

## “Creating a Home for Immigrants”

By Amanda Schueren

When people think of Chicago, they most often think of tourism, hockey, and The Bean. Less often do they think of the population of immigrants that are searching for a new life in the big city. There are few people that care as much as the Catholic Workers of Su Casa, a friary that has been transformed by the workers to act as a refuge for immigrant families in need of help.

John, a recently graduated college student, has become the head of the house. He first became involved in the Catholic Worker community in the summer of 2016 after spending 8 weeks in South Bend, Indiana. He was inspired to continue on as a Catholic Worker and discovered Su Casa in Chicago when he visited and decided he wanted to be a part of keeping the Catholic Worker house open, since there had been recent talk of closing Su Casa.

Su Casa acts as a home for many immigrants coming to the country. The workers at the house help the immigrants find resources to prepare for their future after they leave Su Casa. “First and foremost Su Casa has been their home,” John says. He has seen the struggles the families face on a day to day basis, mostly because “so many of the systems--educational, healthcare, legal, etc--they are working with treat them as just another number and make their lives unnecessarily difficult.”

Immigrants living at Su Casa are living in extreme poverty, and the workers voluntarily live in poverty with them to show their solidarity and let those living in the home know that they are on the same team. “Something that Su Casa is teaching me is that for so many people in our world, poverty is ‘normal life.’ It is what they have always lived and will always live” John explains. The life of an immigrant is much different than what someone would imagine. Immigrants are people too, and John and the others at Su Casa work to help those that are struggling because of the different challenges they face.

As the rest of society goes about their lives, John and the other Catholic Workers of Chicago strive to help those around them whose lives have not taken them in the direction they wish it had. John shared a story with me about an immigrant family he met in January that had just come from an ICE detention center in Texas. The young Guatemalan mother and her two children had faced many challenges already in their journey to a new, better life, but faced new challenges as they landed in Chicago to live at Su Casa. John tells the story of strangers in the airport yelling (in Spanish) for the

three to go back to their own country, that there's already enough of their kind here. "It broke my heart to hear of that inhospitable and mean-spirited comment. It was quite a consolation and joy to refute that comment not just with words, but with actions: driving them to our house, opening the doors for them, showing them their own room, cooking them dinner and doing whatever possible to help them settle in comfortably."

As long as the earth spins, hate will be a problem. The Catholic Workers of Su Casa and other Catholic charities across the United States continues to help immigrants that are doing the best they can for themselves and their families but continue to face discrimination and hate. As Peter Maurin, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement says, we should all be working to achieve justice in a "world where it is easier for people to be good."