



Project Mexico

& St. Innocent Orphanage



Building Hope for Boys Without Families and Families Without Homes

2013-2014 ANNUAL REPORT

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"When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, 'Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's, will save it.'"

– Mark 8:34-35

Message from Our Chairwoman

Dear Friends,

Christ's message is clear: the cost of discipleship and obedience to Him is great, but salvation and eternal life are given to those who sacrifice for the sake of Christ. I cannot think of more obedient followers of Christ than the men and women who faithfully labor daily for Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage. Our staff members have each taken on a heavy cross – the burden and blessing of providing a family to abandoned, unwanted boys and providing impoverished Mexican families a permanent home.

Despite these heavy challenges, you will find a group of energetic, positive, loving, and Christ-centered people that continue to amaze all of us who know them. The challenges they face are at times overwhelming, but they seem unwavering in their mission. Their love for the boys of the orphanage and the poor they serve is palpable. Those who work for the ministry are at the front lines, year after year, fulfilling Christ's command to love one another.

I write this on the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross, a major feast of the Church year. Clearly the Cross is the central symbol, sacrifice, and mercy of our Faith. And the Cross, certainly, is at the core of what has motivated and driven people, like our staff members, to sacrifice for others for over 26 years. This morning during his homily, my priest Fr. John Reimann gently, but firmly, admonished our congregation to take up our crosses, whatever they may be. But he reminded us that we are not meant to carry them alone. We are to share these burdens with others, and we are to help others bear their crosses if we can. This is our salvation.

Are you able to help carry our staff's burden of raising orphaned boys in a loving Orthodox Christian home, and providing homes for the poor in Mexico? Can you help lighten their load a bit? Your prayers are our foundation and spiritual bedrock. Your time and talents of volunteerism strengthen us and your monetary gifts provide the financial structure of this ministry. The good work of Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage continues because of you, our faithful partners and donors. Thank you for your continued faithfulness and generosity. 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! What a joyous and truly fulfilling year this has been for our ministry of service and hope. Together, we shared in the boundless blessings and love of Jesus Christ. Together, we set aside all divisions of politics, geography, ethnicity, philosophy and society to join hands and boldly bear the burdens of those less fortunate. Together, we united in a commitment of personal sacrifice and selfless generosity to glorify His Name. The humbling, but heavenly truth is that we can do nothing alone.

Through fellowship and a shared vision of loving compassion, our unity in Christ has literally changed the world. The success of Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage is a wonderful tribute to both its faithful donors and caring staff. Over the years, most of you have witnessed the fruits of this ministry as you labored to build a home for a needy family or shared a tender moment with one of our boys.

But please consider, if you would, the ripple effects of our ministry and the impact that they likely had on the world. Building a home 25 years ago might have meant a measurable cost savings for a family that could then afford to send their child to high school or even college. Today, that child might be a teacher, an architect or a doctor who will certainly send his or her children to school. Many of our past orphanage boys who are now grown have vocations, are married, and have children of their own that they love and cherish. They are all living proof that through Christ, all things are possible. What an amazing legacy.

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 prayer, love and support. Together, we are building hope and changing lives one day at a time. I pray that you will continue to stand with us, unified in Christ, for many years to come. May God bless you all!

Together in Christ,



Ben De La Riva
Executive Director

OUR DEDICATED STAFF MEMBERS

Eva Maria Altamira
Estela Garcia Alvarez
Father Nicholas Andruchow
Presvytera Joy Corona
John Cosby
Soula De La Riva
Ramon Manuel Dominguez
Madi Franck
Angie Gozum
Guillermo Moreno Luque
Jesus Jimenez Miron
Jessica Morris
Fritz Muehlhausen
Miguel Mejia Nolasco
Kathy Novak
Salvador Lopez Nunez
Martha Elena Maciel Oros
Francisco Carranza Reyes
Ricardo Romero Reyes
Nemesio Morgado Rodriguez
Patricia Otanez Silva
Jose Angel Mendoza Sotelo
Sophia Swanson
Zachariah Swanson
Charity Thatcher
Leonardo Arcadia Valenzuela
Anna Zarazua



"This year is defined with one word -LOVE- God's infinite love. When I think back over the past year of numerous joys and trials, I give thanks that in every moment God has protected and loved us."

– Madi Franck, Orphanage Co-Director

St. Innocent Orphanage Highlights...

