



WAS THE TRIP WORTH IT? YES!

BY

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The cost of my journey to minister at the border (three connecting flights from Lima, Peru to McAllen, Texas) and the time invested was nothing compared to the experience of many migrants. Many had sold everything they owned for the opportunity to enter the United States of America. My trip was secure with the assurance of a place to live. There was a hazardous journey with the risk of kidnapping and an uncertain future. One man traveled by foot for 58 days only to have his **CBP One** appointment with the Department of Customs and Border Patrol canceled by President Trump's executive order.

Mass with Father Brian Strassburger, SJ in Casa del Migrante.



I chose to spend time with the children, aware that they had missed valuable educational experiences during their families' quest for a new life with a brighter future. Lessons in Math, Science, and Art as well as physical activities were planned to amaze any child from ages 4 to 14. Even some adults enjoyed learning about the Mobius Strip (a one-sided 3D figure), the strength of columns (a column made from paper can hold a surprising number of books), and how to fold a piece of paper into a usable cup.

Language was not a barrier. There was a family from Afghanistan with five young boys staying at the Catholic Charities Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas. The oldest was about eight years old. He was able to identify and count American coins using charts and images prepared for the lesson. Much was communicated with hand gestures and a confirming smile.

I met Joani at Casa del Migrante Reynosa in Mexico. We sat next to each other at the joy-filled Mass celebrated there. A brief conversation revealed that we both like to dance. I promised her that next week we would have music to dance to. She gave me the longest hug I ever experienced in my life. So, the following Thursday, we danced to the music played before Mass and we danced to the Freeze Dance activity after Mass. Pure joy!

Victor is around five years old. You can see the amazement in his eyes witnessing how surface tension and air pressure keep water in a glass turned upside down. When I cut a paper snowflake design and gave it to him, he put it on a pair of scissors because it reminded him of his mom's skirt. He spoke of a happy memory - his mom's cooking. Something she has not been able to do while staying at the center.

Migrant children sense the worry of their parents, and they miss the pleasure of a routine home life. But they are resilient and find joy in the simplest things such as making new friends and learning something new.

Was the trip worth it? A boy from Afghanistan, Joani, Victor, and many others would say, "Yes." My heart says, "YES!"

(Right: Victor is amazed with science!)



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