

## **Shelby Spare**

### **Humility of Mary Service – Immokalee, FL**

This place is an extraordinary mix of beautiful and heartbreaking. The children here are always reaching for the sky...trying to kick the clouds on a playground swing or chasing butterflies and dragonflies. The other day, a kid wrapped his arms around my waist, looked up at me and said, "I love you, miss". I am struck by how often they say those words that the rest of us are so hesitant to share with one another. They give their love freely and generously.

As for me, I am not measured here in degrees or lists of accomplishments or impressive resumes. A month after I'm gone, my kids may not remember my name, but that I have taught them to tie their shoes, write their names, how to swim, the words to "You are my sunshine". They lavish me with sticky kisses and "I love you's." They say it loud and often hug. They fight over who gets to hold my hand. They are teaching me Spanish, they are teaching me to sing loud...with my head thrown back and my eyes closed. They are teaching me to live like I mean it. They are teaching me to chase butterflies.

We who have so much in the way of possessions and opportunities have so little in the way of innocence and affection. So often, too, we are trained to believe that we, with our big educations and fancy titles know everything. We are the creators and inventors of the future. But here, in this place, I am learning that I am not the gardener. I did not plant those lovely little flowers amid the squalor. But for now, I have been given the opportunity to bring them a little sunshine, and I am blessed to soak up their beauty, if only for a little while.