



RENEWING HOPE

Project Mexico
& St. Innocent Orphanage



2020-2021
ANNUAL REPORT

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 Holy Trinity, Carmel, IN
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 St. Peter's, Fort Worth, TX
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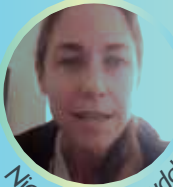


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BEING RENEWED

DEAR FAITHFUL SUPPORTERS,

On behalf of the board of trustees I want to thank you for your generosity and support to sustain and renew this ministry after this pandemic to support the orphaned boys who have been assigned to us. In 2 Corinthians 4:16 it says “therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.” Our Project Mexico programs give us strength even as we see the difficulties in the world around us. We now focus on the future that truly is a blessing for the boys, staff, volunteers, generous donors, and everyone involved with this beautiful ministry that God has entrusted to us.

Our volunteers have already started to build new homes for those in need here in the Tijuana area. This has given needy families hope and confidence that they can truly see and feel safe in the security of their new homes. In Psalm 104, 30 it says, “and you renew the face of the earth”. Our homebuilding programs and service works are doing the work that we have been called to do here and in other areas where we can make a difference helping others.

When we see our boys succeed in school through remote, on-line learning with an intermittent internet connection here in Mexico we are thankful. We take heart in that they are working diligently with our longterm interns and talented education staff to build their future, “so that your youth is renewed like the eagles” Psalm 103,5.

The board and committees of Project Mexico have met virtually this past year to make decisions impacting the future of our programs, our children and the volunteers and staff to “renew a steadfast spirit within me”, Psalm 51, 10. I personally am renewed by the selfless giving of our supporters and look forward to again working together as God would want us to do. Your generous support has sustained us and for that we are truly thankful. God Bless you!

I do want to acknowledge our new Executive Director, Father Nicholas Andruchow. In June he quickly rolled up his sleeves and has been a tremendous administrator and leader who has already made great strategic decisions with love and foresight that are contributing to the renewal of our ministry.

Thank you all for your support volunteerism and prayers.

Sincerely in Christ,

Dennis J. Awad
Chairman of the Board

PROOF THAT GOD EXISTS

DEAR BROTHERS & SISTERS IN CHRIST,

This is what people are looking for. Some reassurance that the events in the world are not just random occurrences in a void of nothingness. So many of us are looking for the understanding that we are not alone and that we are created intentionally. If we all slow down, our thoughts will lead us to the undeniable argument that the world is too unique to be an accident. In addition, humanity shines of God's persistent creativity. We are too different to be categorized as just one of the many species that happen to develop on this random planet. Yes, biologically we are clearly connected to the rest of the animal kingdom but our capacity to invent and discover is unmatched by any other living being. We, the men and woman on this planet, are the proof that God is present, and involved in this world that often seems to have gone mad.

As a priest I am challenged to search for God and His immense power. Now as the Executive Director of Project Mexico, the knowledge of Jesus' dominion is undeniable. In the past ten years I have seen countless individuals whose ingenuity has literally saved the ministry. During the time of the pandemic we have been able to persevere because of the creativity of so many faithful Christians. Since June, when I began to transition into this new leadership role, I have witnessed the brilliant effort of the Project Mexico staff to overcome adversity. Like the young boy said to me recently, "the St. Innocent Orphanage is where I can grow up and learn not to make the same mistakes my parents did." Project Mexico is proof that God exists. For almost 35 years we, as dedicated believers, have shined and have created an organization that has beaten all odds. I give thanks to God for creating us in His image. I lift up my prayers to God's mother, the Theotokos, the ever-virgin Mary to strengthen us in order to miraculously press on and form a ministry both unique and filled with love. I feel it a privilege and a gift to serve the Lord as the Executive Director of Project Mexico. I extend my appreciation to all the donors and supporters who are beacons of God's presence. May we all be comforted by the fact that God does exist and we are the proof.



