



Volunteering with *Heart's Home*



“When we begin to see, love, respect and reverence Christ in the eyes of another, then he will change, and society will change also.”

Adapted from
The Gospel Without Compromise
by Catherine Doherty



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I- INTRODUCTION: ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

You are discerning if Heart's Home is the organization for you – the opportunity to live the Gospel, the chance to live a strong community and prayer life with one goal: Answering God's call. Should you plunge into this incredible experience of always receiving more than you can give? Should you go deep into this experience, centering yourself on God, His Grace and His children?

The discernment process is one of deep prayer and consideration. In this document, we offer you some basic information to help you in this process - please read what follows carefully and ask us questions. We are here to help you as you seek to discern God's will.



"I realized how the simple presence of someone can alleviate a wounded heart. Since the beginning of HH, I have been convinced that the innermost thirst of man is to receive the consolation of a friend, to experience the presence of compassion."

Father Thierry de Roucy
Founder and Present Director of Heart's Home



II- WHAT IS HEART'S HOME

Founded in 1990 by Father Thierry de Roucy, General Superior of the Servants of Jesus and Mary, HH, or “Points Coeur” in French, is a Catholic organization of compassion and consolation, an organization that cares for children and families in the most rejected and poor neighborhoods in the world. It offers volunteers (ages 21 and older) a chance to answer God’s call by dedicating at least one year of their lives to the service of the poor.

Heart's Home was officially recognized in 2000 by Mgr Karlic, Archbishop of Parana, Argentina, where the first HH was opened in 1990. Today, each HH is acknowledged by the bishop of the diocese where it is established.

A Heart's Home is a very simple and welcoming house, a refuge of love and tenderness, located in a slum or a deprived area. It is the house of 4 or 5 volunteers (age 21 to 35 years), men or women of various nationalities, who chose to answer God's call through dedicating at least 14 months of their lives to the service of the poor.



“My pastoral experience can lead me to say that, in the years since it joined this archdiocese, its missionary expansion is a fruitful work of charity; its members do much good.”

Monsignor Karlic
Archbishop of Parana,
Argentina



Milestones

- 1990: **Foundation of HH** by Fr. Thierry de Roucy, sjm. The first two homes open in Argentina and Brazil. 11 youth become volunteers.
- 1992: 9 HH (Argentina, Brazil, France, Colombia, Romania, Peru, Thailand, India, Lebanon).
60 volunteers from 6 different countries.
- 1996: Creation of two coordination offices in South America. The first welcome center is established in Vieux-Moulin, France (near Compiegne, approximately 50 km northwest of Paris). This center also serves as headquarters of the association.
- 1998: **145 volunteers in 29 HH and 17 countries.** 4 new homes are founded (Haiti, Italy, Honduras, Syria).
- 2000: 150 volunteers in 18 countries (France, Romania, Italy, India, Philippines, Thailand, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Syria, Senegal, Brazil, Argentina, Columbia, Peru, Salvador, Honduras, Haiti, Ecuador). In June, **HH is recognized by Archbishop Karlic of Parana**, Argentina, as a Private Association of the Faithful of the Catholic Church.
In September, **HH celebrates its 10th anniversary**.
- 2003: **Foundation of the first North American HH**, Bronx, New York.



III- SPIRITUALITY

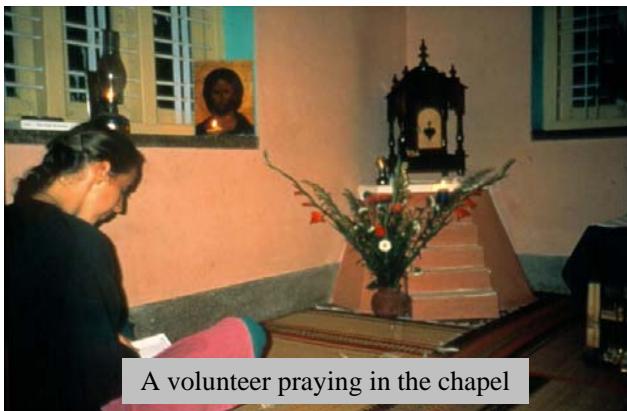
Prayer: The Key to Your Mission

Volunteering with Heart's Home (HH) involves centering your time around prayer, the first pillar. The desire to personally encounter Christ, as well as to help others to discover His love, can only happen through a strong personal prayer life. Founder Fr. Thierry de Roucy often calls HH volunteers, "seekers of God."

Every HH follows a similar prayer schedule. The day begins with *morning prayer*, singing psalms and entrusting the day and mission to God. Volunteers also spend one hour in *adoration* of the blessed sacrament each morning. Each afternoon begins with the *rosary*. Often, neighbors join in this daily prayer.

