



2016 EL SALVADOR MISSION TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

Thank you Parishioners of St. Joseph Church, Strongsville, Ohio, USA!

Many of our parishioners may never make it visit El Salvador (E.S.). But several members of our parish mission committee traveled there February 17-24, 2016 on behalf of ALL OF US, to continue our relationship with our sister parish in San Jose Villanueva. This included Norbert Hobrath, Head of the E.S. Mission, and Tonya Barba Minor, Father Bob Sanson (Pastor Emeritus of St. Joseph), and Pat Greco. We joined forces with the US-based team also visiting there from Epilogos Charities Inc., the local charity in the village that our parish works with to administer our projects. The trip kicked off on February 13, with a special blessing for our mission trip from Father Anthony Suso at the 4:30pm mass, and a nice write-up by Father Joe Mamich in the bulletin about our trip. Thank you both! Here's what happened during the week.

COOKING STOVES & WATER FILTERS – This past Christmas, we put 20 ornaments on the Giving Trees at St. Joseph Church, asking for either a water filter or cooking stove for a needy family in El Salvador. All 20 ornaments were taken! The people that received these gifts were truly needy, and were incredibly grateful. These items will help feed families every day, and/or provide clean water for the first time for many. We donated these items in an outlying mini-community of San Jose Villanueva called 'El Renacimiento' (The Renaissance). Members of the community gathered as we demonstrated how to cook on the stove and use the filters. Father Bob Sanson gave a blessing. (See top photo). Then, within minutes after it was over, the stoves and filters were all taken to the various homes ready to be put to use. Someday Epilogos Charities Inc. hopes to also construct 40 homes here to replace the tin shack housing currently used. Thanks to our E.S. committee member Virginia Antolik for spearheading this effort and all who made this possible.



HOUSING – Each summer, E.S. committee member Rick Mack takes a group of students to San Jose Villanueva to build one or two houses in the community. The houses are not free. The future owners also participate in the construction, and have to pay a portion of the house, so they feel real ownership in the process. On this visit, we saw several of these houses and talked with the families. Their lives have been changed! Thank you Rick and your teams for this mission work, as shown in this one family we visited.



SISTER PARISH RELATIONSHIP – We met Padre/Father Gonzalo Ortega (left), who is in charge of the sister parish in San Jose Villanueva. We covered projects we have participated in the past... building two churches, providing educational aid, and other programs. The Padre and the community remain committed to the relationship with St. Joseph Church. Our bond is stronger than ever.

EDUCATIONAL AID – For over 10 years, we have been providing educational aid for our sister parish's Catholic elementary and high school students. This continued this year once again as our parishioners raised more than \$12,000 for 2016. Who receives this educational aid? Take a look at these photos, of all the elementary kids receiving aid, as well as the high school students. These are YOUR direct supports! The school put on a wonderful event to thank us for this, and to Epilogos Charities Inc., with speeches by the students, native dances, a music recital, and picture taking. Everyone thanks you, our valued parishioners of St. Joseph Church. Thanks especially to E.S. committee member Shelley Mack for her leadership in making this happen each year, and to all who help in this cause.



SCHOOL INTERACTION – For the first time ever, we 'linked' up the schools in San Jose Villanueva with our own St. Joseph & John School. This was under the direction of E.S. committee members Tonya Barba Minor and Andrea O'Brien. The 5th graders at the school in Strongsville prepared cards for each of the 5th graders at our sister parish. And they provided a special video to show as well. Tonya and the team presented all of these during a visit to the classroom with the school principal Nuvia Guadalupe Ayala. The kids loved reading and seeing what their counterparts in the states were like. They then also created cards that our committee will share back to Sts. Joseph & John School students. A new bridge has been formed! We also visited the High School English classes and engaged with the students there.



OTHER KEY MISSION TRIP EVENTS

- The 50th Anniversary wedding celebration of Mike & Susie Jenkins (above), the U.S. missionaries living in San Jose Villanueva representing Epilogos Charities Inc., in which more than 1,000 in the village attended a special mass and ceremony. Our committee, on behalf of St. Joseph Church, presented a check to Epilogos to continue the Jenkins' valuable work in the village in the future.
- A visit to the COAR orphanage and school in nearby Zaragoza, a group in which Father Bob Sanson serves on the Board of Directors. E.S. committee member



- Pat Greco also arranged for special visit at COAR with two sisters living there to see their older brother who had come with Pat on the visit, as he is now an adult.
- A visit to La Divina Providencia (the hospice in the capital San Salvador) to visit patients there and bring small gifts to them, and also to pay our respects at the church/home of martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was beatified last year.
- Many other social events, and home/personal events, visiting within the community to the many friends we have made through the years, including a long hike in 90° heat/sun to a remote, hard-to reach village called Los Naranjos.