

Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage



Building Hope for Boys Without Families and Families Without Homes

REGISTRATION FOR HOMEBUILDING 2019 OPENS OCTOBER 18TH!

Summer 2019 Dates:

Thursday, June 6 - 12

Tuesday, June 18 - 24

Thursday, June 27 - July 3

Tuesday, July 9 - 15

Thursday, July 18 - 24

Tuesday, July 30 - August 5

Thursday, August 8 - 14

projectmexico.org/homebuilding



HOPE YEAR-ROUND

THIS IS OUR 30th YEAR OF BUILDING HOMES IN TIJUANA and this summer we completed our 365th home. Volunteers are most energized after their missions. So how can we continue to serve throughout the year? To continue this purposeful vision at home we are providing an opportunity to build hope 365 days a year. Through Project Mexico's Alumni program volunteers can continue service learning: sponsor projects, invite others to join local projects and encourage family and friends to serve in their community. Join us today at projectmexico.360alumni.org.

Sign up today to be a matching grant sponsor and make 2019 our best year ever. Support our ministry by becoming an Annual Matching Grant Sponsor or Supporter. This giving provides matching dollars to each donor. To participate, go online and click on our sponsor tab or visit projectmexico.org/donate.

Save the Date! #givingtuesday is November 28th this year. Please consider Project Mexico on this nationwide day of giving.

Faithfully Yours,

Dn. Demetrios, James P. Andrews, Executive Director
jp@projectmexico.org | (303) 807-7772

FALL NEWSLETTER // 2018

»»» 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, Strategic Partnerships, and Witness.

»»» Our Thanks «««

Special thanks to all of our supporters for making this year's **Swim for Hope** a resounding success. We met our goal of \$1000.00 per mile on the big 16-mile ocean swim. Check out the photo gallery on our Facebook page!

SHARING HOPE

Tell us your stories!

Share your videos and photos with the Project Mexico Community by joining our Alumni platform today:

projectmexico.alumni360.com
or email: tina@projectmexico.org

Tag us on Social:



A HOUSE WHERE THE SPIRIT CAN DWELL

by Fr. Nicholas L. Andruchow



Screens had to be put on the six new windows. Fixtures for the adult baptismal font needed to be installed and a multitude of other tasks. Our goal is to be finished for the feast day of St. Innocent on October 6th.

The process has been extensive and intricate which is similar to our own

Here at Project Mexico there are many challenges. One of the greatest it seems is the demands to just pay the bills. Through God's grace, the ministry has persevered and flourished despite the lack of predictable income. With this in mind, I was apprehensive when a local Orthodox Mexican man approached me with a sincere desire to improve our chapel. We are always cautious of expenses for the community's liturgical needs because paying salaries and keeping food on the table is our top priority. In the end, we decided that the Lord was working through this man and the construction should begin.

The remodel included tearing down walls, removing old concrete footers and hauling off loads of debris and dirt. As the worship space was expanded, the shape of our new chapel started to form. On the feast day of the Panagia, the Dormition of the Theotokos, we celebrated our first liturgy in the new space. It was a blessed day. Unfortunately, the work was not done. There were numerous details that had to be completed to fully complete the project. A thorough cleaning needed to be done.

efforts to fortify our life in Christ and build up the temple where the Holy Spirit can dwell.

For the past 30 years, Project Mexico has brought over 15,000 volunteers to build homes for needy families and to spiritually construct souls worthy to house the Holy Spirit. St. Paul wrote that we are the temple of God's Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16-17). When the missionary first comes across the border they are faced with the harsh reality of poverty but realize God is present despite the suffering. This dramatic experience allows for the spiritual debris to be cleaned out and to start fresh. As the week goes on a subtle, sublime process occurs where prayer and reflection provides the tools for the soul to be strengthened and purified.

Christ teaches us that the salvation of your soul is more valuable than the entire world (Matt. 16:26). The chapel of the orphanage serves as a home for all of us to grow stronger and to foster our souls where the Holy Spirit can dwell. We are blessed that our place of worship has been improved. And we are blessed that Project Mexico provides a place where hundreds of faithful can

work on their own soul. So, becoming stronger in Christ they build up a place where the Spirit can dwell, and their souls can be saved. May all of our souls be strengthened and built up. †

Father Nicholas L. Andruchow,
Priest & Associate Director, fnicholas@projectmexico.org

BUILDING HOPE 365

Sometimes, all it takes is a little time away from our typical routine, disconnected from our daily comforts, where



we are challenged physically, emotionally and spiritually for our hearts to be awakened and open to the grace of God who draws our souls towards Him in thanksgiving and love. Many of our volunteers will have been touched in some way by their trip, encountering God in the families served and in relationships with each other and themselves. We encourage all to allow these seeds to grow to maturation into a tree of life that provides fruit to those around you and continue as missionaries of God's love back home in their own parishes and communities.

We would love to hear how your trip impacted you and inspired you in different ways, please send us your videos, pictures and stories!

