



# Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage



*Building Hope for Boys Without Families and Families Without Homes*

**2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

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“Project Mexico touched my heart deeply. It was one of the most wonderful experiences of my life.”  
– Work Trip Volunteer

## *Message from Our Chairwoman*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ!

What a tremendous year it has been at Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage. You, our faithful supporters, continue to sustain this ministry of love and hope through acts of mercy for the poor and marginalized. This is no small feat. The hundreds of volunteers, staff, and benefactors of this ministry know this well – a life committed to serving others is full of great challenge, but great joy as well.

Recently, I reread Fr. Paul Schroeder’s translation of St. Basil’s homilies on wealth and poverty, *On Social Justice*. (The book begins with a moving Forward by our own Greg Yova.) St. Basil’s exhortations are strong and sobering. A life committed to Christ must be a life rooted in caring for others, especially the poor, he says. As Christians, we must struggle with our material wealth, examine our response to our fellow man, and focus on our Lord’s Great Commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself.” By not sharing our resources, we rob the poor and call into question our relationship with God.

Fr. Schroeder, in his Preface, perhaps says it best, “The heart of Basil’s message is this: ‘Simplify your life so you have something to share with others.’ And this offers a place to start for everyone, both those who possess great wealth and those of modest means. Even the poor, as Basil points out, can benefit by sharing.”

I am constantly encouraged by the dedicated men and women who work daily at Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage. Their sacrifice is a powerful example of the Great Commandment to love others. I am encouraged by the 400+ volunteers who chose our ministry this year to serve our poor neighbors in Mexico, for they are powerful witnesses of Christ’s love. Likewise, I am encouraged by our generous donors who continue to sacrificially give, and thus allow the transformation of the lives of all who participate in this ministry.

Let us not be dismayed by St. Basil’s call to love our neighbor by sharing our treasure, but rather let us be heartened by his call. The good work of this ministry 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,

I hope this message finds each of you wrapped in the blessings of our Lord and Savior!

As I look back on the past year, it is obvious that we have much to be thankful for. As the Executive Director, I am privileged to observe on a daily basis, the awesome totality of effort and generous sacrifice that occurs across North America so that our ministry can continue to change lives in a meaningful and lasting way. This unique perspective fills me with unspeakable joy, but it also compels me to acknowledge with humility, that the only reason we succeed as a ministry is because of our unity in Christ.

This unity is profound and it inspires each and every one of you in a very specific way to selflessly give of yourselves. Because there are so many ways to be involved in our ministry, we have the benefit of meeting a broad and diverse collection of kind benefactors, all focused on ensuring that our dedicated staff and volunteers can carry out our mission of serving those in need. It is important for you to know that, for reasons that I cannot even begin to explain, every gift of generosity comes in its own perfect time, in exactly the right quantity and often fills a need we didn't even know we had. The Lord clearly works through all of us and this truth consoles and comforts me in a very special way. More importantly, it affirms our miraculous fellowship of hope, compassion and love.

As you review this Annual Report, it is important you understand that Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage cannot exist without your loving support and generosity. Our triumphs are your triumphs, and it is the combined sweat equity of clergy, donor, employee, and volunteer alike that drives our success and makes our community so very exceptional. On behalf of our dedicated staff, our volunteers, our amazing boys, and all of those we serve, thank you for faithfully supporting us as we bear the burdens of others in Christ's Name. May the rest of your year be filled with joy.

Together in Christ,



*Ben De La Riva*  
Executive Director



## OUR DEDICATED STAFF MEMBERS

Eva Maria Altamira

Estela Garcia Alvarez

Lorena Estrada Alvillar

Fr. Nicholas Andruchow

Presbytera Joy Corona

John Cosby

Soula De La Riva

Adan Diaz Dominguez

Madi Franck

Angie Gozum

Hector Jesus Herrera

Janet Johnson

Guillermo Moreno Luque

Eugenio Villa Martinez

Jesus Jimenez Miron

Fritz Muehlhausen

Martha Elena Maciel Oros

Francisco Carranza Reyes

Patricia Otañez Silva

Jose Angel Mendoza Sotelo

Sophia Swanson

Zachariah Swanson

Charity Thatcher

Leonardo Arcadia Valenzuela

Manuel Dominguez Valenzuela

"Family to us means spending quiet moments together, laughing hysterically about a silly shaped tortilla, supporting each other on hard days, and remembering that God loves us."

