

A day in the bus station ministry Sister Denise La Rock

Serving at the Greyhound Bus Station offers help and support to asylum seeking mothers and children, most of whom are fleeing violence and poverty in Central America. This direct service is very rewarding so it is difficult to know which of us receives more from the ministry, the families or the volunteers.

The Bus Station Ministry is part of the Interfaith Welcome Coalition. The IWC gives me travel money to share with families who will be on a two or three day bus trip.

Recently, a few women were in touch with their families to request money through Western Union. All but one was able to receive the transaction. I took that one aside and gave her some money because she had none. I was concerned about her long trip with her children and having no money. I offered her the money and she asked how she was going to be able to pay me back. I told her it was a gift from the churches. She began to cry and hugged me and cried in my arms.

Later that day, I received a call from American Airlines. One of the mothers seeking asylum and traveling by plane was

at the airport and was too sick to travel and had to be taken to the emergency room. I met up with the mother and her child there. After being tested and treated for strep throat and tonsillitis, she was released from the hospital. I provided overnight shelter at my house to her and her son. My job at the hospital was at first to calm the mother and entertain her 2 year old. I enjoyed playing with him. As his energy became too much for his Mom's ER room, we went for a walk after buying some Doritos. After he ate most of them, we walked outside for a while. He was very inquisitive as we walked and tested out every bench. Several times as we were walking, he placed his hand in mine for me to hold it. In holding his hand, I felt that connection that unites all of us.

It is such a blessing to know that in our outreach, we can support others so they feel safe and cared about.

Sister Denise La Rock of the Daughters of Charity is the Director of the Bus Station Ministry

most
VIOLENT COUNTRIES
in the
world



Sister Denise La Rock, of IWC, speaks with one of the families at the station in late September. Source: Jose Arredondo/folomedia.org

Reflections and memories of the Greyhound bus station Michele Rembault

I started volunteering with the Interfaith Welcome Coalition's Bus Station Ministry around December 2016. This was my response to the election results. I shared with my family some impressions from those early days.

Reflections from yesterday's shift...

I arrived at the bus station at 1pm, fresh from Travis Park United Methodist Church, which serves as our group's supply unit. My trunk is filled with backpacks and sack lunches and the rolling suitcase filled with clipboards, itinerary and map sheets, over the counter meds, toys and diapers.

I sit down in "my spot" to the side and away from the main hub. I settle in, organize my stuff, wonder who might show up today.....I look around and, holy cow, there is a mass of women and children refugees sitting right there in plain sight, somehow I miss them walking in! So I walk over, introduce myself and what I am doing and begin the now familiar pro-

cess of "triaging", figuring out which ones have busses leaving soon, then working through individual intakes and conversations. Just as I finished that group, I look up to see incoming new refugees. Just as I finished that group, my new friend, Robert, the station manager, gives me a heads up, there are about 30 who just landed. The work is non stop for hours.

Here are some of the memories I took home with me from the dozens I served yesterday....

So many adorable, curious, eager, beautiful children
The boy with the huge, gorgeous brown eyes
The ten year old girl with no front teeth and a big grin
The teenagers, the babies
None seem to complain, just accept

The 30 year old Guatemalan woman who was going to see her mother. Wonderful, I said, when is the last time you saw her? Twenty -seven years ago. She had to leave when I was three.

The young mother with the grinning ten year old tells me