

From the desk of Fr. Jim

HONDURAS: THE LAST DIME IS THEIRS

There are certainly many needs in the world, and even in our community. The attention of the Church is drawn to a wide spectrum of concerns. It is reasonable to ask why the parish is so involved in a mission to Honduras. The answer to the question might be found in an understanding of how God works through us. There are two simple aspects of this. We believe that God calls us to particular works. We also believe that he makes available to us the resources to accomplish this call. This is the most basic and fundamental understanding of the Christian life. Nothing that we do as the church will make any sense without this: God calls us and gives us what we need to do his work.

As we completed our new church in 2005, we realized that indeed, the resources of our community are very great. This is not a conclusion that we make in comparison to others. We are deluded to imagine that we are wealthier than many others. We are also quite well aware that we have much more than others, but that is not the point. The degree to which we are wealthy also has to do with our willingness to give. We are a parish motivated by generosity.

So, we began to think about what more we might do. We have worked in two mission sites in Mexico, and the work in those were both instructive and encouraged us to do more. While the Diocese of Dallas has been involved in helping with a mission to Honduras, the work seemed to belong to a small, closed group. It was certainly not the response that was envisioned in response to Hurricane Mitch in 1998, which left as many as 20,000 people dead after dropping 75 inches of rain. Then, the dioceses of Texas partnered with the dioceses of Honduras to dig in for a long period of recovery. A five year commitment was made and has since, of course, expired. The recovery from the economic destruction continues, and lags behind what seems reasonable. Corruption in the government and a deafening silence from developed countries has left a growing hopelessness. Honduras' poverty is second only to Haiti in the Western Hemisphere.

Nonetheless, a few parishes are still involved. Others, perhaps, continue to be unaware. There are many other groups involved in Honduras, some who are seeking simply to have a safe outlet to accomplish a missionary mandate. Those missionary groups from other churches have altered the religious landscape of Honduras. This country that was once 98% Catholic is now estimated to be less than 30% Catholic. This may be partly due to the fact that missionary aid is frequently tied to the requirement that the recipients become members of the church that is offering the aid. It may also be tied to the fact that help from Catholic parishes and dioceses has lagged behind that of other church groups. This is surprising for a country that was so predominantly Catholic for so long.

One of the neglected areas of concern has to do with the infrastructure of the church itself. The area of Honduras with which we are partnered is moderately rural. Vast tracts of land are used for mechanized corporate farms that provide jobs to only a few. Unemployment is extremely high, and the average wage is only a few dollars a day. Therefore, the church itself has only meager resources at its disposal. In order for

them to do even basic catechesis, they need money for materials. We reproduced their out-of-print curriculum in order for them to function in an even rudimentary manner. As well, the church and chapel buildings were either never replaced where they were destroyed by the hurricane, or are in extremely bad repair. We have launched numerous projects to repair existing buildings to make them useable again. The church itself is the focus of our efforts and our support.

While the church is materially poor, its poverty has become a seed-bed for a rich faith. As the New Testament clearly teaches, it is through adversity that we grow spiritually. The church in Honduras is a clear testimony to this. They are filled with the fruits of a life devoted to God, love, joy and peace. They also know that a materialistic focus in one's life will bring sadness and many obstacles to spiritual strength. They carry an important lesson for us! Therefore, our relationship with the parishes and people in Honduras is a partnership. We have much to learn from them and they need our financial support.

Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.

(Romans 5:3-5)

Once again, it is important for us to see our work in Honduras as part of the mandate of the Gospel. Our brothers and sisters in the Lord are in need, and we will not turn our back on them. The last dime we have is theirs.

HONDURAS MISSION GOALS FOR 2007

Parish Operations for St. Stephan's and St. Rita's	\$8,000
St. Rita's Music School	\$1,700
Build or Repair Three Chapels	\$9,500
Rehab Parish Offices and Rectory	\$2,400
St. Rita's Farm	\$36,000

Please support these goals with your special contributions.