

TESTIMONIANZA DI *Andrea*

After spending so much time dreaming of that moment, the day of departure for Brazil had finally arrived. Inside me there was only one certainty: I wanted to be there, in person, to see the extraordinary work that the St Michael Mission carries out every day to transform the future of hundreds of children. I arrived at night, welcomed by Marco, and I couldn't wait for the next morning to begin the visit to the mission. The mission welcomed me with the contagious joy of the children, who laughed as they heard me pronounce their names in Italian. During my stay, I attended special events organized just for me, including a concert, Jiu-Jitsu demonstrations, and artistic gymnastics. What a show! Amazing!



Among all the activities, one touched my heart in a special way: the visit to the kindergarten. About 210 children between the ages of 2 and 6, full of energy and curiosity. In that small world made of colors, games, and cheerful voices, there was also Luca. He came toward me with a big smile and told me he had a gift for me.

He pulled from his pocket a sticker from a fruit juice, with his teacher's name written on it and a small heart drawn beside it. "It's for you," he told me. I still keep that little gift today: to me it is worth

more than many other things. Many of the children welcomed by the mission come from extremely difficult family and social situations: poverty, abandonment, violence. But thanks to the extraordinary work of the educators—who support them both emotionally and educationally—these children learn to smile again. They regain trust, discover talents, and rebuild hope. One of the most beautiful initiatives is the one that brings them together with the elderly hosted by the mission. Yes, because even the elderly are often abandoned on the streets, forgotten. The mission welcomes them into a loving and dignified place, the "House of the Elderly," where they can share moments with the children, play together, and exchange stories. It is a bridge between generations, a wonderful idea that benefits everyone.



Another very important part of my visit was the trip to the favelas. Among dirt roads and shacks with no essential services, I met very young mothers and listened to painful stories, discovering the harsh reality many children come from. And yet, in the midst of suffering, shines the hope offered by the St Michael Archangel Mission, where every activity—schooling, sports, games—is designed to give the youngest ones a future. Marco and his team show every day that love truly can change the world, one child at a time. For me, being there was a gift. A precious and moving experience that left a deep mark on me and the desire to share it and support it even more. Thank you Marco, thank you Saint Michael the Archangel!

Obrigado



Lettera di Marco

I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT HELPING THOSE IN NEED IS NOT ONLY AN ACT OF KINDNESS. ABOVE ALL, IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY THAT LIFE GIVES US TO MAKE OURSELVES USEFUL TO THOSE WHO SUFFER.

It is an opportunity to be less selfish and to remind ourselves that our true inner growth happens when we manage to set aside our own needs and make the needs of others a priority. For many years, two dear friends, ours Brazilian lawyers, have offered us their voluntary help. Every time I thank them, they respond with the same words: "Thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve a good cause."

And that is exactly how it is: charity is a reciprocal gift. There are those who need to receive something, and those who need to give it.

For this reason, I believe that the orphanage that will be born precisely at Christmas is a true gift from Heaven: a place that will welcome newborns during the very days in which we celebrate the birth of Baby Jesus.

For a long time now, the small children's shelter of the Municipality of Barbacena has been living in very precarious conditions. For this reason, the authorities have ordered its closure and the transfer of the children. For several months, we have begun the process to obtain custody of these little orphans, most of them newborns abandoned by mothers living in misery and addiction. One of them was left in a hospital crib just after birth: the mother fled immediately after delivery. After twenty-seven years of mission, I now find myself remaining faithful to what, at just a little over twenty years old, I said when founding the first work:



"I WANT TO BE THE FATHER OF THOSE WHO HAVE NO FATHER."

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for always remembering us, for your closeness, and for the good you continue to sow together with us. May the Lord bless you, and may Christmas bring peace and hope to your families!

Marco Roberto Bertoli

