

Sr. Meta Potocnik shared her experience of being a volunteer of Caritas with refugees and migrants in Slovenia with sisters in her province. I think that it is valuable to be shared with other sisters as well.

I would like to share my experience of being a volunteer of Caritas with refugees and migrants. Together with Sr. Jana Rovtar we spend two days 31st of October and 1st of November in Dobova on the border with Croatia. I was happy that we were two and I was aware that we have been sent in the name of you all. Some religious from other congregations had already participate in this kind of help. I applied to the invitation of Caritas in September with the first group of migrants but at that time there was no need. It seems that the migrants will not stop coming. The work of different humanitarian organization is very important; they are on the spot with heart. We were from different organizations: Red Cross, Caritas (also from Hungary and Czech Republic), Knights of Malta, ADFA. We all collaborated very well and with the police and army. I had impression that the last two were more like fathers (for order and discipline) and volunteers were like mothers, that gave food, smiles, did little things in a hidden way, and brought clothes. Representative of UNHCR were also there but I had impression that they were there more for control, observation and writing reports about our work.

On the first day we worked in the tent. People came by buses. After registration, we delivered food, water and clothes. Some groups slept in the tent, others continued their journey. It is important that you have eyes and you see what needs to be done. After departure of the group we cleaned the big tent. There was a lot of rubbish, and quite a lot of food that has been thrown away as well – for me that was not easy to accept. There was no one who would organize migrants to help with cleaning but they told as that there were groups that organize themselves and help with cleaning. People are different as we are. Some see everything and for the others it looks like they have two left hands. But people are also very tired.



We spend night at the Missionaries. They were very open to us and they accepted some other volunteers well. The second day we spend at the railway station. People come by train. As they got out they are registered and they entered the next train. In the meantime, we delivered very basic things, food, hot milk for children and clothes. There was much less cleaning.

I had impression that our presence as religious (we wore religious dress) was very positive. Here are the margins of poverty and the absence of God where we are invited by Pope Francis. We worked for 12 hours (from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.). There was not time for prayers and mass. It was like a river of human poverty and distress and I asked God's mercy to come to the whole world: God you know all human misery and distress; you embrace all into your arm. God suffer in this people, although there are some who made profits from this situation.

I still remember how much we prayed that Bush and USA would not attack Iraq but they did and according to my opinion these are also the consequences. It is up to politicians to stop the war, (that is in their power, as they indirectly caused the war) but it is up to us as Christian to show reasonable love as Jesus said "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was stranger and you accepted me..." That is valid in this case as well. We can always live the gospel of love, in all circumstances. With the gesture of goodness, we can heal the world wounded by evil. It looks like that the evil (from apocalypse) has been put out from the chain. God has already redeemed the world. I think that these are trials for as Christians, to be purified in faith and love of Jesus, to be the true witness in the world that is changing in front our eyes. We do not know what the future will look like, but we are not to be afraid of the people who are different. Sometimes I am more afraid of indifference and hidden hate of European people towards God. Have trust in God and burning love in heart as Angela encourage us. I will go again to be volunteer, if someone would like to join me, she is very welcomed.

