



Young Lay Franciscan Missioner Joins Bolivian OFS Community

By Kim Smolik,

Executive Director of Franciscan Mission Service

www.franciscanmissionservice.org

At an orphanage near Sacaba, Bolivia, little girls tie two blankets together for a jump rope. One Saturday, they invited Franciscan Mission Service's Jeff Sved to join in their game and broke into giggles when the 24-year-old missioner couldn't use their tiny toy. A few girls ran off and brought back a couple more blankets to make the jump rope longer.

"Then we practiced counting in Spanish, English and Quechua as I jumped," said Jeff.

Jeff found himself at the orphanage that Saturday morning – and many others – through his work with the *célula ecológica*, or ecological committee, of the national Franciscan movement Justicia y Paz.

In addition to working on the orphanage's garden, which helps feed the orphanage's residents and nuns, the ecological committee also leads education initiatives. Jeff has been a part of presentations on parishes and schools about what can be recycled, what can be composted, and what has to just be thrown out. He has also helped at a youth retreat by running environmentally-focused games such as a recycling race with garbage sorting to help the kids learn about what can be recycled or composted.

Through the ecology committee, Jeff met Miguel, the formation director for local Secular Franciscans. Jeff has had many good conversations about what it means for Miguel to be a Secular Franciscan. Because Jeff was very interested in learning more, Miguel invited him to participate fully in the local OFS community as a inquirer, although Jeff will likely not complete his formation while in Bolivia.

"It has been very exciting to get to know another part of the Franciscan family here," Jeff said.

He has been enjoying discussing the OFS rule on Monday nights, reflecting with the candidates every Sunday, and meeting with the entire OFS group twice a month.

"Their commitment to their faith, which is expressed in the desire to live a life of simplicity working for peace and justice, has continued to challenge me throughout my time with them."

In early October, he was "filled with joy" to witness the three candidates make their professions to fully enter the OFS community. He has spent the past three months with them in their formation.

"As a 24-year-old who has committed a meager two years to a life centered in joy and simplicity, it has been amazing to share time and community with a fraternity that had already committed three of years of their lives preparing to make a larger life-long vow," he said.

We are delighted that Jeff is able to find support in the Secular Franciscan community abroad, and we look forward to the U.S. secular community welcoming him back at the end of his service in Bolivia. The St. Anthony of Nagasaki fraternity — whose meetings we are honored to host in our formation house — in particular has embraced many of our lay missioners during their training and re-entry over the years

To read Jeff's blog, or to make a donation in support of him, go to www.franciscanmissionservice.org/jeff_sved.

Travel to Bolivia and meet Jeff

Join Franciscan Mission Service in traveling to Bolivia from May 2-12, 2014. Visit Jeff, our other missioners and their Bolivian partners at their ministries in the city of Cochabamba and the rural college of Carmen Pampa in the Andes Mountains. This is your opportunity to learn about poverty and other social justice issues in one of the poorest countries in Latin America.

This Short-Term Mission and Global Awareness Trip is open to anyone who is interested, and a minimum of eight people must register and pay a deposit by January 15, 2014, for the trip to happen. For more information, including a sample itinerary, see http://franciscanmissionservice.org/bolivia_trip

Can't make it in May? We'd love to organize a Short-Term Mission and Global Awareness Trip to Bolivia or South Africa for your fraternity. Email us at info@franciscanmissionservice.org to get started.