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

- To improve the mental and emotional health of our boys, our psychologists held weekly group and individual counseling sessions focused on:
 - Ages 10-14: behavior & anger management, self-esteem & independence, living together, conflict resolution, abandonment, and information processing.
 - Ages 15-18: emotions management, assertiveness, empathy, decision making, problem solving, expression of emotions, and mental distress.
- Our kitchen staff has worked hard to create a balanced diet for the boys! Each meal has fruits, dairy, grains, protein, and vegetables from our very own garden.
- To encourage autonomy, we decreased the number of boys per living space from four to two.

RENOVATIONS

- A new galvanized orphanage front gate was donated and installed by Peter Andruchow. It has our name displayed and it's adorned with a traditional Orthodox cross.
- For the first time in 17 years, the chapel iconostasis was repaired and repainted by iconographer, Antonia Franck, alongside some of our talented staff, Tony, Mary, Seraphima, Emily, and Fritz.
- With help from our staff, the boys worked together to revitalized the old pig barn. The herd has grown to over 24 pigs and we also have 6 cows, 17 rabbits, 15 chickens, 3 sheep, and 5 ducks.
- During the off-season, the Ristagno family repainted the orphanage kitchen, and two *Orthodox San Diego* groups stuccoed the outdoor showers and repainted the boys' dorm rooms.

"Last year, one of our youngest boys started school with so much anxiety and self-doubt. Homework time was close to a nightmare. Today, he chooses to sit as close as possible to my desk and work quietly through his homework smiling, a hand on my shoulder, and proudly asks me to check his work."

– Charity Thatcher, Orphanage Teacher





"I am a priest, I am a husband and I am a father. I am 100% a servant for the Lord. Thank you my God, for allowing me to minister to your little ones."

– Fr. Nicholas Andruchow,
Priest & Associate Director

...Raising Our Boys in the Lord

SPIRITUAL

- We have made a concerted effort to teach the boys how to apply the Orthodox Faith into all aspects of their lives.
- The Divine Liturgy is now being chanted by all the boys, with the older boys leading the younger novices.
- Our team of altar boys has doubled in the past year as we have fully trained the youngest boys who are now very active in the care of the altar.
- In order to gain a deeper understanding of Orthodoxy, the older boys engaged in an 8-week course about the history of the Church.

EDUCATION

- Our boys achieved a cumulative academic average of 8.0 (equivalent to a "B" average). We are very proud of them!
- This fall we launched *Programa Exito* (Program Success) to homeschool four of our middle school boys. It is already proving to be a huge success!
- A total of 51 chapter books and over 100 picture books and short stories were read by our boys this year.

RECREATION

- Andres and Ivan competed in the *Chivas* national soccer tournament in Guadalajara. Ivan was named "All Star" for most goals scored!
- We took the boys on a family vacation this summer traveling 2700km in just seven days. We camped, fished, ate strange foods, played games, prayed, and simply enjoyed being together.



"Serving in this ministry, I have learned so much about myself, about our Orthodox faith, and about Christ's command for us to love one another."

– Soula De La Riva,
Director of Administration & Public Relations

"God has taught me so much about service, sacrifice, friendship, and community in this time that I have been blessed to spend as part of the Project Mexico team. I will forever be indebted to these people and this place."

—Jenny Bailey,
Work Trip Coordinator



Home Building Highlights

"This was by far one of the most incredible weeks I've ever experienced in my life. The children we met in Mexico really opened my eyes to what's actually out there, and how amazingly hard things are for so many people in the world."

— Work Trip Volunteer

- From September 2013 to September 2014, over 439 volunteers and 19 volunteer staff came to Mexico to build homes for impoverished families in desperate need and to complete various projects at the orphanage.
- Our volunteers came from 19 U.S. states and 2 Canadian provinces, making up 49 parish groups in total.
- This summer, 19 homes were constructed for a total of 21 families, with over 11,488 volunteer labor hours.
 - Of these 21 families, we housed: 54 children, 37 parents and 10 elderly.
 - During Orthodox Basic Training #2, 150 volunteers built 8 houses in one week, on the same block, literally transforming a neighborhood.
 - Throughout the week, we were blessed by the words of our guest speakers: Archbishop Benjamin, Dn. Theodore Brinegar, Fr. Andrew Cuneo, Fr. Gerasim Eliel, Fr. Anthony Karbo, and Fr. Basil & Mat. Joan Rhodes.
- At the close of the summer, we said goodbye to our newlywed Work Trip Coordinators, Jenny, Mary, and Tony, and we welcomed our new coordinators, also newlywed, Zachariah and Sophia Swanson!

