



St. Innocent Orphanage 20th Anniversary

Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage



Building Hope for Boys Without Families and Families Without Homes

2015-2016 ANNUAL REPORT

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“The experience at Project Mexico is absolutely indescribable. I have never felt so much love, faith, joy and community in my life.”

– Gabriella Stokstad,
Work Trip Volunteer

Message from Our Chairwoman

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is in our midst!

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and staff of Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage, we give great thanks to you, our faithful supporters. You continue to sustain this ministry of love through acts of mercy to the poor and orphaned. Your generosity is the backbone of the work of caring for these marginalized boys and families. Your generosity sustains hundreds of volunteers and staff seeking to bring Christ's love to those in need.

This is no small feat. Giving is no small feat. Volunteering is no small feat. I find myself often reading Fr. Tom Hopko's chapter on "When you give Alms" in *The Lenten Spring* for encouragement. He reminds us of Christ's commandment to care for the poor. He reminds us of the Apostles' belief that giving everything without asking for anything in return is the greatest imitation of God. He reminds us of St. John Chrysostom's words, "For almsgiving is the mother of love, of that love which is characteristic of Christianity, which is greater than all miracles, by which the disciples of Christ are manifested." And he reminds us of the saint's exhortation that generosity is the treasury of the Church through which we are made God-like.

Generosity is the foundation of this ministry. It is what sustains the home we provide to our orphaned boys and it is the means by which we have completed our 311th home for our neighbors in Tijuana. Generosity is what brings hundreds of volunteers of all ages to Mexico every year to serve, and in doing so, transform their own lives as well as those whom they serve. And generosity is what sustains the work of the dedicated men and women who daily make this ministry operate – what a tremendous sacrifice they offer and what an inspiration they are to all of us.

Thank you again for your faithfulness and generosity. Your good works of volunteerism and financial gifts are the bedrock of this remarkable ministry. We are humbled by your continued support. May our merciful Lord keep you!

In Christ,



Dr. Julie Papatheofanis
Chairwoman



Message from Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

May the Lord's blessing come upon each and every one of you! I am happy to say that we continue to be blessed beyond measure as we labor to bring healing, restoration and peace to those we serve. This year, like so many before, we have been able to positively impact, not only the lives of the very special boys of St. Innocent Orphanage, but those of 23 impoverished families in northern Mexico. With each gesture of hope that we offer, we are strengthened by all of you who support this ministry with such humble generosity, faithful prayers and encouraging thoughts.

As you can probably imagine, our daily work is demanding and wrought with many challenges, but with each heart that we are able to touch, we joyfully proclaim Christ's gospel. With each member of the Faith that we bring into Mexico, we meaningfully share our important mission of fellowship and service. With each community that joins together to support our humble ministry, we expand the Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage family. Without exaggeration, all that we invest in our work is returned ten-fold and it is because we all serve in unity, with Christ at the center. Just as St. Paul reminds us, we can do nothing alone, but we can do all things through Christ (Philippians 4:13).

While you review our Annual Report, we hope you can recognize that your contribution propels the success of our amazing staff and volunteers. This year has seen so many of you eagerly leap to our calls to not only support our Home Building Program, but also our sponsorship programs like School Buddies, Santa's Helpers, and Pantry Partners. Together, we are building hope and changing lives one day at a time, and I pray that you will continue to stand with us, unified in Christ, for many years to come. On behalf of the staff and boys of Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage, I thank each and every one of you for your continued gifts of sacrifice, love, and support. God bless you all!

