

Headline: **Seminarian Vigoa Makes A Mission Report from the Dominican Republic**

Subhead: **“Coming Face to Face with Jesus”**

Seminarian Richard Vigoa traveled to the Dominican Republic with a group from the seminary. On his return, he shared this personal reflection with *DIALOGUE*.

I just returned from the Dominican Republic on a mission trip with a group from the seminary, and



I thank God for all that I was able to see and experience. And in the process of relating my experience there, I hope you'll see that in serving others, we come face to face with Jesus Christ.

We stayed at a place called Campo Nueva Esperanza (New Hope Center), a place for abused, abandoned and neglected boys and girls, some of whom are sick with HIV. It provides a safe, loving environment in which they can grow and succeed. It's an amazing organization, which believes that with faith and literacy, we can fight poverty in this country. I

have made a personal commitment to help the sisters who work with these children by sending them diapers, baby wipes and much needed supplies for their clinic, where they provide medical help free of charge.

One day, I gave a talk to a group of “ladies of the night” who had come to the convent for the chance to have a hot meal. Many of these women feel forced into prostitution because of their poverty, and many are living with HIV. As I walked into the room to give the talk, I was struck by an image I still hold in my head - the rows of blank stares, almost like women with no faces. The dark eyes reaching out to me from somewhere beyond us, not really here nor there. It was as if aliens had landed and taken the souls of those poor abused women. And as I looked into the eyes of these women with no faces, I saw their great need for love, for they live in a world that is nothing but pain. As my talk went along and I called forward anyone who wanted to make a fresh start and a personal commitment to Jesus, almost all of the women came forward for us to pray over them. The power of Christ was able to reach through and find them - on the other side of those empty stares. It was an incredible event. Christ became palpable...women were crying and praying in loud voices, pleading for God help to them. I could not believe that we were instruments that God used to convey His message of love and hope...wow! - what a humbling experience.

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When people express their gratitude to me for my simple response to God's call to the priesthood, I turn and say that it is I who thank God for His call in my life, a call that I continue to hear on a daily basis. It was this time last year when, setting up between masses, I verbalized for the first time what I had been feeling for so long: "My Gosh, I was born to be a priest!" It was a realization that has brought me great comfort. I know in my heart that there is nothing that I would rather do

"I know in my heart that there is nothing that I would rather do than serve Christ and His Church. I entered the seminary to become a priest, to give my life in service for the sake of the multitude thirsting for God's love."

than serve Christ and His Church. I entered the seminary to become a priest, to give my life in service for the sake of the multitude thirsting for God's love. Encounters like the one I had in the Dominican Republic helped me to understand the depth of my call and the beauty of the priestly vocation.

aware of that call and to pray for grace and strength. A vocation is a gift from God and a blessing for the Church. A life dedicated to the service of the Lord and His people is filled with joy and a true sense of mission.

If God is calling you or someone you know to the priesthood or religious life, it is important to be

In the love of Christ,
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