

# Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage



*Building Hope for Boys Without Families and Families Without Homes*

For pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. - James 1:27

Dear Friends,

Another year has passed us by and I am amazed by the number of blessings that our Gracious Lord has bestowed upon us. As with most blessings, they came at a time when we faced difficulty and trials. As we all know, usually after putting our faith in God and our souls into His hands, we are blessed, if it is His holy will. I am certain that you have all experienced God's love in this way. For Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage, saying that it has been a challenging year would be putting it mildly. We have faced an incredible amount of hardships, but in spite of this, God's light continues to shine through and He has given us much hope and many reasons to rejoice.

I live on the grounds of St. Innocent Orphanage and every day I have the utmost privilege of driving through the front gates to see the fruits of our labor. Twenty seven boys, ranging in age from six to twenty six, greet me with a high five, a fist bump, and a hug. I ask about how their day was and while many precious faces poke through my driver's side window, I receive the rundown of the day's operations. Adrian found a new marble on the ground and is keeping it in his pocket. Juan got straight A's in school. Brian is writing his first paper for his last year of law school and everyone was looking for Paul, but they found him - he was reading his Bible in bed. These are the seemingly small, but in reality, enormous victories that I am able to witness at St. Innocent's every day.

Many of you have visited and you know exactly what I am talking about. We have all accomplished these victories together, through the grace of our Heavenly Father. We at Project Mexico are the faithful stewards of the resources you generously endow on us every year and we humbly act as the hands of Christ to take care of the boys and the families that you love so very much.

Thank you for providing the financial, emotional, and moral support that gives us the ability to do God's work everyday. We, the staff, thank you! Over 40 boys, past and present, thank you! The 200 families thank you! Our gratitude is overflowing and we know that God has truly blessed us with donors like you.

In order to continue being honorable stewards of your donations, we are tightening our belts even more and looking for every way possible to save time and money. As we move forward into 2011 we are unceasingly improving our program and we respectfully ask that you keep us in your holy prayers and remember us in your giving commitments. We are honored by every gift, note, and picture that you send to us and our boys. You are the family of Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage and we pray that you too are blessed by the good work that God has poured forth from this ministry.

Please read the highlights of our program in the following pages of the 2010 Annual Report. I know that you will be pleased to see the continuation of God's magnificent work on this earth.

May God's bountiful blessings be upon you and your family.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Bray'.

Geoffrey Bray  
Executive Director



## ANNUAL REPORT - NOVEMBER 2010

# HOME BUILDING



## New Online Work Trip Sign-up!

In an effort to streamline work trip sign-up, we have moved to an online registration process. For the first time ever, you can: register your group, reserve your dates, make your deposit, add group members to your team, and download clearance forms and preparation packets. For more information or to register please visit:

[www.projectmexico.org](http://www.projectmexico.org)

↳ Home Building

↳ Volunteer Registration

It was a summer full of growth and new blessings, both for our home building program and for the volunteers who made it such a success!

From May through August, over 420 volunteers came together to build 15 houses. This is an all-time record for us here at Project Mexico, which was only made possible through the selflessness of our work trip participants and our donors. For the second year in a row, we held two Orthodox Basic Training weeks, during which 267 volunteers built 10 houses for Mexican families who previously had next to nothing.

This year, we undertook our first ever “distance-building” OBT, which entailed a lengthy commute to the San José De La Zorra reservation of the Kumiai people - a native tribe of Mexico living in great need. Although the week entailed a 5 a.m. start each day, 4 hours of driving to and from the work sites, and long, hot work-days under the sun, everyone came together to make the week a great success! Bookending the Orthodox Basic Training weeks, 159 volunteers from 12 parishes across the United States and Canada built 5 houses during May, June, and August, changing the

lives of both the families receiving the homes, and the volunteers who built them.

One of the great joys that we have here at Project Mexico is seeing the pan-Orthodox fellowship that is inherent to our ministry, and this summer did not disappoint! Churches from five jurisdictions - Antiochian, Greek, OCA, Russian, and Serbian - came together as Orthodox Christians, young and old, to help those in need. Neither differences in language nor ethnic tradition deterred them from uniting as a group and actively engaging in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving - the main tenants of an Orthodox life.

