

Pro-Papa Missions in Honduras



PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION WITH HONDURAS LINKS TWO PARISHES FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT LOUIS WITH PRO-PAPA MISSIONS

By Msgr. Francis Blood

One of the wonderful stories that deserves to be told, and that is more widely known as the Partnership in Mission, has been taking place for the past five years among Our Lady of Providence Parish (Grantwood, Missouri), Immaculate Conception Parish (Arnold, Missouri), and Pro-Papa Mission, America. Pro-Papa was founded by Sister Laurinda Mayer, a Sister of Christian Charity, who works as a missionary in Honduras. The story of this mission partnership has been movingly and beautifully written by Mrs. Marilyn Price, R.N., Saint Louis Team Leader for Pro-Papa Mission.

The story of this mission partnership is movingly and beautifully written by Mrs. Marilyn Price, R.N., Saint Louis Team Leader for Pro-Papa Mission. By a happy coincidence, I have been living at Our Lady of Providence Parish for the past 3 years. Because of my role as Director of the Mission Office of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis, Marilyn and her family, as well as Father Dave Rauch, Pastor of OLP, have been keeping me informed of the work of the mission partnership. The involvement of Father Paul Niemann, pastor of Immaculate Conception in Arnold, Missouri, has also been quite admirable in this mission partnership.

What is sometimes known as “twinning” between mission-sending parishes and the host country is more aptly called mission partnership. This distinction is made in a study sponsored by the United States Catholic Mission Association in Washington, D.C. The study “prefers the terms relating to partnering because these types of relationships are based on mutuality and solidarity, not on charity or obligation,” according to Partnering Relationships for Mission, p. 4, written by Nancy Bernhardt-Hsu, June 4, 2003, and published by the United States Catholic Mission Association on its website: www.uscatholicmission.org.

Partnership in mission is a wonderful way of uniting Catholics from various countries and with the help of the Holy Spirit, empowering them to fulfill their baptismal calling to be missionary.

The National Office of the Pontifical Mission Societies also sees mission partnerships as healthy and a work of the Holy Spirit, provided that “it broadens the vision of Catholics in the U.S.A. to see the universal needs of the mission Church. Care should be taken not to limit one’s range of action to one objective so as to safeguard the principal of universal equity in the distribution of funds.” (www.worldmissions-catholicchurch.org - Frequently Asked Questions)

I share the article written by Marilyn Price, R.N. in the hope that it inspires other Catholics in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis to become more involved in missionary endeavors overseas. As Director of the Mission Office, I hope to be of further assistance as a resource, for other parishes and mission teams that are involved in partnership in mission. Once again, such partnerships need to broaden one’s vision of the universal Church. This does not eliminate the need or importance of the Pontifical Mission Societies, the Holy Father’s network for evangelization worldwide. For a better understanding of the role of the Pontifical Mission Societies, see the related sections of our website.

I congratulate all those involved in the Pro-Papa Mission, America partnership that links Honduras and the parishes of Our Lady of Providence and Immaculate Conception.

For further information, please call me at the Mission Office at 314-792-7655, or email me at francisblood@archstl.org.

Monsignor Francis X. Blood
Director, Mission Office
Archdiocese of Saint Louis

REFLECTIONS OF MISSION TRIPS TO HONDURAS AND THOSE WHO SERVE

By Marilyn Price, R.N.

In the fall of 2004 my daughter Michelle was a senior at Cor Jesu High School in St. Louis. At that time, she was learning about the Church’s social justice teachings. She wanted to put the teaching into action and asked me if we could go on a mission trip.

I am a Registered Nurse and for a long time I had a strong desire to do such a trip. I was waiting for the right time and knew that this was it.

At that time, I was the Parish Nurse at St. Joseph Church in Imperial, Missouri. The Secretary, Margie Atzert has a sister, Sr. Laurinda Mayer. Sr. Laurinda is a Sister of Christian Charity and a St. Louis native. For the last 25 years, she has been a dedicated missionary living and working on behalf of the poor in Honduras. She is the Foundress of Pro Papa Missions, America. Margie connected me with her sister and the partnership with Pro Papa Missions formed.

What I didn't know then, was how life changing this would be for my family. I would continue to lead the medical team, my husband Bud, an engineer, would lead construction. Michelle and my son, Ben would serve along with us. So would many others from St. Louis and now many from other cities in other states as well would be forever changed.

So, what has happened in the five years since Michelle came to me asking to go on a mission trip? Recently, at the request for a news article from Monsignor Francis Blood, Director of the St. Louis Archdiocesan Mission Office, I was given the opportunity to reflect on all that has taken place.

