

Black Eyes

As I look into the eyes of those who come to our door, I listen to the fears and wisdom that women bring. In their confusion they are desperate to have a voice. As I remember their shared thoughts—I weep.

A mother with two teenaged boys saying to me, that she measures her self-esteem daily, by looking into the mirror at her face and seeing no black-eye.

I sat at the table of our soup kitchen with a woman who had come from the streets. I looked into her swollen black eyes covered with makeup. The outward, artificial sign of beauty with makeup running down her cheeks, she wept as she quietly spoke. “My body is tired, I learned to be a prostitute from my mother who sold me at an early age. I get beat up about once a month. But it’s more than outside beatings, I’m beaten inside. Somewhere behind all this make-up there must be more to me inside. How can I get off the streets?” I reached for her hand a quietly responded, “you will no longer need the make-up; you are beginning to discover your real beauty.”

With calmness I am daily aware of the painful encounters that bring them to our door. I am left with this thought; God’s presence comes with dirty hands, tired muscles and sometimes salty tears. A discovery that the shadows are as important as the light. For it is in seeing and listening that we are brought to love.