel in the Sahara desert. They encapsulate his spirituality.

The Annunciation (page 7, top) symbolizes the spirituality of friendship. By taking initiative to bring the presence of Christ to others, we spread the blessings of the Kingdom and the aroma of Christ to others.

The Holy Family (page 7, below) The

hidden life of Nazareth, so available to families and communities today, is the Redemptive love which transforms the world.

The Sacred Heart (page 6, below) is the merciful love of Christ which saves all mankind. This is the love present in the Holy Eucharist, transforming our lives so that we can bring that same love to others. "Love one another as I have loved you." Jn 13:34; 15:12.

