

This morning as I looked at the bulletin it calls Mary's response to Jesus a radical reordering of Life. This week two groups of people from Advent radically reordered their lives. We were no longer staying in our own bed, no longer on our own schedule but on someone else's time and schedule. Granted we had not just witnessed our brother being raised from the dead but we did get to see a new creation, new life springing out of death and destruction. During the week, we watched two homes go from being unlivable to at least a hope that someone would be able to move into these homes.

Not only were the people whose homes we worked radically reordered; so were those who lived in the neighborhood. We heard stories about how the drug dealers were finding other streets to deal and how people were taking new interest and pride in the way their neighborhood looked. I would be kidding myself and all of you if I said that my life was not radically changed by the experiences that I had this week. Each mission trip has its highs, its lows, and all ranges of emotion. This year is no different. As we were packing the vans and started our trip, I had mixed emotions. Yes, I was excited to be with this new group of people and excited to start our journey, but I was also a bit sad because I knew that this will be my last trip as a member of Advent. It was on our first trip to New Orleans that I announced to the group that I would be leaving for seminary in the summer, and now I will be graduating from seminary.

It was on that first trip that we got to work beside and got to know one of the homeowners – Cathy. We bonded with her. This year as we drove by her house, I was startled to see it was gone. There is only an empty lot.

This trip was different in many ways but as we continued to work on the two homes we were assigned to we didn't know anything about the families that lived there. On Thursday as we were finishing up for the day; a car stopped and some people came up to see what we were up to. We listened to them, one was the granddaughter and the great-grandson of the man who lived there until Social Service came in and said it was no longer safe for him to live with all of the mold. He is currently living with family members. We also got to hear a few quick stories about what the house looked like before the work was started and how they remembered the house. It looked brand new to them. They had hope for the future of this house.

Many of us who worked in New Orleans on earlier trips can vividly recall the smell of the mold, but this trip the smells were different. Granted, we didn't pour a pound of pure nard on the home; but we did pour ourselves. Each of us, using the gifts and talents we possess, worked to get the house livable. The smells weren't perfume per say but the smell of saw dust, of primer and paint and of cleaning products – all signs of new life in the home.

This was only a slice of all the new life we saw on this trip in both those who went and those who live there. On each of these trips, I am changed; and this trip was no different.

--- Brenda Crossfield