

What Would You Write in the Sand?



I was thinking about how lovely it would be to walk on the beach today! Our weather here in the Midwest has been a little crazy lately. One day last week it was nearly eighty degrees and the next day we had three inches of snow!

I love to walk on the beach! Recently I took a group of volunteers down to the border in McAllen, TX and Matamoros, Mexico before COVID-19 caused us to shelter in place. We finished our time of service a little earlier than normal and were heading back from Matamoros before flying home to Indiana the next day.

I said to my six volunteer companions, “We are going to take a detour!” We took a right turn and headed east to South Padre Island for a few hours. I had not been there before but knew there was only one way to go – east, toward the gulf! We worked our way into the area and drove around a bit, taking in the endless beauty of the blue sky, water, beach, and sun!

I found a break between two buildings with a walkway leading to the beach and turned into the parking lot. We made our way as fast as we could with the wind blowing in our hair and the smell of the water tickling our noses. Before long, our feet were sinking into the sand as we headed straight for the water. Curious seagulls squawked overhead. People passed by walking their dogs and picking up seashells. We each found our own space where we could “take it all in” and, I suppose, commune with God in our own ways.

Soon the cameras came out and fingers were snapping shots as fast as they could tap the buttons. Before you knew it, I picked up a stick and drew a great big heart in the sand. It seemed almost an automatic thing for me to do! Inside the heart I drew the letters, PHJC. You can imagine why! We gathered around this simple symbol representing who were together. We had created a community of communion with one mind and one heart, and in such a short time!

We each chose to put aside the demands of home and work, traveling over 1,500 miles to serve total strangers. We chose to give of ourselves completely to some of those greatest in need in a place ravaged by poverty beyond what any of us have ever experienced. We were each, in our own way, moved by the Spirit and by Saint Katharina Kasper to make a difference through service, compassion and the gifts of time and energy.

What does this have to do with writing in sand, you might ask? I guess I realized through this experience that time is fleeting, that experiences are sometimes only once in a lifetime, and opportunities come and go like messages written in sand and then blown away with the wind or swept away by the tide. They can be here and then gone before we know it, both in time and in memory.

But what should never leave us is our gratitude for our past experiences, for our loving God who places such opportunities before us and who gives us the will to respond. If we are really attentive, we can link such opportunities together to see how God has always been present in our lives offering this and that choice; opportunities to be enriched, to love, to serve, to grow – and to give praise!

During this pandemic, I am most grateful for the time I have had to pray with and be present to my sisters in our local community. I am grateful for time to create mandalas, write music, work in the yard and appreciate creation. I am grateful to be able to connect through various technologies with family, community, friends and loved ones. I am grateful to check off many items on my “back burner” list.

I am also grateful that, while putting together a photo album, I ran across the photo of the heart in the sand! The photo brought back wonderful memories of experiencing community in communion and recognizing that God is present in everything, especially in my experiences.

For all this and more, I say...