"I see this ministry as a tapestry of thickly-woven relationships. Most of the time we can only see the back of the tapestry, but every once in a while, we get to see the front, the glorious and dazzling result of our work. And we thank God for every encounter He has arranged for us."

— Sophia Swanson,
Work Trip Coordinator

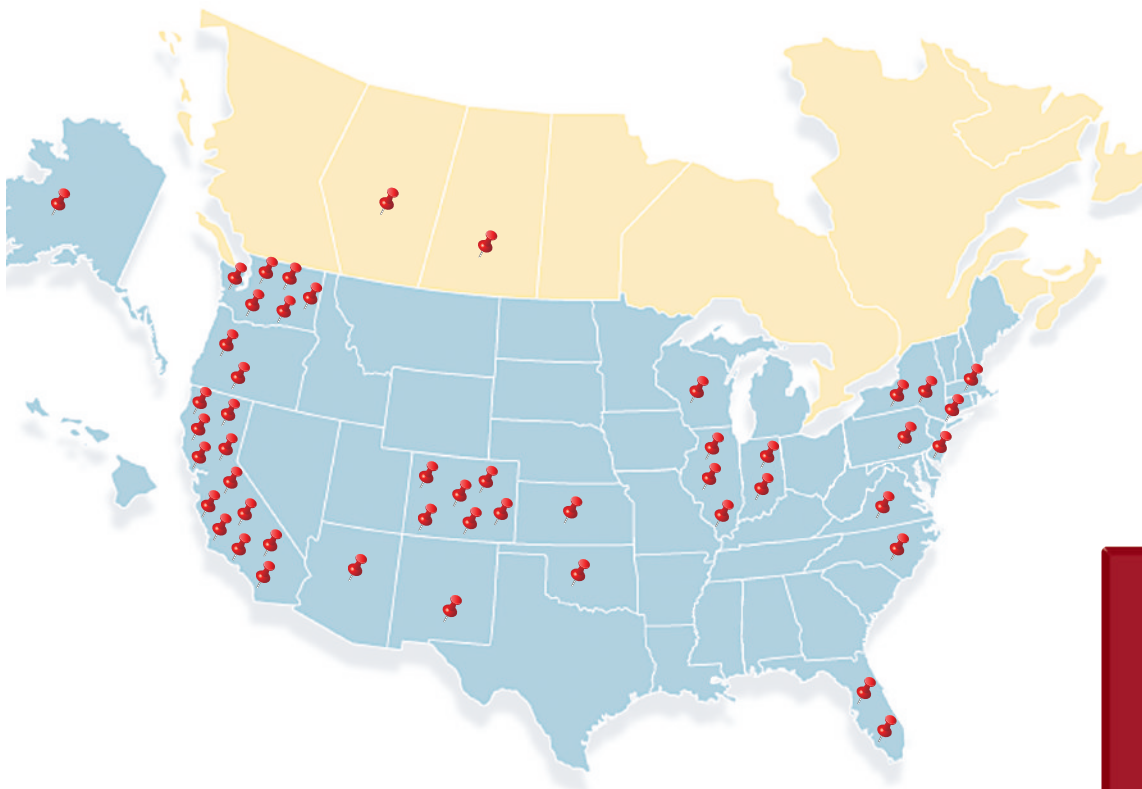


"Through the joyful, and sometimes more difficult times of working in this ministry, I have truly felt God's hand working through, and with us all."

- Tony Machnee, Work Trip Coordinator



In 2014, Willing Hearts and Hands Volunteered from Across the Country



"I was inspired by the joy that we saw in the Mexicans. Even though they have so much less than we do, we could still see a radiant joy shining from them, especially from their children."