Fr. Nicholas L. Andruchow

Fr. Nicholas L. Andruchow
Executive Director & Priest

LESSONS OF LIFE

BY FATHER NICHOLAS Project Mexico is a home where people can come and learn what it means to truly live and work on one's faith. Project Mexico was founded to be a vehicle of Christ's love and allow the faithful to experience the Church come alive. Young Mexican boys, American teenagers and adults throughout North America have found the 16-acre ranch as a place to be reminded of what is truly important: a life focused on God, serving Him and always striving to transform what we have into something greater. At Project Mexico, we have been striving to make the world a better place for the last 30 years.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Through the years, I have heard the boys frequently remark that they want to grow up to be "un hombre de bien." This best translates into being an honorable man. This is not a simple task and it is only accomplished through the teachings of Jesus Christ. Each boy who comes to the Ranch is exposed to God's love which is a result of them choosing that love. The outcome of that choice is the sacrament of baptism. Each young child has decided to commit

their life to Christ. Yes, some days the boys are more prayerful than others, but always on Sunday we come together as a family to receive God's ultimate gift, Holy Communion. We encourage all the members of the community to live everyday with the knowledge that God has given us so much. We challenge the boys, the staff, the missionaries to make the world a better place by planting vegetable for the kitchen,



cleaning their rooms, sharing the joy of Christ with one another. We learn and teach together. This is the life at the St. Innocent Ranch.

MISSIONARY WORK

The most important lesson we can learn, in order too truly live, is to have Christ our God in our lives. This does not mean life is easy, but it does chase away the darkness and gives us all hope. Project Mexico was founded as an Orthodox Missionary organization. To share the Gospel through bringing aid to the needy of Mexico.

This summer we welcomed missionary groups once again to live the Good News. Homes are being built by the faithful traveling from the United States. The families in our community are tasting the Kingdom which is to come. A small neighborhood is transformed by a brightly painted recently constructed two-bedroom home. The dimensions of the home are a modest 15 feet by 25 feet, but it makes a world of difference to the mother and father who now have a safe, secure and stable place for their children. Christ's life is about sacrifice and we are here to teach that through words, prayer and action. The lessons are being taught. I challenge all of you to come and learn.✘





A NEW VISION OF CHILDHOOD

BY PATRICIA OTAÑEZ SILVA, CAMPUS ADMINISTRATOR

SEVEN YEARS AGO, my journey at Project Mexico and St Innocent Orphanage began. They say that God's timing is perfect. As a young woman with ideas to change the world and make it a better place, I faithfully believe He put me in this place for a specific reason. As a young woman with ideas to change the world and make it a better place, I thought I had to start from the top, but then God showed me that I would have to start from the bottom. I found in each child and young person with whom I have grown to know that God guided me here, to sow in them the seeds of hope, justice and always wanting to improve themselves. Through love and dedication, I feel very proud of what they are creating, I am very proud of how far these children and young people have come and how far they can go. ✖

Highlights

- 12 of the boys had the highest averages in their class.
- Of the five boys aged 18+, four are now at University, and one is finishing Highschool.
- The University Program began and three of the four young people are employed.
- Angel Brian graduated from Highschool and starts University in September.
- Four boys graduated elementary school and enter middle school with the best grades of their class.
- Guillermo worked with our boys as a team to teach them to plant and grow food
- The boys spent the lockdown studying and beautifying their home.
- On Holy Saturday, 5 boys were brought into the Orthodox Church at Capilla San Inocencio.
- The daughter and spouse of one of our program graduates were baptized and chrismated in June.
- Faeli and Shannon assisted clergy in teaching 10 catechism classes.
- Shannon assisted in facilitating 7 Youth Nights and 9 children's Sunday School classes for two groups of boys.



LEARNING TO LEARN

BY FAELI HEISE, OCMC MISSIONARY

THIS YEAR WAS REWARDING despite the challenges of distance learning. I did my best to help the boys navigate their last year of elementary school and complete a year of schooling online. I watched them grow in confidence, skill, and patience as challenge after challenge was presented.

On July 9th, 2021 we were able to attend an in-person elementary school graduation! Two of my four boys had come to live at St. Innocent Orphanage after the start of the pandemic, which means I watched them meet their teachers and classmates for the first time as we all came together to celebrate their achievement. The experience of being with my group for that long-anticipated event was surprisingly emotional and rewarding. I still give thanks for it.

In the course of our days together, these boys exemplified patience, perseverance, and the importance of not always taking things **too** seriously. I can only hope that the lessons I learned from them are tucked away in my heart and not to be forgotten.

Glory to God for all! ✕

CLASS OF 2021

Congrats!



YOU DID IT!

#PushForHope Fundraiser

IN SPRING OF 2021 we hosted our first-ever Push-Ups for Hope fundraising campaign. The event took place at the ranch and we hosted it online through our social media portals. Participants from around the country took part in our one-day Push-up marathon and helped raise over \$20,000 for our School Buddies program. The School Buddies program is the foundation of our

education outreach for the boys in our care. Proceeds underwrite the cost of school uniforms, materials and special instruction for our children with developmental disabilities. In combination with the boys and staff at the ranch, along with Father Nicholas Andruchow, we completed nearly 10,000 push-ups in an hour.





