

Vincent Artymko 1993-1994

The year I spent at the Welcome Home marked the beginning of a greater awareness of the presence of God in the world and neighbour. It was during my stay that I took time to reflect upon my life journey and the direction it was heading. The year of ministry set the foundational structure that has carried me to where I am today.

In August of 1993 my wife and I moved from Markham Ontario to join Fr. Larry, Connie and Theresa in community at the Welcome Home. We were married but a year and had not yet made any decisions on where we wanted to settle down. I believe the Welcome Home is an opportunity to be in relationship with other believing members of the Church as we journeyed to minister to the poorest of the poor. Little did I realize but I was the one ministered to.

The Welcome Home gave me numerous opportunities to grow in filial friendships with other community members, neighbourhood families and Redemptorists. I was also provided a structured and solid faith formation with daily Divine Liturgy and Vespers, community prayers and theological teachings. It was at the Welcome Home that the Catholic faith came alive and I was able to see and meet Jesus on a daily basis with those I lived and interacted with.

Life at the Welcome Home was not easy. Our community was entrusted with setting up the physical structure. I helped renovate various parts of the home. We spent countless hours cleaning and painting and worked with the other members to bring to life the ministry structure.

Sharing common meals was always a challenge. Fr. Larry always seemed to get an "emergency" phone call the nights he was scheduled to wash dishes and so the rest of us would pitch in to clean. We didn't always enjoy the food we shared and on more than one occasion spent some time laughing together over our culinary disasters.

The Welcome Home is a necessary part of our church. I believe everyone who spends time in genuine ministry will come away a richer and holier person. The Home gave my wife and I an opportunity to grow and share and stretch. The stretching part was the hardest, having to deal with other people and their struggles, but that was the heart of the year as well. If it wasn't for the struggles, if it wasn't for the challenges I would have stayed dormant and God's grace would have been lost on me. I am ever grateful for the opportunity to serve a year at the Welcome Home and that why it is so important to continue its great work.

Thank you to the Redemptorists for the opportunity to live a year of my life for with others of common belief for the purpose of knowing God in the lives of the strangers who became friends.