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My most significant experience as a seminarian was being able to serve others. Last school year, as a first-year philosophy seminarian at Mount Angel Seminary, our class was assigned to go to Saint André Bessette Parish in Portland and serve our homeless brothers and sisters in a way I had never done before.

I already had some experience ministering the homeless in our local area by serving sack lunches at the Good Samaritan Program with my family before I entered the seminary. But there was something different at Saint André Bessette, something else that our homeless brothers and sisters are lacking, and it is not hunger for food, but hunger for love and for human care. Most of them get fed wherever they go, but only few of them are treated or even “seen” as actual human persons. I recall very well that day, talking to different people, each one of them with a different story, different background, and of course different “hunger.”

Among them was one man whom I will call “Carlos;” he is from Mexico. He came to the United States, “crossing the river,” (in his own words) looking for a better economic situation for his family. He has four children back in Mexico.

Once he arrived in the U.S., he was hired by a person who exploited him, making him work overtime, paying him less than a full-time job, and always threatened by his employer “or I will call the ‘migra’ (the immigration department).” Until one day, Carlos decided to stop the abuse and never return to that place. Now he is homeless.

Sometimes WE are indifferent to our neighbor’s sufferings and this is NOT the Christian way. It’s time to open our eyes and see our neighbor as Christ himself.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled.” – Matthew 5:6.