Together in Christ,



Ben De La Riva
Executive Director



OUR DEDICATED STAFF MEMBERS

Eva Maria Altamira

Estela Garcia Alvarez

Fr. Nicholas Andruchow

Nayeli Valencia Arce

Presbytera Joy Corona

John Cosby

Soula De La Riva

Janet Felix

Madi Franck

Angie Gozum

Hector Jesus Herrera

Guillermo Moreno Luque

Eugenio Villa Martinez

Jesus Jimenez Miron

Karla Moreno

Jessica Morris

Fritz Muehlhausen

Maria Isabel Solis Naranjo

Edward Novis

Martha Elena Maciel Oros

Francisco Carranza Reyes

Noelle Robaidek

Patricia Otañez Silva

Maria Veronica Otañez Silva

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Erik Swanson

Zachariah Swanson

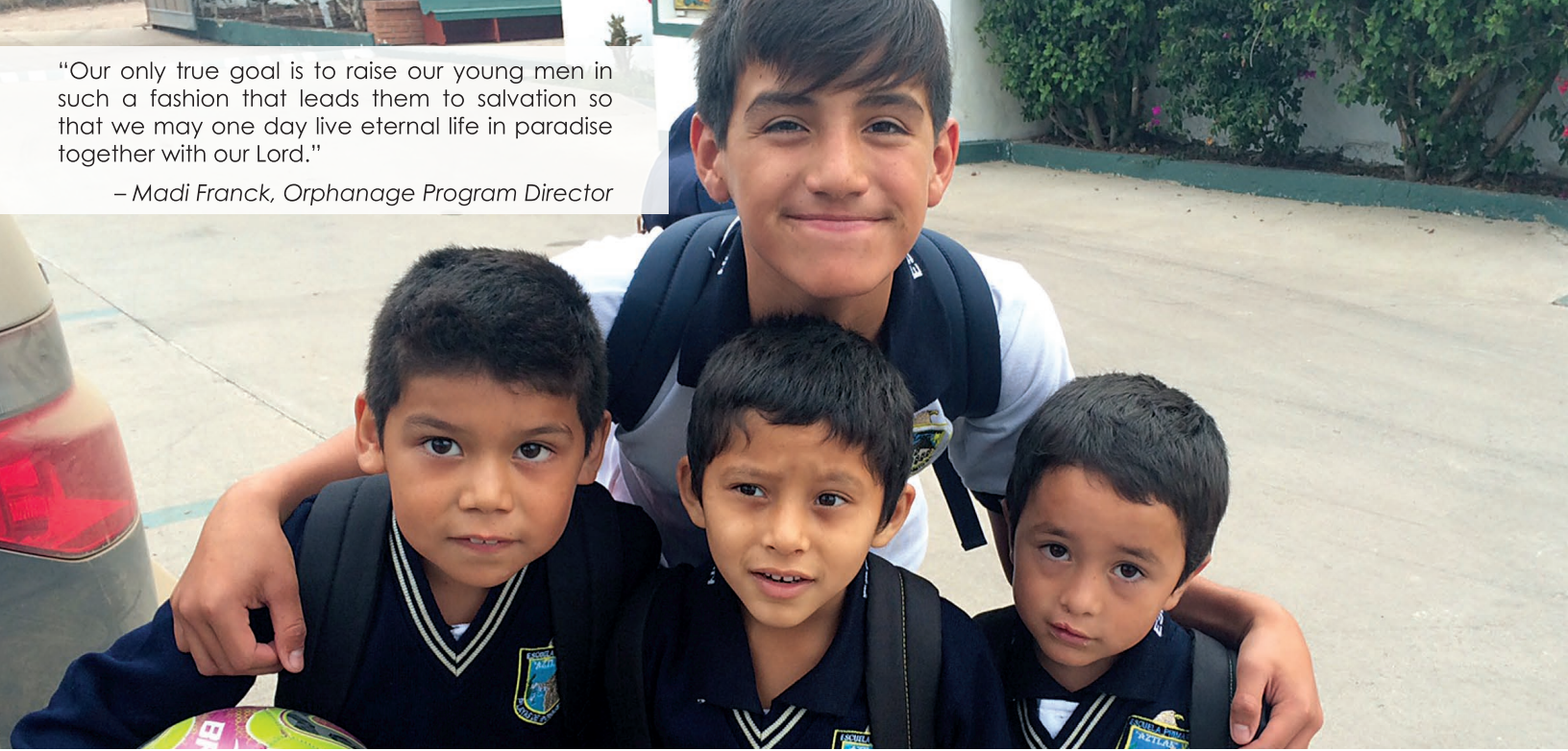
Charity Thatcher

Leonardo Arcadio Valenzuela

Manuel Dominguez Valenzuela

"Our only true goal is to raise our young men in such a fashion that leads them to salvation so that we may one day live eternal life in paradise together with our Lord."

— Madi Franck, Orphanage Program Director



St. Innocent Orphanage Highlights...