True service, not simply volunteering, requires self-awareness and education on the complex societal and historical barriers to livelihood. We become better people when we serve. We learn to love and treat our neighbors as ourselves.

~ **Em Godshall**, SISW Intern

This summer I am interning for St. Innocent Service Works because I want to dive deeper into following Christ's call to serve others, to learn how to humble myself to be least among my brothers and sisters.

~ **Gabriel Fahling**,
SISW & PM Intern



 MEXICO



The niños are so full of joy and excitement for life that it is easy to forget where they've come from. They are an example for me on how to endure difficulties and trust in God's will.

~ **Niko Deffigos**,
SISW & PM Intern



 BOSTON, MA



 CLEVELAND, OH



 ORANGE COUNTY, CA

SUMMER SERVICE PROGRAM

AFTER POSTPONING homebuilding in 2020 due to the global pandemic, we felt a strong calling to serve despite the uncertainty of the border closures. Thus, our team worked tirelessly on building a service program that partners with other non-profit organizations throughout the United States. Starting something new is not easy, especially during these unprecedented times.

Our path was windy, complicated and often times, required a full stop and a U-turn. But the Lord is good, and He has called us to be strong and courageous and to not be afraid

for He will personally go before us (Deuteronomy 31:6). In this way, with one heart and one mission, our team moved forward together, improvising and collaborating. We successfully developed a new internship program and ran service trips to seven different locations this summer.

The Saint Innocent Service Works (SISW) Internship Program began in March and featured three months of online training, covering areas of spiritual reflection, servanthood,

missionary work and leadership. Altogether, twenty-two interns graduated from our program and were sent into the field from June through August to serve in affiliation with partner organizations. At each location, interns took on roles as Work Trip Lead Intern, Pastoral Intern, Social Media Intern and Build Intern. Our partners included Habitat for Humanity of Greater Boston, Massachusetts, Saint Herman house in Cleveland, Ohio, FOCUS Orange County in California, FOCUS Detroit in Michigan, Techos Pa' Mi Gente in San Juan, Puerto

SERVICE, continued pg. 9



 DETROIT, MI



 PUERTO RICO



 GARRISON, NY

SERVICE, continued from pg. 8

Rico, Saint Basil Academy in Garrison, New York, and also with our very own, Project Mexico in Tijuana, Mexico.

Volunteer groups joined our interns at these locations and built homes for the unhoused, rebuilt structures that were destroyed during natural disasters, designed and painted murals, prepared food and distributed to communities. Interns also provided mentorship to local children and youth who are at risk of food insecurity and are in need for emotional assistance. Most importantly, our interns and volunteers served as Orthodox servants, sharing our Christ's love as he has loved us. On behalf of the team, we want to say thank you for volunteering in the program, for donating your labor to those in need, for entrusting us to share Christ's love and for praying with and for us. ✘

WE ARE BUILDING HOPE!

BY ANNA CUNNINGHAM, WORK TRIP COORDINATOR

THIS YEAR HAS BEEN far from typical but still fruitful in many ways! As border regulations continued to extend month after month, I realized in order to get these families the help they need I would have to find a new solution. This inspired the foundation and execution of our latest Homebuilding project: The Community Build Initiative.

Through the Community Build Initiative groups, churches, and individuals who are unable to travel to Mexico can still help us fulfill our

mission to the community through their generous contributions and prayers. I have been meeting and organizing with each family to gather volunteer labor from the local community. With monetary support from afar, and physical volunteer support from near, we have been able to build 5 houses in 2021.

By the grace of God and support of our donors this program can continue to bear fruit. ✘



YOUR HANDS AT WORK



In spite of my weakness, I found strength and wisdom in my faith, helping me to do what was best for those we were serving and ourselves, enabling everyone to become the best version of themselves through Christ.

~ **William Cumbelich**, SISW Intern

I realize that my first moments at St. Herman's were a timely summation of one of my greatest challenges this summer. Every day at St. Herman's I engage with dozens of homeless people. It's easy for me to see the painful outward dysfunction of the people we serve and mistake it for the people themselves. But that moment in the garden, my very first at St. Herman's, reminded me to turn to Christ and the Theotokos and that, through their aid, I can perceive the image of God in every human person and love them as myself.

