



**CLARET VIDA AWARD**

# **PROJECT BETHANY**

**CLARETIANS EUROPE PROVINCE**



***PROJECT BETHANY - SEVILLE (SPAIN)***

My name is María Cruz Granados, and I am a Claretian Missionary. After 18 years of sharing my missionary life in Mexico, I returned to Spain and found a reality unfolding in our country. As I sat before the television, watching the news, images of boats arriving on our shores every day in inhumane and painful conditions would shrink my heart. Day after day, I felt like a spectator, comfortably seated on the couch, and I told myself, "I have to do something about this reality." With the passage of time, the Lord, through my superiors, led me to our community in Seville to the **BETHANY PROJECT**, where I would meet migrant brothers and sisters.

This project was born in 2015, motivated by Pope Francis' call to open our homes to hospitality and welcome those who have nothing, who come from different latitudes, cultures, and religions. We had made small attempts at welcoming others in the past, but this time, it was about fully opening our house, our lives, and carrying out the four verbs proposed by Pope Francis: **"TO WELCOME, TO PROMOTE, TO INTEGRATE, AND TO PROTECT."**

We embarked on this journey alongside other institutions that lent us a helping hand, such as Berakah Spaces, which helped us get involved in the world of migration, and the Diocesan Caritas of Seville, specifically the Nazareth Project, which has supported us throughout. And, of course, the unconditional help from our NGO KORIMA CLARETIANAS, which has been with us from the beginning and without which we couldn't meet all the material needs we have.

Over the course of time, about thirty people have passed through our community, mostly young men, and a smaller number of single women or mothers. We have been fortunate to witness and share the presence and growth of several babies. They come mainly from Africa, but also from Central and South America.

But, what is the Bethany Project?

As our small welcome decalogue says... Betania is a house of encounter, a community of love, a shared table, a heart of humanity, an oasis of friendship, a place of laughter and tears... Betania is HOME, FAMILY...

Our task is to create and cultivate a family atmosphere to welcome those young people who come to our house. For this, we provide a home, a space where they can feel safe, have the possibility to rest, study, and regain strength to integrate into Spanish society.

The moments of sharing as a family are essential in BETHANY; we get to know each other, build trust, foster closeness, learn about cultures, share values, listen to and welcome differences, and respect our diversity of religions. Most of them are Muslims, but there are also Christians from other denominations.

For us, Claretian Missionaries, sharing time around the table is fundamental because we share the WORD, we LISTEN... Each person with their joys and difficulties... Each life



story becomes ours. For this, we need time for mutual understanding—knowing their lives, their stories, worries, fears, joys, and achievements, all become ours. Every passed school subject is a celebration, every obtained document is a celebration, a job offer is a celebration, every piece of news about their families is a celebration, and even celebrating a birthday is a joyous occasion. However, we also share sorrows such as the death of a close relative, the denial of residence permits, job rejections, or illnesses. All of this is the most valuable and beautiful aspect of the project, and it all happens around the table, just like Jesus with his friends in Bethany.

Each young person has their own life project; learning the language is fundamental, and some sisters support them in this task. The next step is to study to obtain primary or secondary education, take courses at Caritas Employment Office, find a job... all of this is done with the support of social workers and educators. And with us, they share their daily lives, their household chores.

In their own space, they do household tasks, go shopping, prepare meals, study, rest, and interact with their peers. They start their process of integration into Spanish society; the majority stay, although some may move to another country. Once a month, we have a meeting to evaluate how things are going, what we can improve in our coexistence, and household tasks.

And after spending a certain time with us, having achieved several goals, most of them manage to live independently in every sense. They obtain their residence permits, find a job, and have a place to live... but the connection as FAMILY remains with each one of them. Over the years of Betania's existence, we have seen how some of the young people have been able to visit their families in their countries of origin, or how they have started their own families in our country, getting married, finding good jobs, completing their studies...

During this time, many sisters have been part of the community and enjoyed the richness of living together with our migrant brothers and sisters. It has been and continues to be a BLESSING FROM GOD for us Claretian Missionaries, for everything we have received from each person who has accompanied us.

With St. Anthony Mary Claret and Mother Antonia París, we embrace the lives of these brothers and sisters and walk together towards a better future.

María Cruz Granados Varo Claretian Missionary