

This month's bit of news comes directly from our Pastoral Team in Berlin. We have left the language "as is" for effect.

Greetings from the Pastoral Team

Fear: Situation of the children and youth in Berlin.

General data: In El Salvador we have a law of protection and the "Statement of the Rights of the Children and girls", but the reality is that the country determines the living conditions. In our country the majority of the people is of poor class, between the sectors of laborers and rural. In this context other social problems are originated that affect the children and young, as the family disintegration, lack of education and illicit works that induce them to drug addiction and/or prostitution. Among the damages that the children suffer are:

- 1- Violence of the family
- 2- Abandonment of the parents or mothers
- 3- Work of risk
- 4- Sex Abuse and prostitution (average of 12 years)
- 5- Vagrancy and drug addiction
- 6- Begging

Many children and girls work to help the economic support of the family and they do not have time for play. Their toys are the tools of work and their areas of recreation are the streets, the markets or the agricultural fields.

The children and girls in Berlin: The poor sector of the population is around 70% and in the cantons and the city many children have worked since the age of 6 years: sales in the street, seeking firewood or water, in the markets, in agricultural works, and other. Many children and youth leave the school to help their family and many have to buy things such as clothes and school materials with their own money if they can even attend.

Many families have disintegrated and children are abandoned that end up living with some relatives but in many cases they are mistreated and do not receive education. This situation induces them to vagrancy and drug addiction, and also induces them to juvenile delinquency.

We have laws such as the "Law of the Smaller Offender" that applies to the delinquent youths, and that is supposed to offer rehabilitation programs with vocational workshops and other media to qualify and to integrate the youths to society; but in reality does not function and what happens is that the youths are imprisoned in Penal Centers under a repressive system.

We have children with problems of psychological traumas brought on by natural disasters or situations of violence, and we do not have sufficient programs to attend these cases that negatively affect their emotional development. There are institutions that work for the children and young,

like the Institute of Protection to the Children and Adolescents, and also churches and NGO's BUT the need is very large.

Close: To change the life of the children and the youth in El Salvador, it is necessary to change the system with regard to economic, social, political and application of the laws. "If the present of the children is sad, the future of the town will be the suffering"

Thanks for your attention.
Equipo Pastoral