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Sr. Melissa Anne: Valuing Experiences

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Sr. Melissa Anne: Valuing Experiences

Abstract: This paper consists of an interview with Sister Melissa Anne. She has traveled around the Western side of the United States, Mexico, and Central America translating (Spanish) with integral evangelization ministries.

Sister Melissa is the vice president of a local congregation in the Midwest. Her congregation has done a lot of work in their area helping homeless shelters and also those who need low-income housing. Much of the work that she is a part of today was influenced by the experiences abroad she had before joining her congregation. Without those experiences, she wouldn't have had the chance to learn through others, who she is, and the values she has as a woman religious.

During our interview, I could feel her passion and emotion come through when we started to talk about all the work she did before coming to the Midwest. Sister Melissa Anne's mentioned that her time in Mexico and Central America brought her great clarity about life and why she took her vows. She went with a group of sisters from St. Peter's Parish where they worked with seven different parishes that focused on integral evangelization. Sister Melissa Anne explained integral practice meant that they focused on providing information about laws, education, social justice, and other issues to the multiple indigenous groups they helped. The indigenous groups were often mistreated and manipulated by the government and big corporations that went into their villages to take away their land and everything they worked for without their consent. People would show up with documents and have them sign away their

homes because they couldn't understand what was happening. Sister Melissa Anne and others helped them find their voice for themselves so they could get the attention of the government to listen to the people they are hurting.

Sister Melissa Anne recalled times during her stay there were times that were scary, but also exhilarating. She worked alongside Bishop Lucian Ramirez, who was a very forward-thinking man who was strongly hated and targeted by the government. On one occasion she remembered they were headed out of the village to meet others for their annual week-long meeting, but they had to leave in secret. Traveling with the Bishop made them large targets, so they had to travel at night and through the jungle to avoid any people who could put them in even more danger. If anybody stood beside the Bishop or the indigenous people the government marked them as the enemy since the government was so corrupt. When she was telling me about this, I couldn't fathom being in a position like hers or even a nun almost living another life. I could tell she loved the thrill of it and I'm sure she had plenty of other similar stories.

After telling me about her adventures in the jungle, she went back to why she was grateful for the experience. Living among the people showed her the true value of community and forgiveness, which she holds close to her values as a nun. That feeling of hers was really solidified and became clearer when she visited these places. She has had mentioned how she wouldn't have changed any of the experience over 13 years she was there translating for doctors and providing education.

Works Cited

“Sr.Melissa Anne.” Personal interview. 16 Jan, 2019.