

# Mission Trips Uncover Hidden Graces

by Maggie Johnson

In January, two groups of seminarians went on mission trips of a lifetime. One group spent their days in the Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos orphanage in the Dominican Republic, the other in the swarming city of Kolkata.

Formator and Spiritual Director Fr. Jonathan Kelly led the eight-day trip to the Dominican Republic. He believes mission trips are an integral part of formation: “In addition to serving others and broadening our perspective, mission trips strengthen our community and fraternity.” Since the seminarians may be pastors one day, these trips provide opportunities in which they can lead others to know God and recognize human dignity.

While on mission to the Dominican Republic, 11 seminarians were able to bring Christ to and see Christ in the children at the orphanage and Casa Santa Maria, a house for mentally and physically handicapped kids. This gave seminarian Frankie Floeder a “taste of what it’s like to be a spiritual father” and an opportunity to be “a source of love, hope and joy to the children there.”



Senior Jacob Bennett has full hands and a full heart.

Daily activities included working in the kitchen and fields, playing with the kids, and assisting with a home construction project. They also taught religion and attended daily Mass with the students. Floeder enjoyed speaking Spanish with the kids, but added, “love is a language in itself.” He returned with the desire to improve his Spanish, fueled by the need he saw for Hispanic ministry in this region of the world.

On the other side of the globe, another group of seminarians participated in a mission trip to Kolkata in partnership with Pathways to Children, a non-profit organization that helps and empowers children in extreme poverty. Interacting with kids from the poorest neighborhoods was an opportunity to “bring Jesus to the world,” seminarian Ryan Keisling reflected.

Along with Fr. Michael Becker and Fr. Stephen Borello, Keisling and 10 brother seminarians spent their days at a home for abandoned children with mental and physical challenges, at a home for the dying, and at a leper colony run by the Missionaries of Charity. He was shocked by the different culture but was attuned to “how much we needed prayer to keep doing the daily work.”

Fr. Borello, who led the Kolkata trip for the second year in a row, commented on the seminarians’ openness to encounter a new way of life leading to a far greater dependence on God each day.

“These trips provide an opportunity for the heart to be moved in a different way. By being exposed to different stresses, the seminarians encounter the Lord in different settings and uncover graces that may have been hidden before.”

