A close-up portrait of Ernesto Reyes, a man with a warm smile, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and grey tie. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a brick wall.

Ernesto beams with the joy of his new life in Christ.



PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION
Transforming lives since 1877

“I MET JESUS WITH YOUR HELP.”


At Pacific Garden Mission, we know that Jesus Christ is the answer. Jesus Christ changes lives, and a relationship with Him has helped many overcome life-crippling addictions and despair. Story after story of lives changed through God gives us confidence that He is still working today. As you read Ernesto’s story of transformation, in this month’s issue of PGM News, remember stories like his would not be possible without your help.

ERNESTO REYES

“I have been fortunate in my life to be born into the family I was born into. My family was well off, and I am

too. I have a few businesses with my father. I got married and moved to Houston and had kids, but unfortunately, life detoured, and I got a divorce about five years ago. I didn’t cope with it. I started drinking. I am just grateful to be alive. I should be dead.

“I used to drive by this building all the time. I would shop here downtown and pass and see this cross all the time, and I never knew anything about Pacific Garden Mission. I always thought I was saved. I grew up Roman Catholic and went to seminary for high school, so I have always known who God was. I got baptized at a church, but only to find out I did it just so I could get married



“I am not the person I was before. I am a new creation in Jesus Christ!”

at the church, so I don't know if I was saved until I came here.

“I needed Pacific Garden Mission at this time in my life. I was a heavy binge drinker and a high-functioning alcoholic. My ex-wife would tell me I looked bad. Looking at myself, I thought I looked good, but little did I know I had an early form of jaundice at that time. I could have died. I got into a car accident, moved back home to Chicago, and continued drinking.

“I drank not to harm myself, even though I did. I drank to forget because I was grieving and in pain and didn't

know how to cope. In my family, men don't cry, so I was this emotional brick wall. I needed help. So one day after a drinking binge, something I put my family through for almost five years, I realized how urgent it was. I do have children, two boys, and a daughter, and I needed a change; I could lose everything. I burnt many bridges and lost a lot of friendships. It was time to change because I could die, so my brother found this place called PGM. My brother said there was a program there for 90 days, and I said, OK.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
—2 Cor. 5:17 (KJV)

“I walked in. I had never been to a homeless shelter in my entire life and thought I



Ernesto takes part in a Bible study with those he volunteers and serves with at PGM.



Ernesto takes part in a New Life Bible study class with his fellow program students

these people mentors/elders in my life. I am not the person I was before. I am a new creation in Jesus Christ!"

Ernesto is becoming the man his children and family need him to be, and he is learning to cope with his pain in a healthy way now. His relationship with Jesus Christ has given him the power to overcome his addiction to alcohol and God's Word continues to give him direction. Without your help, stories like this would not be possible, and we are grateful for your support. A life like Ernesto's, once changed, doesn't just positively affect his life but the lives of those around him, like his children and family. The light of Christ is shining and spreading, thanks to faithful supporters like you.

couldn't do this. I had made my mind up that I was going to deal with it, and I have been here since. I was in the New Day program, and I have changed, but I only changed through Jesus Christ. I can't take any credit for it. I don't have a desire to live that life anymore.

"Through that relationship with Christ, I realized I needed more than just a 90-day program, so I joined the New Life program, and I have been here for seven months now. I am enjoying it and taking pleasure in the relationships I have and the pursuit of a better life. I have important people in my life, and I want to make sure they are saved. And the most important of those are my children, but I can only do that if I am saved. I take comfort in the fact that my family takes comfort knowing I am here.

"Everybody in this building plays their part, and everybody here is amazing. I have built some long-lasting friendships because I consider many of



Ernesto volunteers his time helping meet the needs of those coming off the streets of Chicago.



Everyone Needs a Place at the Table

The holiday season for the homeless can be a challenging time of year. Not only is the cold weather starting, but feelings of loneliness and painful memories of the past can also arise during these times meant to be spent with family and loved ones. As our annual Thanksgiving dinner approaches, remember that when you donate to make this event possible, it is much more than a hot meal to these men, women, and children. It is a sign that they are indeed cared for and loved, and while they may be in a difficult situation, they are not alone. The love of Christ is shared, and the fellowship these transient guests experience shows there is a light at the end of the tunnel for them. *Thank you for your support.*



GIVE NOW pgm.org/donate

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Learn more by visiting Pacific Garden Mission, where lost souls find hope, compassion, and purpose.