- Work Trip Volunteer

VOLUNTEER PARISHES

- St. Nicholas, Juneau, AK
- St. Ignatius, Mesa, AZ
- Annunciation, Sacramento, CA
- Annunciation, Modesto, CA
- Holy Resurrection, Castro Valley, CA
- Holy Trinity, San Francisco, CA
- Holy Virgin Mary, Los Angeles, CA
- St. Athanasius, Goleta, CA
- St. Basil, Stockton, CA
- St. George, Fresno, CA
- St. John, Anaheim, CA
- St. John, Orinda, CA
- St. Nicholas, San Jose, CA
- St. Seraphim, Santa Rosa, CA
- Holy Theophany, Colorado Springs, CO
- St. Herman, Littleton, CO
- St. James, Fort Collins, CO
- St. Katherine, Greenwood Village, CO
- St. Luke, Erie, CO
- St. Mary, Calhan, CO
- St. George, Orlando, FL
- St. Justin, Jacksonville, FL
- Annunciation, Chicago, IL
- Assumption, Chicago, IL
- St. Sophia, Elgin, IL
- Holy Trinity, Indianapolis, IN
- Ss. Constantine & Elena, Indianapolis, IN
- St. George, Wichita, KS
- Ss. Constantine & Helen, Webster, MA
- St. Basil, Wilmington, NC
- Annunciation, Brick, NJ
- Holy Trinity, Santa Fe, NM
- Church of Our Saviour, Rye, NY
- St. Michael, Binghamton, NY
- St. Paraskevi, Greenlawn, NY
- Holy Apostles, Bixby, OK
- Roseburg Mission, Roseburg, OR
- St. John, Portland, OR
- Holy Cross, Pittsburgh, PA
- St. Katherine, Falls Church, VA
- Holy Apostles, Shoreline, WA
- Holy Cross, Yakima, WA
- St. Andrew, Arlington, WA
- St. Katherine, Kirkland, WA
- St. Thomas, Snohomosh, WA
- St. Sophia, Bellingham, WA
- Kimissis Tis Theotokou, Racine, WI
- St. Vincent, Saskatoon, SK
- St. Anthony, Edmonton, AB

2015 BUILD WEEKS

Small Group Weeks

- Wk #1 May 27 - Jun 02
- Wk #2 Jun 05 - Jun 11
- Wk #3 Aug 04 - Aug 10
- Wk #4 Aug 13 - Aug 19

Double Group Weeks

- Wk #1 Jun 16 - Jun 22
- Wk #2 Jun 26 - Jul 02
- Wk #3 Jul 23 - Jul 29

OBT Week

- Wk #1 Jul 07 - Jul 13

"I find myself in the midst of an organization which could continue on without me, yet asks me to do better. I feel confident that all will be accomplished, as it has been for 26 years, and I hope that I can be a part of a lasting improvement."

- Zachariah Swanson, Work Trip Coordinator

OUR VALUES

Acts of Mercy

Excellence

Education

Love & Compassion

Mission Work

Partnerships

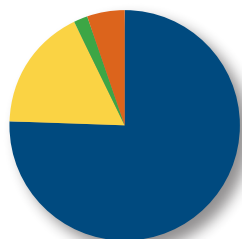
Witness



OUR MISSION

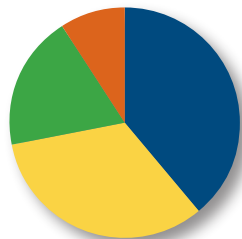
Project Mexico performs works of mercy and helps others do works of mercy in the name of Jesus Christ, transcending cultural barriers by building homes for the poor in Mexico and by providing a home for orphaned boys through St. Innocent Orphanage.

How Your 2013 Donations Were Put to Work



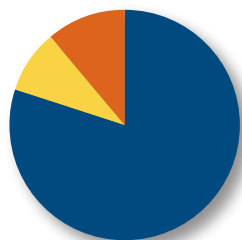
DONATIONS & REVENUE

General Donations	\$892,926.88	75%
Home Building Work Trips	\$206,893.64	17%
Investment Income	\$23,991.82	2%
Other Income	\$64,218.81	5%
TOTAL	\$1,188,031.15	



EXPENSES

Project Mexico	\$521,337.99	39%
St. Innocent Orphanage	\$447,850.25	33%
General Admin & Fundraising	\$249,133.04	19%
Capital Construction	\$127,659.47	9%
TOTAL	\$1,345,980.75	



2013 EXPENSES ALLOCATION

Program Expenses	81%
General Administration	9%
Fundraising	10%

**VOLUNTEER
HOURS
23,556 hrs.**

Our support comes from individuals, groups, parishes, corporations, and foundations. We work diligently 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 transparent and above reproach. Complete financial statements are available upon request.

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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 in North and Central 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.