SO MANY WAYS TO SERVE

There are so many wonderful things about going on a mission trip. It is very adventurous. You meet so many inspiring people. Those we serve have struggled all of their lives and have managed to survive. It is amazing what they have gone through and can still smile and enjoy life. The volunteers are so dedicated. We get very close quickly, making lifelong friends.

There are many reasons not to go on a mission trip. The areas we serve in can be dangerous. We must only drink bottled water; the water has parasites and bacteria. Sometimes, in spite of our best efforts, we become sick. In Honduras, the weather is unbelievably hot; sometimes it is 115 degrees with very high humidity. We work very hard both on the construction team as well as the medical team.

Not every one can go on a mission trip, though. Even though some have a strong desire, health, family obligations, finances may prevent them from going.

However, most of the work of the mission trip takes place before we go. Since the medical team treats so many, we must be prepared well before hand. It is necessary to have all of our medicine ready to dispense. Each prescription needs to be bagged ahead of time and the label written in Spanish. Since we treat over 2,000 people, a lot of preparation is needed.

We like to give gifts to those in Honduras that have helped us. During the last two years, wonderful women from Our Lady of Providence in Crestwood and Immaculate Conception Church in Arnold have made beautiful aprons to give to the ladies. What a delight they have been for the women there! Many parishioners have donated toothbrushes and crayons to give to the children.

Generous financial contributions help us purchase medicine, medical supplies, construction equipment and building materials. Each person contributes what they can. Each contribution is a significant part of the success of the trip.

CULTURAL CURIOSITY IS MUTUAL

I have always enjoyed giving presentations about Honduras upon our return from mission trips. There is always a lot of interest in how the people live, what the country is like. What are the commonalities we share, what differences are there?

What I have also found is that there is also an equal curiosity about us and how we live our lives. The children in Honduras as well as their parents love to see pictures of people from the United States. Realizing this, I have requested photo albums made by the schoolchildren here to be given to the children in Honduras.

Last May, the schoolchildren of Our Lady of Providence put a photo album together to give to the schoolchildren in La Abisinia, a mountain village we served in. The photo album is a simple tool, but a very effective one in creating a partnership with those we serve.

The Honduran children and their parents gathered around me as we looked at the pictures of the schoolchildren. They loved hearing the children's names, what they learned and how they played.

We found out there are many similarities. The boys in Honduras love soccer and were pleased to see photos of our children playing the same game they did. The girls like to jump rope, sing and play hand clapping games just as our girls do. Most of the people of Honduras are Catholic and even in the public schools prayer is a part of their day. They also start each day with the national anthem of Honduras.

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is a driving force behind all of our dedication and perseverance. It is the call of the Holy Spirit; Divine Intervention. Each volunteer has felt the call in some way. It is compelling and propelling. In answering "yes" to the Holy Spirit, we are placing our trust in His love and guidance. The love of the Holy Spirit is poured upon us here. It spills down into Honduras and comes back up to us in the form of great joy and peace.

MANY STORIES

There are so many stories I could tell you. I think of the time we were traveling up a steep, narrow mountain to reach a remote village. We had to get off of the bus so it could make it to the top. We walked part way over slippery, muddy rutted roads.

But, our walk was very short compared to those we treat. Many people walk as many as four hours one way to see us. Some come by horseback; some by cattle truck. Each person is so special, kind, warm, and grateful.

It is fun to watch the children. We see about three children for each adult we see. Watching the young children running about the courtyard waiting to be seen, reminds me there are so many universal things children, actually, all of us have in common. The mothers there have the same pride and concern for their children as we do.

We receive and learn so much from those we serve. In each village we have been in, there is a rich sense of community. The children run and play together after chores are done. Even though there may not be much to spare, women in the village help each other and share meals of meat and vegetables with each others' families. It reminds me of life long ago.

A CHANCE AT A NEW LIFE

Sometimes we come across children who have medical conditions that cannot be treated in Honduras. Without treatment, some of these children would not survive. Upon our return, we make every effort to find physicians and hospitals in the United States willing and able to treat them.

Two years ago we were able to bring a 17 year old girl to St. Louis Shriners Hospital for surgical treatment of scoliosis. Maria Elena's deformity was life threatening. Without surgery, she would only live a couple more years. She was here for 9 months. Even though there were many hardships, today she is back in Honduras living a normal healthy life. We were reunited at her home in Honduras during our last trip. We were able to meet her baby niece, Michelle, named after my daughter.

Now, we are awaiting the arrival of two more children. Twelve year old Yorlenny and nine year old Louis will be treated in New York. Two more children, whose lives would have been short, can now expect to live full, rich lives. This is the result and efforts of our last two mission trips.