Launched this summer, our building-hope365 initiative is a campaign to build hope year-round. Let us support you as you connect and collaborate with volunteers in your area using our Alumni map. Share your ideas and

SPOTLIGHT

GROWING UP PROJECT MEXICO



One of the greatest accomplishments of the year was Alejandro's acceptance and transition to life at Hellenic College Holy Cross. Since he was young, Alejandro has been one of our boys most focused on his goals and future. With the help of our teachers and staff, Alejandro was able to make his dreams a reality. As a result of his lively spirit, kind heart, and brotherly demeanor, all of the boys look up to him as an example of what is possible. Alejandro is already asking about



how he can help fundraise at local churches for his brothers at the orphanage! We are grateful for God working in his life.

create groups and events to enable you to live out your faith and creatively use your gifts together as one body in Christ.

Join our new Alumni platform today! Anyone is welcome to sign up and if you volunteered with us this summer you should have already received a link to activate your profile and get started. For more information go to: projectmexico.360alumni.com. †

Tina Cooper, *Volunteer & Alumni Coordination*, tina@projectmexico.org

Brandon (10), *Adan* (9), and *Alejandro* (6). Despite how hard transitions can be for young children, these boys immediately felt at home. They were happy to be in a safe place and provided for. Likewise, it was a joy to watch the other boys take them under their wing. We are grateful to have been entrusted with their care and look forward to being with them on their walk into the Faith and Life. †

Madi Franck, *Orphanage Director*, madi@projectmexico.org

BENEVOLENCE ABOUNDS FINDING JOY

As children grow, they learn through imitating those around them. For most children, this means an intense focus on the actions of their mother and father; however, children who are raised in an orphanage setting have many adults who care for them. At St. Innocent Orphanage, *it has become our mission to raise our children in an Orthodox community worthy of imitating.* By the grace of God, at the orphanage, we have seen a surge in benevolence, a chartable disposition to do good in



regard to others and to act with genuine compassion and kindness when considering their needs. We are grateful to witness our boys seeking to aide others and demonstrate genuine care for one another and for strangers.

After our family vacation in Mulege, Loreto, and La Paz we welcomed the three newest members of our family:

This past summer, I had the opportunity to experience some really uncommon things for an 18-year-old just out of high school. A huge part of this experience has been connecting with the twenty boys who live at St. Innocent Orphanage. When I first arrived, I felt the boys holding back whenever I tried to interact and connect with them. This really did not surprise me since they meet hundreds of people every summer, and most everyone leaves them after one week. I could see how some of the boys were afraid to get too attached to anyone because as soon as they created a friendship, they had to say goodbye. When the boys realized that I was here for the entire summer, a perceivable shift occurred in their interactions with me. Even the language barrier seemed to matter little. They are so silly and fun to be around, and I have began to treat them as my little brothers.

Mother Gavrilia, a Greek Orthodox missionary to India, was once criticized because she didn't learn any of the languages in India. After praying to God and asking Him if she was a terrible missionary, God revealed to her that she did know five languages - the language of smile, laughter, touch, tears, and love. With these languages,

See FINDING JOY on page 4

Project Mexico of the Orthodox Church



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BUILD WITH US!

*Project Mexico offers building trips year-round. If you can't make it during the summer or want to return and renew your commitment you can join us for your choice of a 1-4-day trip this fall. To book a trip, call Tima at **619.426.4610** or sign up at **projectmexico.360alumni.com**.*



FINDING JOY, *from page 3*

along with the language of sports, I've really connected with the boys.

The families for whom we build homes are another major aspect of this experience. Each family is unique and special in their own way, but they all share the spirit of gratitude and appreciation towards us, and towards God.

My first week here, José, the father of the house who happened to have some construction experience, leveled out the entire property for us by himself. This normally takes a team two hours on the first build day to accomplish. José was filled with excitement and joy when he saw us, because he was not sure if we would actually show up. He told us that he worried we might have been a scam, and he and his family had been praying it was not. After the house was built at the end of this week, the family cried and thanked us over and over

again. José even apologized, saying "Mexico is ugly" and "I'm sorry this must not have been a good vacation for you." I was heartbroken to hear him say these things, and we reassured him that we felt so blessed to be here and that there is such beauty in Mexico and among the Mexicans

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we've met. At the end of each build, we often make a little door step for the families and ask them if they want anything written in the cement, or if they want to put their children's handprints in the cement. One family asked us to write "As for me and my

house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15) and another asked for Psalm 23.

One of the greatest lessons I have learned is the difference between the "real world" and what is often perceived as the real world. At Project Mexico & St. Innocent's Orphanage, God is brought into every small aspect of what is done, and all is dedicated to Him. There is a simplicity that is emboldened here, which forces one to find great pleasure and excitement in the littlest things, such as sunsets overlooking the ocean, campfires under the stars, and quality time with loved ones. This way of looking at life has helped me discover what is the real world! Joy and happiness can always be found, even in the midst of extreme poverty. †

Theodora Veronis, *Summer Intern*

GET INVOLVED! Contact 619.426.4610 OR projectmexico.org/get-involved