

CATHOLIC CLARITY IN A COMPLEX WORLD

OSV

Our Sunday Visitor

DECEMBER 24, 2006



A Heart's Home missionary poses with some children in Ecuador. Each year 150 people age 18 to 35 enter Heart's Home as missionaries and serve all over the world.

PHOTO COURTESY OF
HEART'S HOME

MINISTRY

A friend in need

Heart's Home missionaries use contemplative prayer as a basis for helping the world's poor

By **Caroline Schermerhorn**

Wanted: young seekers of God, 21 to 35 years of age, supernaturally endowed with a desire to adapt, befriend and pray among the poor and lonely.

These are no mere superheroes. They are the young missionaries of Heart's Home. They live in homes in the poorest areas of the world, bringing compassion, friendship and grassroots services to needy neighbors. But the poor and the lonely are not the only beneficiaries.

"We serve two populations: the poor, and the young people who serve them," said Aude Rey, executive director for Heart's Home USA. Heart's Home offers young missionaries 14 months of living in contemplative community and learning, as Rey put it, "how to love."

Heart's Home began in France in 1990 with founder Father Thierry de Roucy, then-general superior of the Servants of Jesus and Mary Congregation, who wanted to offer a place of refuge in poor, depressed or violent communities. The group gets permission to establish itself in the dioceses where they have missions.

Contemplative spirit

Heart's Home places a strong emphasis on prayer and contemplation. At its core is a strong daily prayer life including the Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary, Mass and eucharistic adoration. "This is where we get the ability to give of ourselves," Rey said.

Going out two by two, they make weekly visits to the elderly. They sit with people dying from AIDS. They befriend children who come to the center for help with homework, advice or just

quality time with someone who will listen.

Getting involved

Every year, around 150 new missionaries enter into service with Heart's Home, some staying up to a full two years. Most come from Argentina, South America and India.

After an initial "Come and See" weekend, potential missionaries have a period of time to pray and discern their calling. Missionaries and Heart's Home split the cost of training and supporting the young people. Before beginning their mission work, the young people are asked to secure sponsors who will provide \$650 in financial support per month. The group explains that this offers many people who cannot become missionaries to get involved. In turn, the missionaries pray for their sponsors and ask the sponsors to pray for them.

Before heading off to their missionary destination, the young people undergo two intense weeks of onsite training in New York.

"We try to give them a lot of spirituality and to help them understand the charism of compassion — what it means to be present. We speak a lot of Mary at the foot of the cross. We introduce the culture and the language of the mission," she said. "We want them to understand the attitude of the heart."

Caroline Schermerhorn writes from Ohio. For more information, visit www.heartshomeusa.org.