In closing, we’d like to express our gratitude to the summer staff for giving their time and effort to make our homebuilding program possible. Madi Franck, Mary Karbo, Jenny Zimmerman, Nikos Petrides, Sotiri Michalatos, Stepheno Zollos, Katie Artemas, Emily Couchell, and Anna Petrides - thank you! And a special thanks to our offseason interns, Joel Schaefer, Tim Morley, and Deanna Polan!

## Reflections From Our Work Trip Volunteers:

“As with most people, I was hesitant to come here but it was the most spiritually invigorating experience of my life.”

“The experience was a gift from God. The teamwork and fellowship of 3 seemingly diverse groups of people was God driven. My faith was enlightened and I hope that I can continue to reflect God’s light of compassion and support to others in need.”

“The week of structured prayer throughout the day, simple food, hard work and service with time to reflect and enjoy being with others has resonated within me. It has shown me that my life is too full, too distant from our faith. Thank you for this time. You have made a difference in my life just as much as in that of the family we built for. God Bless you!”



Madi Franck leads house blessing prayers with a grateful mother after a successful week.

## St. Innocent Orphanage

For the last 14 years, St. Innocent Orphanage has provided a place of refuge for abandoned teenage boys in Mexico. These boys reflect the population of children most neglected in Mexico. Each one of them needs our help to achieve a future that they never knew they could realize. For these boys, a future without St. Innocent's would deteriorate quickly to a homeless existence on the streets of Tijuana. However, through our award-winning program, each boy is raised in a loving environment that emphasizes the areas of education, spirituality, and physical activity. These are vital areas of importance for all human beings, especially our boys, and we are committed to meeting their individual needs with patience, care, and love.

### Education

We all know how invaluable a proper education can be, but for our boys it is their spring board into a future that they could only dream of. When they first arrive, many of our boys scoff at the idea that finishing high school can be a reality, let alone finishing college! After a brief time at the orphanage, the younger boys see the older boys achieving success and they too quickly begin to dream and plan what they would like to do when they are older. Every boy, from first grade to university, is grateful for your donation dollars that make their education possible. In the 2009-2010 school year, the Project Mexico School Buddy program raised 86 percent of the cost to send our boys to school, totaling \$46,000! We are grateful to all of our School Buddies; you are all changing lives! Our program provides them with not only the opportunity to go to school, but also with a full time after school program complete with an on-site tutor. This includes the building of close relationships with the boys' teachers so

that we can assist in their classrooms when necessary. Many of our boys have never seen the inside of a classroom and are therefore behind in their studies so we try our best to alleviate the strain on their teachers. We have three young men in university and they are coming close to finishing their degrees in Law and Graphic Design. They are paving the way for their younger brothers to follow by being examples of hard work, scholastic success, and leadership. We are very proud of all our boys' academic success and achievements.

### Spirituality

The boys attend a regular cycle of services at St. Innocent Orthodox Chapel inclusive of daily Morning Prayers, Saturday Vespers, and Sunday Typica. We try to teach them, even at a young age, the importance of a Godly life. They participate actively as readers and altar servers and they also partake of religious studies. This past July, when we had visiting clergy from our OBT groups, we were thrilled to baptize two of our boys - Irwin and Andres. These two boys are now the most active readers and they lead the two teams of 'helpers' in the chanter's cove. We are working to further develop our catechism and church school materials with the qualified members of St. Innocent's community, thereby giving our parishioners the opportunity to work directly with the boys.

### Physical Activity

Our boys are still sports fanatics. The go crazy over any donations of sports equipment or sports clothing! They absolutely love playing soccer, basketball, volleyball, and most recently baseball. Regardless of the sport, their favorite time is when groups of volunteers come to visit! This year they went undefeated against the volunteers when challenged! Needless to say, they do not take their victory lightly; the pride on their faces is simply obvious. Besides sports, the boys also participate in Tae Kwan Do where they receive training in not only self defense but also in emotional and physical self control. At St. Innocent Orphanage, we feel it is crucial for the boys to learn the value of an active, healthy lifestyle while also reaping the benefits of teamwork, discipline, and sportsmanship.

## OUR NEW BOYS

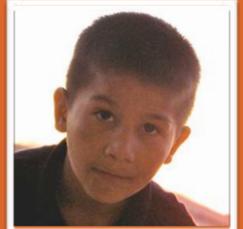
Adrian (6) is quite rambunctious and climbs everything he can, including refrigerators.



