



# The Long Walk by Jessica Nelson, Itauguá, Paraguay

**CLAP! CLAP! CLAP!** “¡Yessica! ¡Ya amaneció en tu casa!” Hermana (Sister) Susana’s applause at our door is the Paraguayan equivalent to a knock, and her cheery rise-and-shine greeting is not exactly music to my ears on the one day I was hoping to sleep in. “¡Yeeeeessicaaa!” She sings as I shuffle my way across the room and open the door to two smiling faces. Hermana Susana is in charge of the pastoral projects for children here in Itauguá and she never seems to stop working, or talking for that matter. Yes, she can even go on longer than me. Behind her is Anchi, a college student and volunteer from the community. I give them each dos besos (kisses on the cheeks) and before I can invite them in, Hermana Susana is already on a roll explaining that Anchi and I are going out to take pictures this morning.

Since my arrival a little over two months ago, I have been working on a project called Child Care International, a sponsorship program from Canada. Hermana Susana goes on to explain that we will take pictures of the children in front of their houses to be sent to their sponsors in Canada, along with a letter

**“I feel torn as the intense need that I witnessed all day weighs heavily upon my heart...”**

which we will help them write this coming week. I excuse myself to change out of my pajamas and ten minutes later I’m on the road, water bottle in hand and breakfast (salty crackers) in my pocket.

Sleepiness melts away in the spring sun as we make our way through the cobblestone streets to the dirt roads, still muddy from yesterday’s rain. The breeze is cool on my face and gently brushes the clouds across the vast blue sky. *What a beautiful gift, this day full of green trees and bright wildflowers.* I think, *thank you God for getting me out of bed!* I am drinking in the rich landscape and enjoying Anchi’s company as we search for the first house. Most of the children do not have addresses, so we have to ask around their neighborhood and go from there. With the help of several people, we find the house nestled under a group of mango trees at the edge of a large field.

As we draw closer, I see that this dwelling could hardly be described as a house. Large, uneven slats of wood lean precariously against one another to form walls and a roof while a tattered sheet has been hung to serve as

a door. The floor is made of dirt and there is a sickly dog rolling around in the dust just outside the house. Anchi claps to announce our presence and moments later we are greeted by the mother with a shy smile. Once we explain why we have come, she calls to her daughter, Rocio. She is eleven years old and has a sweet smile that matches her mother’s. Her sweatpants are too small and her brown t-shirt, thin from age, reads ‘University of Mammoth’. I feel a twinge of pain in my heart as I realize that Rocio will probably never have the opportunity to attend college. Like many of the children in this program, she is probably malnourished, and her young body might be infested with parasites. I take the picture and tell her that it will come out beautifully and that her sponsors will be so pleased to get to know her. A bright smile spreads across her face and she lets out a nervous giggle and then runs back into the house.

We walk for over five hours, visiting almost thirty houses. Different families, various homes, but the same devastating poverty. I am exhausted both physically and emotionally as I sit down to eat lunch with my community member,



Jessica Nelson and Nicole Rangel  
GSV in Paraguay

Nicole. I feel torn as the intense need that I witnessed all day weighs heavily upon my heart, but the laughter of the children and the beauty of this land bring me joy. So I simply let myself exist in this space of paradoxical emotions because this is the present, and it is where I am meant to be. So thank you God for today and all the joys, pains and challenges it brings.

**“the laughter of the children and the beauty of this land bring me joy...it is where I am meant to be.”**

Embrace the World...

Good Shepherd  
Volunteers  
Mission Statement

Good Shepherd  
Volunteers is a service  
association

of women and men  
which exists to express  
the gospel values of the

Good Shepherd in  
today's world.

The Sisters of the Good  
Shepherd and

the volunteers share  
the same work and  
values in this

collaborative project.

The basic elements of  
the GSV philosophy are

exploration of simple  
living, working towards

social justice, the

development of

community bonds, and  
attentiveness to the

spirit.

## From the Director

Dear Friends,

We began this year by welcoming a new group of 20 volunteers who are now in ministry with our Good Shepherd sisters and collaborators across the United States and in South America. We also began the year by welcoming Mary Helldorfer as the new Coordinator of our domestic volunteer program.

