

Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage



Building Hope for Boys Without Families and Families Without Homes

A MILESTONE YEAR

I pray that you are blessed and have enjoyed a relaxing and rejuvenating summer season. Summer is easily my favorite time of year, but it also tends to be very busy. Despite its hectic nature, the summer allows us to embrace, reminisce and connect with so many of you that come to Mexico in support of our ministry of hope.

Because of you, this year marked the building of our 300th home since 1988. Praise God! This summer we hosted over 550 volunteers from 51 different parishes across the United States and Canada, who together built 23 homes for deserving families in need. This beautiful synergy of service, fellowship and faith was truly remarkable and it was all done in the name of Christ. What an amazing year it has been!

But, it is with joyful sorrow that we say goodbye to Zachariah, Sophia & Porphyria Swanson, who are moving to attend Holy Cross Seminary. We are eternally grateful for our time together and for their selfless service to this ministry. We are proud to welcome Zachariah's brother, Erik Swanson, who will step into the role of Work Trip Coordinator. Please pray for all of them!

Our boys continue to grow in Christ as they face each new day surrounded by those who care for and love them. This year we saw our largest number of graduations with three of our boys, Jose, Humberto and Juan, graduating from high school, and several others graduating from elementary and middle school. The boys' summer would not have been complete without a very exciting vacation trip to Bahia de los Angeles relaxing, fishing, and swimming with their brothers, and our loving staff and their families.

Your moral support, prayers, and notes of encouragement mean a great deal to all of us, and your confidence strengthens us as a community. As some of you may know, the fall is traditionally a challenging time for us financially, so I humbly ask you to consider an additional gift of support if you are able. May God bless and keep you all!

Together in Christ,

Ben De La Riva
Executive Director



Ben and Alejandro
greet one another after Divine Liturgy.

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.

OUR VALUES

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

OUR THANKS

Thanks be to God for the 550 volunteers and 25 interns who served needy families in Mexico this summer. Our deepest gratitude to them for their selfless service!



info@projectmexico.org

GRADUATION TIME! CELEBRATION TIME!

Our beautiful faith continually teaches us to give thanks for God's blessings. For us, this gratefulness comes in the form of enjoying time spent together, celebrating the boys' academic accomplishments, and rejoicing in the opportunity to live and struggle together. BUT, on graduation day, we give thanks for all of these things and more! We are thankful that Jose, Juan, and Humberto have successfully finished their high school studies. Like most graduates, there were struggles along the way, the greatest of which was finding the motivation to attend class everyday even when senioritis kicked into high gear. Thanks to the boys' continued willingness to work with our incredible tutoring staff – we made it! Most of all, we celebrate the growth that came from perseverance, overcoming frustration, and hard work.

Jose was our first graduate, completing his studies back in December. He is currently working to save money and ready himself to enter university or the next stage of life. We are proud to say that he hopes to attend culinary school. Additionally, Juan has been accepted to one of the best universities in the city for engineering. We pray that God gives him the wisdom and strength to use his great gift of intelligence to reach his dream of becoming a mechanical engineer. Lastly, Humberto plans to enter the work force for six months where he will focus on narrowing down a career path that most interests him; he is heavily interested in the culinary arts!

Glory be to God for His continued guidance and for giving the boys the courage to continue on and achieve their goals! Please continue to pray for these boys as they transition into adulthood.

In Christ,

Madi H. Franck
Orphanage Program Director

Left: Juan proudly receives his diploma.
Center: The boys gather with Jose for a photo on his graduation.
Right: Humberto gets a big hug from Madi.



TOP NEEDS

- 1. Orphanage Electrical & Propane Gas Upgrades (\$3,500)** Help provide the labor and materials needed to bring us into compliance with the new Mexican orphanage registration process.
- 2. Orphanage Kitchen Sink Upgrade (\$850)** Support our need for an essential new three-station kitchen sink to create a healthier environment for the 150 meals prepared every day.