A Word from Philip Kwiatkowski

President, Pacific Garden Mission

THANKFUL HEARTS

We have so much to be thankful for, especially when we look at the plight of so many around the world. Years ago, a man from India was touring the Mission when he began to weep in our prayer room. He said he was so moved because many people in his country who work don't have it as good as our guests at Pacific Garden Mission.

I was recently reminded of his tearful statement when a number of immigrants from Venezuela began arriving at our door. They told stories of a two-month walk through the jungle where they were subjected to animal attacks, gang violence, dead bodies littering the path, starvation, and fear. Upon reaching the border one told of walking through the Rio Grande while holding their child over their head fully aware that others were being swept away by the current. After being bused to Chicago where they were dropped off they turned to the only place they could find: Pacific Garden

Mission. Once here they showed nothing but appreciation for being here. Some have young children, one is in a wheelchair, but one thing they all have in common is a thankful heart to be allowed to have a good night's sleep, a hot meal, and a warm shower. Pray for us. We have started a service just for these individuals, and last Friday six people made decisions to accept Jesus Christ as Savior. Angel Feliciano, our evening superintendent, is heading up the service, and he said it is exciting to see them singing, praying, and making decisions for Christ. Despite all they have been through they still have a song in their hearts.

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:20 KJV)

Have a blessed Thanksgiving, and thank you for your love, prayer, and support.

THE IMPACT WE MAKE TOGETHER

Pacific Garden Mission's budget is completely donor-funded. We receive no government funding. We are eternally grateful for the individuals, businesses, churches, and foundations that make it possible for PGM to serve thousands of homeless men, women, and children each year. When you support us financially, you're not only giving *to* the Mission, but *through* the Mission to people who need your help the most. In September your support made a true difference:

On average, **409** homeless people received aid and Gospel services each day

About **21,412** plates of food were served

55,000 items of clothing were distributed

3,159 media outlets around the world broadcasted *Unshackled!*

41 men and women were enrolled in Bible study programs and provided room and board

14 mothers with their children who were sheltered at PGM

27 people professed faith in Christ



GODLY STEWARDSHIP

Stephen Welch,
Director of Development

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—Colossians 1:3 (KJV)

I remember being homeless 10 years ago. When I came through the doors of Pacific Garden Mission, I had nothing and no idea where to start in rebuilding my life. I was physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually bankrupt—I felt like I had lost everything, and there was no hope. In the men's dayroom, I heard the Gospel preached 252 times in seven weeks, and the Word of God broke up my stony heart and gave me a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). It was then that God showed me that a job was not the answer to my predicament, but the Bible and Jesus were. I joined the one-year Men's Bible Discipleship program on June 27, 2012. The Mission provided everything for me to rebuild my life.

Yes, I enjoyed three hot meals a day, safe and peaceful shelter, a dorm where I had my own bunk with drawers and a closet to store my new possessions, including all my toiletries, towels, linen, and an entire wardrobe of clothing from casual to suits, ties, and dress shoes. I was excited about my new life in Christ with men who would spend over a thousand hours discipling me. I learned how to study and apply what I was learning in the Bible. I understood why I became homeless, what decisions were wrong, and how living the Bible could make things right. We had devotions and Bible memory every

morning at 6:30, followed by breakfast and then classes. My first workplace ministry assignment was mornings after class in the laundry room. I also had a lesson in the afternoon. I had over 90 classmates, all learning and growing in Christ. God gave me a sense of purpose, and I grew in faith, strength, courage, confidence, and wisdom. God had arranged my new life in Him.

I remember my first Thanksgiving. Thinking back on the many family Thanksgivings over the years was difficult. I realized then that I might be alone, but I'm not by myself. The body of Christ and Pacific Garden Mission was my new family. The dinner was so good with all the trimmings. I learned that a church had made the pies, and when I tasted a slice, they were just like my late mother's, and I wept secretly.

I represent a large group of beneficiaries you have helped that want to thank you for your faithful support. As you gather around the table with your loved ones this Thanksgiving, know that you are providing so much more than meals and shelter to those in need. With your help and support, we offer life answers through faith in Jesus Christ, through any season of life, so that our guests become fully functioning followers of Christ.



Stephen warmly welcomes the homeless and needy who come to PGM for Thanksgiving blessings.