Our domestic volunteers have just completed their community retreat, with the realization that the "honeymoon" is over. They are now well into the sacred and dangerous work of building Christian community in a world that presses for individualism. At the retreat the volunteers reflected on the counter-cultural

nature of building Christian community and have come up with creative and intentional ways of living this out. They are an example and an inspiration as they view our world through eyes filled with hope. We are so blessed to have such a generous and talented group of volunteers who embrace our mission of mercy and reconciliation!

As we approach the season of Thanksgiving, I send my special thanks to all those who continue to support GSV.

Peace,

Maureen



## Beauty in Simplicity by Meredith Gnerre, New Jersey

In some ways, life in our New Jersey community does not seem to be radically simple. Our apartment is comfortable and spacious; it would definitely fit more than a two-person community! We eat lunch in the school cafeteria every day, which is actually something of a treat at Collier High School (an alternative high school) So, we always have plenty of interesting meals. The restrictions of living within the volunteer stipend have not even weighed too heavily upon us.

Still, I have found lessons in simplicity in almost every aspect of life here. Much of it comes in the consciousness present in just about everything we do, from planning meals and grocery shopping, to deciding how to spend our evenings and trying to conserve resources. There is a beauty to such intentional living, especially as we try to make choices on the side of simplicity. Some of those careful decisions are necessary; a limited food budget renders every purchase significant. But, I also appreciate the way simplicity manifests itself in other areas, like our use of time, which finds a good balance among work, walks in the woods, meals and activities together, and plenty of reading.

A couple of weeks ago, my community mate, Judith, and I had the opportunity to go on an overnight leadership retreat with a group of students and staff from our high school to tiny Sedge Island on the Jersey Shore. Environmentalism is the main focus of the Sedge Island program, and we were immersed in a solar powered lifestyle where there is no garbage collection so everything is recycled, composted, or sent home with you, and saving water takes on a whole new meaning in the form of an interesting sort of outhouse called Clivus. One of the greatest lessons I took away from the retreat was a reminder that the moment I think I'm doing enough, I have to look around to see what else I could be doing, in terms of my life in general as well as conservation.



Meredith Gnerre

As Judith and I carry our own reusable bags to the grocery store each week and I grow accustomed to taking showers without running the water constantly, I start to feel satisfied that I am being ecologically responsible. Sedge Island, with its intense devotion to the environment, was a wake-up call and a motivating force, reminding me to renew my commitment to living a truly simple life in all ways. And so it is a work in progress, as old habits or tendencies occasionally creep into my mind, showing me that I start wanting more when I forget that everything is a gift.

## Alumni Corner

-Thank you to GSV alumni who provided their support and assistance in our recruitment so far this year:

**Ellen Sidorski, '03, Godfrey Ddungu, '02, Jim Spillman, '00, and Nicole Stenke, '00.**

-Congratulations to **Andrew Nelson, '04** on his recent marriage.

-Welcome back **Annette Hynes, '99**, upon her return from service in Kenya with the PeaceCorps. We hope her re-entry is gentle and we look forward to hearing her stories.

-Thank you to **Christine Mariano, '03, John Bosco, '00, and Jessica Abels, '02**, for their continued involvement as community support persons.

-**Jessica Kochis, '00**, is doing great and continues on her wonderful recovery. She appreciates all of your support and prayers.

-Congratulations to **Lisa Jeremiah, '00**, on earning her MPA from the University of Washington, we wish her luck in her new field.

-Congratulations to **Kathleen Wurth, '99**, on receiving her MSW, we wish her an exciting and rewarding career.

## GSV hosts NYC-NJ Volunteer Social Gathering

Peter Morris of GSV reflected: "With our first contact amongst New York City area volunteers came the comfort of feeling at home in this new place and experience the shared opportunity for friendships."



