



MISSION EXPERIENCE IN BRAZIL

*A man in temporary vows
with the Divine Word
Missionaries shares his
experience working with
the poor and underserved*

My name is Christian Castro. I am originally from Mexico, but I spent the last 15 years living in the United States.

Since I was a little kid, I knew God was calling me to be a priest. At first, I was afraid to respond, but after participating in a retreat, I discovered that I could not escape God's call.

At the age of 24, I entered the seminary with the Society of the Divine Word. Since then, it has been a great experience.

Today, I am in Brazil doing my cross-cultural training experience. I work in a low-income neighborhood. I serve



annual 2022 parish census, there are about 12,000 faithful Catholic Church members in the parish.

Throughout the year, we have meetings on a variety of topics. Each year, the parish offers more than 3,500 Catholic families help through job training, assistance from psychologists and connections to law experts. This is why your support to our congregation is fundamental for our mission to continue working in the poorest places serving God's people.

This July, I will return to the United States and do my last year of theology. My experience here in Brazil reminds me that what makes a church is not a building – it's a place filled with people of faith.

the Parish Santa Cruz (Holy Cross), which is located in the Archdiocese of Aracaju. It's located in the southern expansion zone of the capital, in the peripheral area.

The majority of the people here live in houses that the government offers to people who are homeless or who have been removed from high-risk areas, like slums. In addition to the land for public housing, there are lands that are invaded and illegally occupied. These places don't have urban infrastructure, like a sewage network, basic sanitation or electrical networks.

The community here lacks a quality public education and a reliable healthcare system, leaving people insecure in many ways.

Most people who live here are considered low-income. In fact, many of them are unemployed. Some people come from the neighboring state or from the interior state of Sergipe because there aren't jobs available. The population suffers from unemployment and a lack of job opportunities. These circumstances leave people with domestic jobs, like collecting and selling recyclable materials. They fight for survival.

The people who I serve live in small, humble, uncomfortable houses. They're made of rammed earth, which is a technique for constructing foundations, floors and walls using natural, raw materials. They also use wood, reused materials and ceramic blocks, often without plaster.

There is a city dump in the territory of the parish. It's been operated here for 20 years. The dump influenced the creation of sub-jobs, including collectors of recyclable waste, a cooperative and recycling groups. According to the

