



MY BACKGROUND

My name is Kathryn Ophardt. I am going into my second year at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary to pursue a Master of Divinity. I graduated from Wittenberg University with a degree in Spanish and Sociology. Then, I did a year of service through the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America as a Young Adult in Global Mission, where I served with Casa Refugiados. There, I felt the call to ministry more clearly. In the future, I hope to be a pastor or chaplain for the Presbyterian Church. My passion for ministry is fueled by my background in Spanish and Sociology, through which I hope to help build the Kingdom of God in midst of our cultural contexts, not despite them.

REACH ME AT:

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CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM AT CASA REFUGIADOS



This field I came across on a walk is an example of the many natural refuges that surround us.

DEAR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS,

It's hard to believe but Refuge of the Heart's initial program is already half way over! I say "initial program" instead of "pilot program" now after an enlightening conversation with my mentor, Miguel, who is a pastor at a local church in Mexico City. In talking with Miguel, I confessed my concerns that the program will finally be established just as I have to leave and go back to the United States to continue my seminary studies. We talked about guilt, responsibility, and integrity in ministry. I told him that part of why I was comfortable doing a short-term mission was because it served as a pilot program for Casa Refugiados to decide if they wanted to continue offering spiritual accompaniment in the future. Then Miguel told me something that both rattled me and calmed me. He said, "There is no such thing as a pilot ministry. There's just ministry and serving people as best you can in the moment you share with them." Miguel reminded me that Peter, Paul, and even Jesus never stayed in one place for very long. They planted seeds of faith in the people with whom they came into contact and hopes that a faith community would take root. Hearing him compare Refuge of the Heart to the early church was humbling and empowering. I am no longer thinking of Refuge of the Heart as a pilot program, but rather thinking about how I can develop



ACCOMPANIMENT THROUGH PRAYER:

Part of the goal of Refuge of the Heart is to bridge our communities by praying for one another. If you have any prayer requests that you would like me to lift up, please contact me and I will gladly keep you in prayer as well.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Please pray for all the people who are seeking asylum, that they stay healthy, find shelter, and feel welcome.

Please pray for the people who don't feel safe where they are, that they may find refuge in large and small ways.

Please pray for Mexico City and all the people who live here as we persevere and continue to quarantine during the pandemic.

Please pray for health, recovery, and wholeness.

Please pray for me as I continue the second half of Refuge of the Heart, that I may have the kindness and wisdom to accompany people well.



as many resources as possible for someone else to continue what the Spirit has planted through my time here. This has become all the more important to me since the founder of Casa Refugiados assured me that Refuge of the Heart would continue after I leave!

Spiritual accompaniment through Refuge of the Heart looks different than I had imagined. Mexico City continues to be widely in a state of quarantine due to COVID 19. I work entirely from home and meet with people through video calls. Three times a week, I meet with members of the team at Casa Refugiados to lead them in breathing exercises and meditations in midst of their increasingly demanding work. This week, I will start offering group meditations to people who are seeking asylum. In addition to the guided meditations and personalized spiritual accompaniment, I am developing a curriculum of interfaith meditations in written and audio forms, a list of online resources for spiritual enrichment, and a directory of the religious institutions in Mexico City. The more I learn about other religions, the more respect I have for them and our shared calling to build a more peaceful and whole world.

On the next page, I have included an example of how I have adapted the Christian prayer practice of Lectio Divina to the context of interfaith meditation. I invite you to participate in this meditation from Refuge of the Heart, hoping that in it, you might find a moment of rest and refuge as well.

Thank you for your continued accompaniment and prayers.

Love and peace,
Kathryn Ophardt



Another natural refuge just outside Mexico City,
taken at La Marquesa National Park



Refuge of the Heart

We walk toward wellness despite unwellness.

Healing – A Christian Meditation

When people think about wellbeing and unwellness, they often focus on physical health, especially now in the context of the pandemic COVID 19. However, for this meditation, I invite you to think about wellness and unwellness from a holistic perspective—not just the health of the body, but also of the mind, heart, and spirit.

The meditation for today comes from Christianity. In the Christian tradition, Jesus is understood as God's in human form. In the Bible, there is a story about Jesus in which he cures a man with leprosy. Leprosy is a skin illness, and at that time, if someone had leprosy, they were marginalized without being able to live in their community. Whether you believe in Jesus, a Greater Power, or not, this passage has a powerful message. Here, Jesus represents compassion. Think about Jesus from your point of understanding, but I invite you to consider Jesus as the Most Compassionate Being. The encounter with Jesus demonstrates that no one is too sick to be in the presence of compassion, of God, or of a Greater Power.

The Meditation:

Read the passage, Matthew 8:1-4, three times. This meditation is not meant to be a time of criticism and analysis of the reading, but is meant to be a time to reflect, contemplate, and seek to understand more deeply why there are people who believe in this story.

1. The first time: listen to yourself, to your mental, emotional, physical, or spiritual reaction to the reading.
2. The second time: As you read, imagine that you are a witness of the healing from the crowd.
3. The third time: As you read, imagine that you are the person with leprosy or some kind of illness or unwellness in body, mind, heart or spirit.

Matthew 8:1-4

When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Then Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

To close this time of meditation, I share with you this hope: In your walk toward wellness, may you find compassionate people who accept you in illness as well as in wellness. In the same way, may you embody the compassion to accept others in illness as well as in wellness.