PARTNERING WITH ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH IN URRACO

In 1998, Hurricane Mitch destroyed the infrastructure of much of Honduras. Urraco is a small very poor town that was particularly hard hit. Even though it is ten years later, it continues in its quest to recover.

In the center of the town stands St. Anthony' Church, a small cinder block building. Five years ago, during our first mission trip, Sister Laurinda brought the team to the crumbling building in disrepair.

She explained the Pastor, Padre Joseph Chevelo, ministers to a congregation of 6,000 throughout the entire region. On the property stands a small building which serves as a nutrition center for the area children.

There was so much that needed to be done to keep this church viable. Sister Laurinda asked if we could find help of any kind.

Upon returning to St. Louis, I approached Father David Rauch, the Pastor of Our Lady of Providence. From there, the partnership with St. Anthony's Church and Our Lady of Providence began. From the funds that were raised, the construction team was able to repair the roof of the convent and build a gazebo to be used for meetings at the Church. Since then, Fr. Paul Niemann of Immaculate Conception Church in Arnold and the congregation joined the partnership. A ceramic tile floor was the next addition.

Our Lady of Providence raised funds to help purchase a much needed truck to enable Padre Chevelo to see many parishioners in outlying villages. Recently, we were all able to get together and look at photos five years ago and photos from our last trip in May. The partnership of three churches all working together for the good of mankind, truly made a difference in so many lives.

MORE CONSTRUCTION TEAM SUCCESS

Besides the work at St. Anthony's Church in Urraco, the Construction Team has been busy with the building of much needed cinder block homes.

It is the belief of Pro Papa Missions that true ownership of the homes is accomplished when the family has a commitment of time and money. Before construction begins, the applicant must agree to assist in any way they are able in the building and also agree to pay a portion of the construction fees.

Local townsmen assist the construction team in the building. They have been essential in their skills and knowledge of building in the area. They also form a strong bond with the team. They receive payment for their work, thus helping the economy and their families.

When we bring a child to the United States for surgery, we want the child to return to the best possible environment. The construction team has accomplished this goal.

Since our first trip, three homes have been built. The first one was for a young man and his family. Tony was sent to New York

for repair of a broken back he suffered after falling down the rickety stairs of his old house. The new house was built so well that recently it was used as a refuge for flood victims in the town.

A home was built for Maria Elena, the girl from El Progreso that was treated in St. Louis. The third one was for Yorlenny and her family including nine cousins. The new home replaced a stick structure home. Yorlenny will go to New York for surgery in October.

Through this partnership of the Honduran construction team and the team from St. Louis, many lives have been improved as well.

PREPARATION BEGINS FOR THE NEXT TRIP

The next trip will be in June of 2009. Now that we are in our fifth year, we have a core team that returns. The medical team consists of doctors, nurses, a pharmacist and a paramedic. Father Paul Niemann will join our medical team. This will be his third trip.

Our state-side volunteers are eager as well. I have had calls about aprons and requests to help again with the preparation of the medicine and collections. Plans for fund raising have already begun. The enthusiasm of each volunteer propels us forward. It gives us the strength to continue and persevere.

A FAVORITE QUOTE

"I never look at the masses as my responsibility. I look only at the individual. I can love only one person at a time. I can feed only one person at a time. Just one, one, one. You get closer to Christ by coming close to each other. As Jesus said, "Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do it to me." So you begin...I begin. I picked up one person-maybe if I didn't pick up that one person, I wouldn't have picked up others. The whole work is only a drop in the ocean. But if we don't put the drop in, the ocean would be one drop less. Same thing for you. Same thing in your family. Same thing in the church where you go. Just begin...one, one, one."

-Mother Teresa of Calcutta

As we continue the mission work, I ask for your prayers for the success of our work. Please ask the Holy Spirit to continue to pour down His blessings and guidance upon all of those who help in any way.

Marilyn Price, R.N.
St. Louis Team Leader
Pro Papa Mission, America



Dr. Felix Gaido examines twin boys in La Abisinia. Dr. Gaido was born and raised in El Progreso, Honduras. He is a pediatrician now living and working in Denver, Colorado. Dr. Gaido returns to Honduras with Pro-Papa each year to give back to his people.



Marilyn Price shares pictures of the school children at Our Lady of Providence with the children of Honduras.



The school children in Rio Clara enjoy a visit with the medical team.



A little girl from Rio Claro arrives by cattle truck for her doctor's visit.



Marilyn Price visits Maria Elena, the young girl that had surgery in Saint Louis at Shriner's Hospital. The baby is Michelle, named after Marilyn's daughter.

[Close Window](#)