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- This year we saw great emotional and personal growth in each one of our boys as they continued to receive individual and group psychology lessons, helping them break down past barriers of abuse and abandonment.
- On a monthly basis, the boys share their many blessings with the needy in Mexico. They visit the elderly, feed the homeless, and sing Christmas carols in order to perform acts of mercy and help the less fortunate.
- We were so happy to celebrate the 20th anniversary of St. Innocent Orphanage this year, and to welcome three new boys: Armando who is 8 years old, Carlos who is 7, and 6-year old Christopher (all pictured above).

EDUCATION

- We had a year of graduations with three boys graduating from high school, three from middle school, and four from primary school. More than the act of graduating, we rejoice in the Lord for allowing our boys to grow.
- Our six homeschool boys completed many hands-on science experiments and supplemental projects this past year. These boys love the small classroom experience!

RECREATION

- We had another beautiful summer vacation in Bahia de Los Angeles, where we spent quality time together catching over 40 fish and frying them for dinner, digging for clams, and kayaking alongside sea turtles!
- Our garden and orchard has been blessed with an abundance of crops. The boys have successfully cultivated the soil which has resulted in hundreds of meals of zucchini and Swiss chard for everyone.
- The boys continue to train hard and continually achieve new heights in their varying sports endeavors, whether it be soccer, football, or basketball.

"What a beautiful sight to watch God's Word at work in this ministry: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). Witnessing the selfless love that each donor puts forth has been a blessed opportunity."

— Janet Felix,
Office Administrator





...Raising Our Boys in the Lord

ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS

- We have successfully completed 60% of the new state requirements to bring the orphanage into compliance.
 - All employees are now First Aid certified and trained in food-handling and sanitation.
 - Additional fire alarms, emergency alarms and lights, and smoke detectors were installed on the property to improve safety and security.

SPIRITUAL

- The generous donations of a Last Supper icon over the Royal Doors, 12 additional icons of the Apostles, and a processional candle set, have immensely enhanced our chapel and worship.
- Throughout the year the boys participated in classes discussing the challenges of living the Faith in a secular society. The boys even wrote and performed a rap song in Spanish on the importance of chastity.
- Our boys' love for the Faith is contagious! This is seen by our Orthodox community growing through the conversion of several local families, including baptisms, chrismations, and even one quinceañera.

RENOVATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

- A new telephone system was installed at the orphanage, which met an ever-growing need for quick and easy communication between staff members, as well as outside callers.
- In order to comply with new state regulations, we made enhancements and upgrades to our on-site utilities: electrical, gas, and plumbing. This also significantly improved their efficiency and safety.
- Improvements to the internet have additionally increased reliability and speed, helping to make our internet connectivity a more useful tool.



God's saving power is truly a mystery. As volunteers, missionaries, and faithful believers, we make a profound impact on the lives of the Mexicans who are suffering, while at the same time we are purified by the sacrifice and struggle.

– Fr. Nicholas Andruchow,
Chaplain & Associate Director

"The feeling of being able to provide a home for a family who could only dream of having one is inexpressible. I truly feel that I made a difference in this family's life, and this feeling has inspired me to reach out and serve in my community at home."

– Natalie Samaan,
Work Trip Volunteer



Home Building Highlights

2017 BUILD WEEKS

May 25 - May 31

Jun 07 - Jun 13

Jun 16 - Jun 22

Jun 28 - Jul 04

Jul 07 - Jul 13

Jul 21 - Jul 27

Aug 02 - Aug 08

Aug 16 - Aug 22

- Glory to God for all things! From September 2015 to September 2016, 602 beautiful people volunteered to build homes for families in Mexico and complete projects at St. Innocent Orphanage.
 - Of the 602 volunteers, 83 came during September–May and 519 came during June–September.
 - Our volunteers came from 23 U.S. States and two Canadian Provinces, making up approximately 62 volunteer groups.
- Additionally, 28 volunteer staff spent their summer in Mexico facilitating the Home Building Program.
- In 2016, our staff and volunteers constructed 23 homes for a total of 27,050 individual volunteer hours.
 - The homes that were built served two elderly, 46 adults, and 59 children.
 - During our three Orthodox Basic Training build weeks we were enlightened by speakers Fr. Nicholas Andruchow, Fr. Ted Barbas, Fr. Ted Dorrance, George Hazlaris, Jacob Saylor, and Fr. Luke Veronis.
- We give a heartfelt thanks to Zachariah and Sophia who have served as our Work Trip Coordinators for the past two years. Zachariah's brother, Erik Swanson, has taken over and it is exciting to see the energy and talent he brings to the program.

