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Encountering Jesus through Prayer and Service

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“Your encounter with Jesus doesn’t have to be in a church or in a church meeting. You can encounter Jesus anywhere,” said Adelita Contreras. “I encounter Jesus every day in and through my service to others.” Adelita has served at St. Helena Catholic Church for over 20 years in multiple ministries and was commissioned by Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, M.Sp.S. as a Lay Ecclesial Minister through the Institute for Lay Ecclesial Ministry and Service in December 2023.

As the universal Church continues the Synod on Synodality, Adelita said that she enjoys witnessing the Holy Spirit lead people back to the Church through a variety of ministries that encourage dialogue and collaboration. One of her favorite examples is CYO. “I really enjoy the CYO ministry because I always think of the idea of synodality and how we’re welcoming people of different faiths or people who haven’t been to Mass in a while,” Adelita said. “I always do a blessing Mass at the beginning of each CYO season, and I invite the children and their families to attend. Usually after this Mass, parents will approach me and ask how they can get their child baptized. It fills my heart with joy to see entire families who have



gone through the RCIA process now actively participating in parish life — all from planting that seed in CYO.”

Pope Francis recently declared 2024 as the Year of Prayer in preparation for the Jubilee Year 2025: Pilgrims of Hope. Adelita recognizes that prayer and service go hand-in-hand and that each person is a pilgrim on their own journey to Christ. “Everybody’s encounter with Jesus is different,” said Adelita. “Many people shy away from prayer or service because they think it must be a strong feeling or a force that comes across us, but it’s not. You can encounter Jesus through worship, through prayer, and through service. I really love a quote from St. Maximilian Kolbe where he describes prayer as the most effective way to reestablish peace in our souls

because it allows us to get even closer to God's love."

Adelita is excited to implement new ways to help her community at St. Helena's deepen their prayer life during this preparatory Year of Prayer. For Adelita, the prayer life of the community is how she witnesses Christ in their midst. "I see Christ through the prayer life of our community," Adelita said. "We have people who have a very deep prayer life and it's beautiful to see that. Everybody's prayer is different. You can sing, you can pray vocally, you can pray in silence; but I love to see it expressed in different ways. That's where I really see that encounter with Christ in our community."

Since the Archdiocese of San Antonio kicked-off the local Eucharistic Renewal in 2022, Adelita said that she loves teaching the youth about the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. "I love taking our confirmation kids to adoration," Adelita said. "Many don't know about adoration, and they ask me 'What do you do in adoration?' I tell them, 'You just sit there and let God love you. It's a time where you can quiet your mind, quiet yourself, and open your heart to God.' Adoration is another great way you can encounter Jesus."

Adelita said that the part of serving she enjoys most is to see Jesus moving the youth to a closer relationship with him. "When I see that light of Christ in our youth, it gives me fire to keep going and to keep serving," said Adelita. "I love that the youth are there because they want to be there, and they serve because they want to serve. When I see the light of Jesus in our youth, when I see the fruits of the spirit in them — that's what keeps me going."