GIVE THE GIFT OF EDUCATION

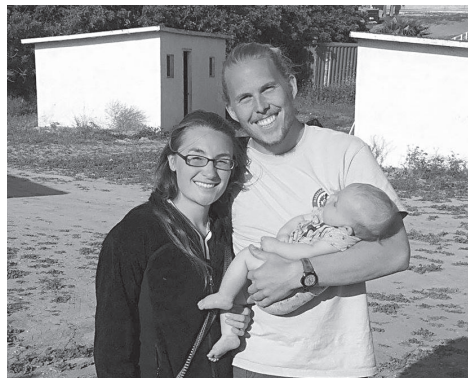
Education is a top priority at St. Innocent Orphanage because it is essential in assisting our boys to break the cycle of poverty in Mexico. In pursuing their educations, our boys realize that they have the potential for a bright future. We aim to provide them with all the resources they need to succeed, including supervised homework time, on-site tutors, hands-on activities, a widespread library, and a computer learning center. We invite you to join us as a Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage School Buddy by sponsoring a boy's education for \$1,500/year (or \$6,000/year for college) to cover all the necessary education costs. Contact Soula De La Riva at soula@projectmexico.org to learn more.



Eduardo, Ivan and Andres receive gifts at their middle school graduation.

UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS

On every group's last evening, we pray the Akathist of Thanksgiving together. The Akathist is pure poetry, but these particular lines always grip me with renewed strength: *Glory to Thee for the unforgettable moments of life; Glory to Thee for the heart's innocent joy; Glory to Thee for the joy of living; Moving and being able to return Thy love.* "Innocent joy" -- this is



what we feel bubbling up inside of us at the end of a long day spent mixing cement and laughing with the neighborhood kids. It is the insatiable joy that comes from seeing the beauty of Christ in everything.

The 23 houses we built this year included the completion of the 300th house in our home building history! Glory to God! This milestone would not have been possible without the herculean efforts of our 25 interns and our 550 volunteers! Additionally, we were enriched by our guest speakers: Fr. Ted Barbas, Fr. Ted Dorrance, George Hazlaris, Jacob Saylor, and Fr. Luke Veronis. A hearty thank you to all who filled this summer full of unforgettable moments.

My wife and I experienced many unforgettable "firsts" in our time here, including our first home, our first job together, and our first child. It is very difficult to put into words what our life here has meant to us. Like everything worthwhile there were moments of struggle, but looking back on our last two years brings tears to my eyes. We have found such love, joy, and peace on this tiny Mexican ranch.

Please keep us in your prayers as we now head to Holy Cross Seminary! Also, keep our brother, Erik Swanson, in your prayers as he becomes the next Work Trip Coordinator. We are incredibly excited to "pass the staff," or should we say shovel, into his very capable hands! Thank you for letting us be a part of this blessed mission.

With All Our Love,

The Swansons - Zachariah,
Sophia & Porphyria
Work Trip Coordinators,
2014-2016



Top: The Swanson Family.
Right: Participants from Week 3 pose
with the family in front of our 300th home.

HOME BUILDING 2017 DATES COMING SOON!

*Dates will be released on
our website by the end
of August.*

*Online registration
tentatively scheduled to
open on October 17, 2016.
Email announcements will
be sent two weeks prior.*

*For the most updated
information, visit
[www.projectmexico.org/
homebuilding](http://www.projectmexico.org/homebuilding).*

*We look forward to seeing
you all next summer!*

Project Mexico of the Orthodox Church



Building Hope for Boys Without Families and Families Without Homes

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YOUR PREFERENCE MATTERS

In order to reduce our annual mailing costs, we are making the transition to electronic correspondence. Beginning in 2017, paper mailings will only be sent to those who have requested them. To provide your correspondence preference, please visit our website, or call or email our office. Thank you for helping us Go Green and operate efficiently!

HELP US BUILD HOPE!



Brighten a Future

Sponsor the costs of educating one of our boys by becoming a School Buddy for 2016-2017.



Plan a Fundraiser

Organize an event or campaign to help us meet some of our ongoing and top needs.



Fill Our Pantry

Coordinate a donation drive to collect food and supplies for our growing boys.



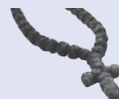
Build a Home

Change the life of a needy family by volunteering on a home building trip in Mexico.



Give a Gift

Become a sustaining member of our ministry by donating on a monthly basis.



Say a Prayer

Sign up to receive our quarterly emails to pray for all of the petitions of our ministry.

TO GET INVOLVED CONTACT (619) 426-4610 OR INFO@PROJECTMEXICO.ORG