Moises (6) is a goofy youngster whose favorite english word is Washington.



Angel (7) loves riding bikes, and has a great little two-wheeler thanks to your donations!



Angel Brian (7) is already one of the best canicas (marbles) players at the orphanage!



Eduardo (9) also loves climbing, but he prefers to climb people when they least expect it.



Efrain (9) is Angel's older brother, and loves peddling around in the go-karts!



Ignacio (10) is the oldest of the new boys, and makes it a point to high-five everyone all the time.



\*Absent: Brian, Edgar, and Marco.

## ORPHANAGE PROJECTS



## ROOF REPAIR

We recently replaced several roofing sections & support beams within the dorms of the orphanage, securing them for the rainy winter months. A BIG thank you to the generous donor who provided the funds for this project!

## GROUP HOUSING

In addition, we did some maintenance on several group houses, after a particularly intense wind storm tore off the roofing material and tar paper.

## WIND & SOLAR

Lastly, we began monitoring the wind and solar energy potential of the orphanage property, to see if we might be able to harness green energy and produce our own electricity! We are continually seeking out ways to be more environmentally conscious and cost effective at the orphanage.

# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS 2009

Our support comes from individuals, groups, parishes, corporations, and foundations. We work to maintain the highest level of financial accountability at all times and we are committed to spending every dollar wisely while keeping our financial accounting open and above reproach.

VOLUNTEER HOURS 18,876 hrs.

### DONATIONS AND REVENUE

General Donations \$ 762,761

Project Mexico Work Trips \$ 195,025

Capital Campaign, Endowment Fund, Buildings  
[Designated Funds: Non-Operating Expenses] \$ 152,947

On-Site Business and Misc. Income \$ 38,863

Total Donations and Revenue \$ 1,149,596

### EXPENSES

Project Mexico \$ 582,897

St. Innocent Orphanage \$ 517,455

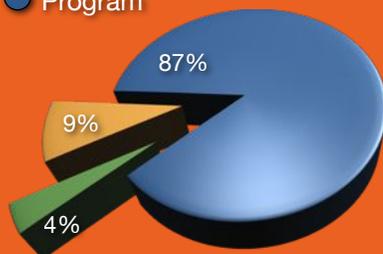
Capital Costs - Construction, etc. \$ 19,781

Total Expenses \$ 1,120,133

\*Complete audited financial statements are available upon request.

## EXPENSE PERCENTAGES

- Administration
- Fundraising
- Program



## Project Mexico Board of Directors

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### Executive Director

Geoffrey Bray

## FUNDRAISER FOR PROJECT MEXICO

— LIMITED SUPPLY AVAILABLE —

## HOW CAN I HELP BUILD HOPE?

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT  
 The Boys of St. Innocent Orphanage,  
 Tijuana, Mexico.

For more info: [www.ProjectMexico.org](http://www.ProjectMexico.org)

San Inocencio is a exciting Mexican coffee from Oaxaca. It is produced by about 600 families and grows at a high altitude of 3800-4900 ft. The end result is a pleasant sweet nutty aroma, chocolate notes, rich body, smooth aftertaste!



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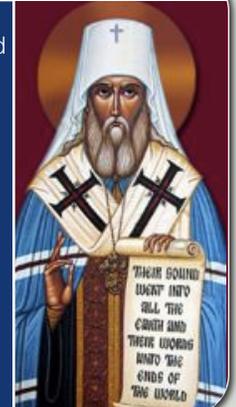
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Check out our new and improved website for more information!

[www.projectmexico.org](http://www.projectmexico.org)

New Features:

- Help from Home Page
- Downloadable Bulletin Inserts
- New Videos
- Online Work Trip Sign-Up
- Monthly News Updates
- And More!



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Project Mexico of the Orthodox Church is a non-profit agency of Orthodox Christians working within the Church. Project Mexico is accountable to both an American and a Mexican Board of Directors composed of clergy and laity from all jurisdictions. The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) has designated Project Mexico as one of its endorsed organizations. The Mexican government has granted official status to St. Innocent Orphanage as a recognized orphanage with tax-exempt status in Mexico. Project Mexico holds official non-profit status, i.e. 501(c)(3), in the U.S.