Following afternoon mission, volunteers gather for *evening prayer* to intercede for the friends they visited and to entrust all they have lived in their day. Before going to sleep, volunteers say *night prayer*. At this time, they ask for forgiveness and give thanks to the other members of the community.

Finally, volunteers attend *Mass* daily, often in their neighborhood parish.



A volunteer praying in the chapel



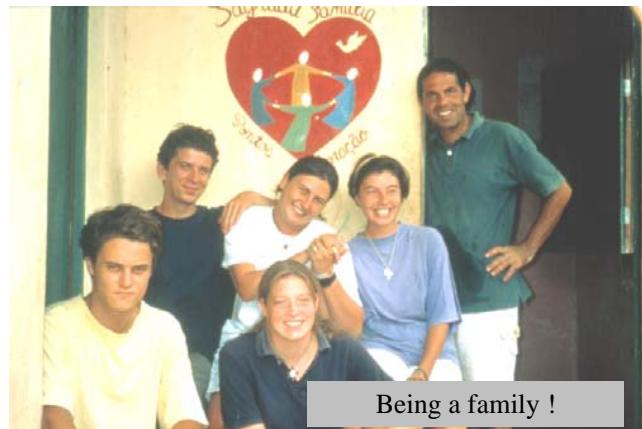
IV- COMMUNITY

Being a family

The second main pillar of the HH mission is life in community.

The majority of HH communities are made up of 3 to 5 volunteers, male and female. The reason for this number is to create a home in which we may live as a family. Our family is not only for ourselves, but for our neighbors who come to our home because they experience love, love from Christ, who is present in our home. HH is a place where they can rest from violence, tension and hatred, a place where they can find strength in love.

As a community member, you will take part in the everyday life of the house, cooking, cleaning, praying, welcoming the people who knock at the door.... Each day, one of the volunteers takes a turn being in charge of the house. This is called *house duty*, and is a way of showing love to your brothers and sisters of community. The person on house duty leads the prayer, cooks, and does not leave on afternoon mission but stays to play with the children at HH. If you do not know how to sing or cook, don't worry, all the volunteers had to learn.



Being a family !



V- MISSION

A- Reaching the Poor

HH volunteers have answered a call to reach those living in the poorest neighborhoods of the world through the third pillar of the organization, *mission*. But what does this mean?

Mission means being Christ's presence to those you serve, especially in your neighborhood. You will regularly visit friends in their homes, you may sit with the sick, help cook a meal or accompany a friend to the hospital. Generally, you are called to be available to the particular needs in your neighborhood.

Volunteers are not called to be heroes; the poor is not a problem that needs solving, an inferior group that needs pity. The poor will be your neighbors who ask for your friendship, your love, your presence. A presence that is humble and respectful of their humanity. A presence that remains faithful to the HH mission both in your particular neighborhood and beyond...



B- In the Neighborhood

There are two kinds of mission. The first takes place in your particular neighborhood. This is a mission of proximity; your neighbors will soon know you and the fact that you belong to HH. Volunteers are always in mission of proximity. Stepping out of your house, the friends will meet you on the street, you will meet them on the way to the market or to Mass, children will stop you to play with them, and parents will invite you in for a soda.

C- External Mission

The second form of mission is the external mission. Volunteers travel outside of their neighborhood to serve in shelters, jails, hospitals, garbage dumps... so that wherever the poor live and work and visit, volunteers may be present at their side. External missions often reflect a great suffering of the particular country of mission. Often, external missions also allow volunteers to witness and work with other agencies and missions working in their country of mission, and to reflect upon and grow from their participation.





VIII- CONCLUSION

Love as God Loves!

After two or three weeks with Heart's Home, many volunteers have written me: 'Father Thierry, I made a mistake! I thought I would be giving more than I could receive, but it is just the opposite. Our friends give us much more! This experience is enriching me as I never could have imagined.'

St. Vincent de Paul said: 'The poor are our teachers.' In contemporary times, the poor remind us that what is essential in human life are relationships, that faith is not an abstract principle, but that it is a daily life with God, in constant trust, a life that invites us to walk without fear.

In these neighborhoods, where there is so much suffering, we sense that we receive grace in order to be able to live and serve. During these 15 years, I have experienced in an amazing way the presence of divine grace.

Our friends too, they live in the favelas, or slums – this is impossible without someone strengthening them, hour after hour, day after day, enabling them to overcome all the trials that afflict them – the successive deaths of children, the omnipresent violence, the insecurity, the fear of tomorrow. We have been blessed to witness their voice: 'God gives us the grace that comes from a friend's smile and strength that comes from a friend's hope!' On more than one occasion, I have been blessed with the opportunity to meet with persons imprisoned for years because of their faith. They have told me, 'Because of grace, the years I spent in prison are undoubtedly the best of my life.' Without God, how is it possible to explain their testimonies?



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