~ **Eliza Corder**, SISW Intern

 Tune in to more **Stories of Hope** from those who have been touched in various ways by being part of the Project Mexico family! Find the podcast at: **ProjectMexico.org**



**PANTRY PARTNER
BOXES**



**IN KIND
DONORS**



**SANTA'S HELPERS
(2020)**

LEADERSHIP 100 GRANT

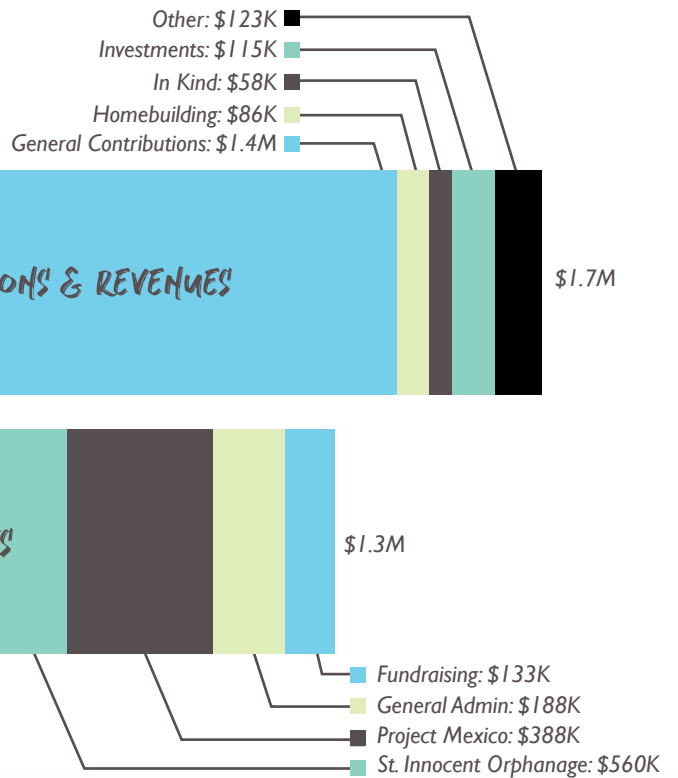
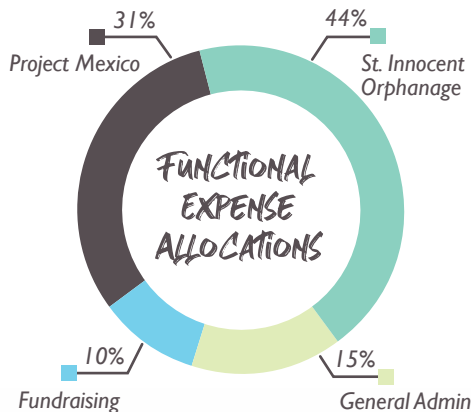
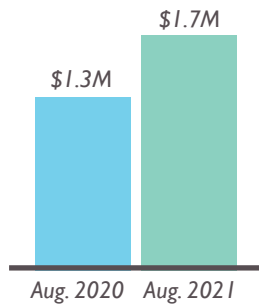
"Give to those who ask, and don't refuse those who wish to borrow from you" (Matthew 5:42). It isn't always easy to be charitable. Sometimes, it's easier to keep your wealth, your time, or your energy to yourself, but because of Leadership 100's commitment to providing a helping hand to the Orthodox world, we were able to bring together 22 young Orthodox adults from all over America to lead this summer in Boston (MA), Cleveland (OH), Detroit (MI), Garrison (NY), Orange County (CA), Tijuana (MX) and San Juan (PR).

The Leadership 100 Grant provided our organization the resources necessary to create in-house leadership and Orthodox servanthood courses. These young adults engaged with their communities and learned to see Christ in the Other from February through September. With the gift from Leadership 100, our goal is to always provide a place where young Orthodox individuals can meet, learn together, serve together, create lifelong friendships and hopefully step into leadership roles within the Orthodox community as they head into the next stage of their lives.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Leadership 100 for making our mission possible. We are currently accepting applications for the 2022 Internship Program. Those who are interested can apply at **ProjectMexico.org/internships**

YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK

YEAR END NET ASSETS



SUPPORT A LIFETIME

FAITHFUL FRIENDS are the cornerstone of our mission. Your monthly gift provides stable resources for continuous education, hygiene, mental health and spiritual growth for the children of St. Innocent Orphanage. Become a Faithful Friend today at projectmexico.org/donate



GEORGE & JUDY MARCUS FOUNDATION GRANT

WE ARE SINCERELY GRATEFUL to the generosity and continual support from the George and Judy Marcus Family Foundation. With their recent charitable gift, we were able to replace our old truck and purchase a new heavy-duty vehicle for the orphanage and the Homebuilding program. This marks a major upgrade as the vehicles here in Tijuana have served us well but must be retired from our modest fleet. May Mr. & Mrs. Marcus always be blessed for their generosity. ✘