"I am constantly amazed by the beauty that emanates everything within the walls of St. Innocent Orphanage. Our patron saint's prayers are deeply felt. Amongst the constant rowdy circus of raising twenty-four young men, God grants peace, calm and comfort."

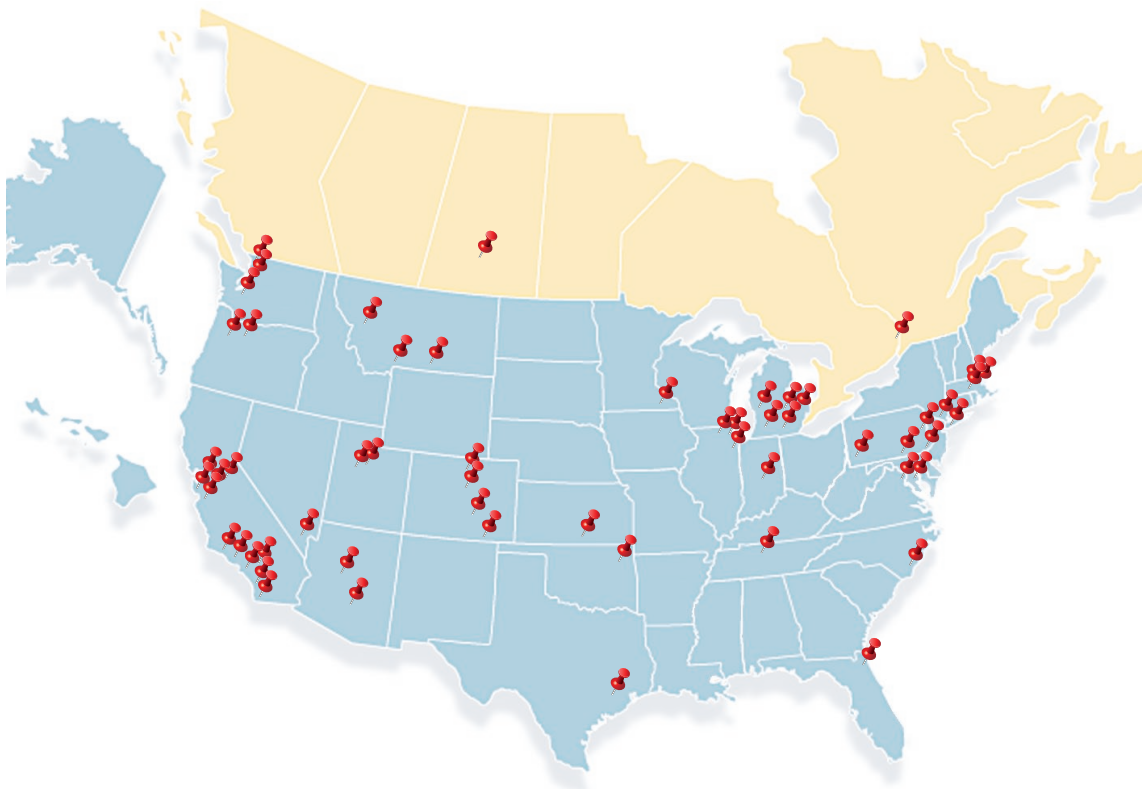
– Erik Swanson,
Work Trip Coordinator



Welcome to our team, Erik!



Willing Hearts and Hands Volunteered from Across the Country



“Project Mexico is a powerful experience, one that, if you let it, brings you into the world that is God. There, as our OBT speaker told us, we find reality – in prayer, service, fellowship – not the “fake” world of our normal routines.”
 – Joseph Sharman, Work Trip Volunteer