NYC area volunteers gather with GSV on October 2 at 8th annual Potluck

## Lobbying Vignettes by Karen Bulthuis, New York

On September 23, GSV Brooklyn (led by Sr. Maureen and Tommy Hollywood, joining forces with GSV Sarah Schell and Good Shepherd National Advocate, Allison Prevost) lobbied their representatives in Washington DC, in favor of HR1258 – a bill which would temporarily close WHISC (Western Hemisphere Institute for Security, Cooperation, formerly the US Army School of the Americas or SOA), in Fort Benning, Georgia in order that a complete review of the school may take place. The SOA has been training Latin American soldiers in combat, counter-insurgency, and counter-narcotics for fifty years. Graduates of the SOA are responsible for some of the worst human rights abuses in Latin America. Below are thoughts by each volunteer about their lobbying experience.

The murder of Oscar Romero, the Argentine Dirty War, the murder of 6 Jesuit priests and their two housekeepers, and the inhumane democratic tactics of Colombian soldiers are all incidents with direct correlation to graduates of WHISC. Knowledge of this military school is known to so few within our communities, let alone those on Capitol Hill. Eight volunteer members tried to change that sad scenario with their lobbying efforts in the House of Representatives on a gorgeous day in September. An effort, definitely, to make some impact, even if small at first...

“...details are twisted while the voices of the oppressed echo unheard and unrecorded. For the Latin American communities adversely affected by the SOA, these details must be brought to light, a daunting task.”

Washington DC should be noisier, I think, with the clamour of Americans who – off-tune and off-beat – insist on squawking out their most particular, peculiar citizen convictions. Instead of finding such a fiesta of voices, we roamed the silent, sterilized congressional palaces to find wizards of oz who smiled ironically and directed our appeals back upon ourselves, to our own power and the unexercised power of the American people – who mostly, it was implied, on the subject of the SOA, do not particularly care...



“Torture and excessive violence are still being taught to soldiers at the SOA. The GSV lobbying trip hopefully convinced our Congress leaders to close the SOA.”

GSV joins with Good Shepherd Sisters to lobby against the SOA

Standing in solidarity on a clear September day on the lawn of the Capitol, we joined hands in prayer and song to remember the cause for justice and those who have suffered consequences for the cause. I was filled with a strange mix of sorrow and hope, knowing that many long and die for action, positive action, to be realized. In such a climate of action and possibility I was reminded that our voices collectively will continue to ring in order that such positive change may occur...

# Meeting with God

by Theresa Nowak, Los Angeles

"If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be?" I was recently challenged with this idea. I had so many questions and marveled at the opportunity to have them answered. After reflecting on this question, it hit me-I encounter Jesus everyday. I am in constant relationship with Him through the sisters, the families, my community members and myself.

Within the last two months, I've had countless opportunities to explore these relationships. *The sisters show me how to love.* The Good Shepherd Sisters amaze me. I learn about spirituality and about who Jesus is through them in new ways every day. *The families teach me strength and forgiveness.* The mothers and the children, all suffering the effects of domestic violence, have been through the unimaginable. Yet, despite all of that pain and hurt, they are still willing to open up and trust again. They work hard at building up what has been broken down inside of them. *My community challenges me to explore my spirituality.* Living in an intentional community with three beautiful women has helped me to examine my idea of spirituality and embrace differences.

**"I am constantly reminded that Jesus lives within us and among us - this is how I continue to grow in my personal spirituality."**



Kristin Kleiser, Theresa Nowak,  
Michelle Massett, Libby Cunningham

Many people, events, and experiences have shaped my relationship with God; however, it is the realization that God lives within all of us that helps put everything into perspective. Working in the shelter, I am constantly reminded that Jesus lives within us and among us. This is how I continue to grow in my own personal journey. We have the opportunity to ask Jesus any question we wish, as long as we're willing to search for the answers within ourselves and within those we serve.

## Good Shepherd Volunteers

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Maureen McGowan, RGS- Program Coordinator  
Mary Helldorfer- Domestic Coordinator  
Thomas Hollywood- Int'l Coordinator  
Sita Satyadhara- Administrative Assistant

## Mail To:



We are very pleased to welcome Mary Helldorfer to the GSV staff as the Domestic Coordinator. Originally from Kings Park, NY, Mary attended Siena College where she studied Spanish Education.

Welcome Mary!



**"Creativity is a sign of life."  
St. Mary Euphrasia**