VOLUNTEER GROUPS

- St. George, Prescott, AZ
- Assumption, Scottsdale, AZ
- SS. Constantine & Helen, Cardiff, CA
- Calphin Aquatic Club, Fremont, CA
- St. Athanasius, Goleta, CA
- St. Paul, Irvine, CA
- St. John the Evangelist, Orinda, CA
- St. Katherine, Redondo Beach, CA
- Emerald Pacific Electric, San Diego, CA
- Orthodox Young Adults, San Diego, CA
- St. Spyridon, San Diego, CA
- Holy Trinity, San Francisco, CA
- Holy Virgin, San Francisco, CA
- St. Nicholas, San Jose, CA
- St. Katherine College, San Marcos, CA
- St. Basil, Stockton, CA
- Holy Theophany, Colorado Springs, CO
- St. Luke, Erie, CO
- St. Spyridon, Loveland, CO
- Archangel Michael, Pueblo, CO
- St. John the Divine, Jacksonville, FL
- All Saints, Chicago, IL
- St. John the Evangelist, Chicago, IL
- St. Sophia, Elgin, IL
- SS. Peter & Paul, Glenview, IL
- Holy Trinity, Carmel, IN
- St. George, Wichita, KS
- St. Mary, Wichita, KS
- Hellenic College Holy Cross, Brookline, MA
- SS. Constantine & Helen, Webster, MA
- St. Spyridon, Worcester, MA
- SS. Constantine & Helen, Annapolis, MD
- Holy Ascension, Albion, MI
- Holy Transfiguration, Ann Arbor, MI
- St. Nicholas, Grand Rapids, MI
- Basilica of Saint Mary, Livonia, MI
- Nativity of the Virgin Mary, Plymouth, MI
- Crossroads Group, Rochester, MN
- St. Nicholas, Billings, MT
- St. Anthony the Great, Bozeman, MT
- Annunciation, Missoula, MT
- St. Basil the Great, Wilmington, NC
- St. Paul the Apostle, Las Vegas, NV
- St. Mary, Brooklyn, NY
- Church of Our Saviour, Rye, NY
- Holy Trinity, Tulsa, OK
- Ottawa OCF, Ottawa, ON
- St. John the Baptist, Beaverton, OR
- Holy Trinity, Portland, OR
- St. Nicholas, Bethlehem, PA
- Annunciation, Lancaster, PA
- St. Nicholas, McKees Rocks, PA
- St. John Chrysostom, Philadelphia, PA
- St. Vincent of Lerins, Saskatoon, SK
- Protection of the Holy Virgin, Clarksville, TN
- St. Paraskevi, Washington, TX
- Greek Orthodox Mission Parish of Utah, UT
- Prophet Elias, West Jordan, UT
- St. Katherine, Falls Church, VA
- St. Sophia, Bellingham, WA
- St. Katherine, Kirkland, WA
- St. Paul, Lynnwood, WA

OUR MISSION

Project Mexico performs works of mercy and helps others do works of mercy in the name of Jesus Christ, transcending cultural barriers by building homes for the poor in Mexico and by providing a home for orphaned boys through St. Innocent Orphanage.



SCHOOL BUDDIES SPONSORS

35

MONTHLY SUPPORTERS

215

SANTA'S HELPERS DONORS

77

PANTRY PARTNERS GROUPS

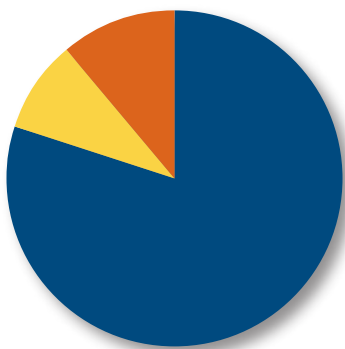
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Acts of Mercy • Excellence • Education • Love & Compassion • Mission Work • Partnerships • Witness

How Your 2015 Donations Were Put to Work

FUNCTIONAL EXPENSE ALLOCATION

- Program Expenses 80%
- General Administration 9%
- Fundraising 11%



VOLUNTEER HOURS
28,192 hrs.

DONATIONS & REVENUE

- General Contributions \$847,353
- Home Building Work Trips \$239,775
- In Kind Goods \$110,930
- Other Income \$16,509
- Investment Income \$15,127
- Endowment Distribution \$33,052
- TOTAL \$1,262,746**

EXPENSES

- Project Mexico \$290,031
- St. Innocent Orphanage \$766,880
- General Admin & Fundraising \$265,331
- TOTAL \$1,322,242**

NET ASSETS

- Net Assets, beginning of year \$1,661,127
- Net Assets, end of year \$1,545,376

Note: Because Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage conducts operations in both Mexico and the United States, we are obliged to sustain a broad range of dual services with regards to accounting, legal, human resources, property management, and banking. We are grateful for your support and we strive diligently to maximize the number of donor dollars that fund our program services.

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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 Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America 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.