– Madi Franck, Orphanage Program Director



## St. Innocent Orphanage Highlights...

### HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- We prioritized individual counseling sessions addressing: behavior and anger management, self-esteem building, independence and conflict resolution.
- We've seen significant improvements in the boys' individual behavior as they find healthy ways to express frustration and anger through art therapy, imagination therapy, and play therapy.
- In order to teach our boys the importance of service, they completed many projects this year which included serving tamales to the homeless in Tijuana and visiting senior citizens in a retirement home.

### ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS

- After significant investment and hard work, we are now fully compliant with the Mexican Financial Reform Act of 2013 which established new financial and accounting rules for non-profits.
- We have redesigned our process for the receipt, storage, tracking, and use of all in-kind goods at the orphanage, decreasing our monthly food and supplies budget.

### RENOVATIONS

- Thanks to a generous donor, we purchased and installed a new commercial transformer at the orphanage that now provides consistent electrical power at over 50% cost savings.
- We also upgraded our group bath house by installing hot water heaters, new lighting, and mirrors, improving the overall home building volunteer experience.
- In order to be more hospitable, our home building store (Tiendita) was drastically remodeled, creating a great venue for building new friendships.

"My favorite part of this ministry is the fierce love and quiet humility that abides in each donor, volunteer, and staff member. They continuously remind me of the true meaning of selfless service, and I am grateful the Lord has set me here to be inspired by them."

– Angie Gozum,  
Donations Processing Specialist





“Christ is the center of our lives. We rise in the mornings with prayer. Our week is focused on Sunday, the day of the Resurrection. We’re all striving to make the world a better place by being like Christ.”

– Fr. Nicholas Andruchow,  
Chaplain & Associate Director

## ...Raising Our Boys in the Lord

### SPIRITUAL

- Our older boys explored the depth and history of the Orthodox Faith during a 16-week course on the book *La Iglesia Ortodoxa* by Bishop Kallistos Ware.
- Our pre-teen boys completed a three-month course on the 12 Great Feasts, studying the mystery of the Eucharist, the afterlife, and the spiritual battle against demons.
- In the past year, more than a dozen priests from the Greek, Antiochian, Russian, Romanian, and Orthodox Church of America jurisdictions came to the orphanage and celebrated the divine services.

### EDUCATION

- Melina completed her Bachelor’s Degree in Education, graduating with honors. She continues to pursue a certification in Special Education. We could not be more proud of her accomplishments!
- Our homeschooling students have shown significant improvement from last year and they have a renewed sense of confidence and desire to learn.
- The generous donation of a document camera and projector has amplified our teaching productivity, and is being used daily to explore everything, from novels to live bugs.

### RECREATION

- Our summer road trip included visiting National Park San Pedro Martir to see the second largest observatory in the world and traveling to Bahia de Los Angeles where we fished, snorkeled, swam with whale sharks, and camped on beautiful beaches.
- Currently, fifteen of our boys are involved in a Rosarito minor soccer league and many have already distinguished themselves through their ability and sportsmanship.



“One of God’s greatest blessings in my life has been working in this ministry. Our precious boys, beautiful families, incredible volunteers, faithful donors, and remarkable staff fill me with immense gratitude and love.”

– Soula De La Riva,  
Director of Donor Engagement

"Something I immensely enjoyed and thirsted for this summer was praying the Akathist of Thanksgiving with every home building group. It vividly identifies different moments of life and features of creation we give thanks to God for."

– Sophia Swanson,  
Work Trip Coordinator



## Home Building Highlights

"This past week was life changing for me. Outside of my children being born, I truly feel like I participated in a miracle! Praise God!"

– Work Trip Volunteer

- From September 2014 to September 2015, 530 volunteers and 15 volunteer staff came to Mexico to build homes for needy families and to complete a large number of projects at the orphanage.
  - Of the 530 volunteers, 134 came during September–April and 396 came during May–August.
  - Our volunteers came from 20 U.S. states and 2 Canadian provinces, making up approximately 43 volunteer groups.
- In 2015, our volunteers and staff constructed 20 homes with a total of 16,400 individual volunteer hours.
  - Of these 20 homes and the families inhabiting them, we served 45 children, 32 adults, and 6 elderly.
  - During Orthodox Basic Training, we built 7 houses in one week with 173 volunteers, and we were blessed to hear from our guest speaker, Fr. Gregory Horton.
- As we move towards the fall season, our Work Trip Coordinators, Zachariah and Sophia, are getting prepared for their first child to be born this October.

"A beautiful community of people is gathered around St. Innocent Orphanage, struggling for Christ. I count myself so blessed to work with them and be inspired and drawn to Christ by them."

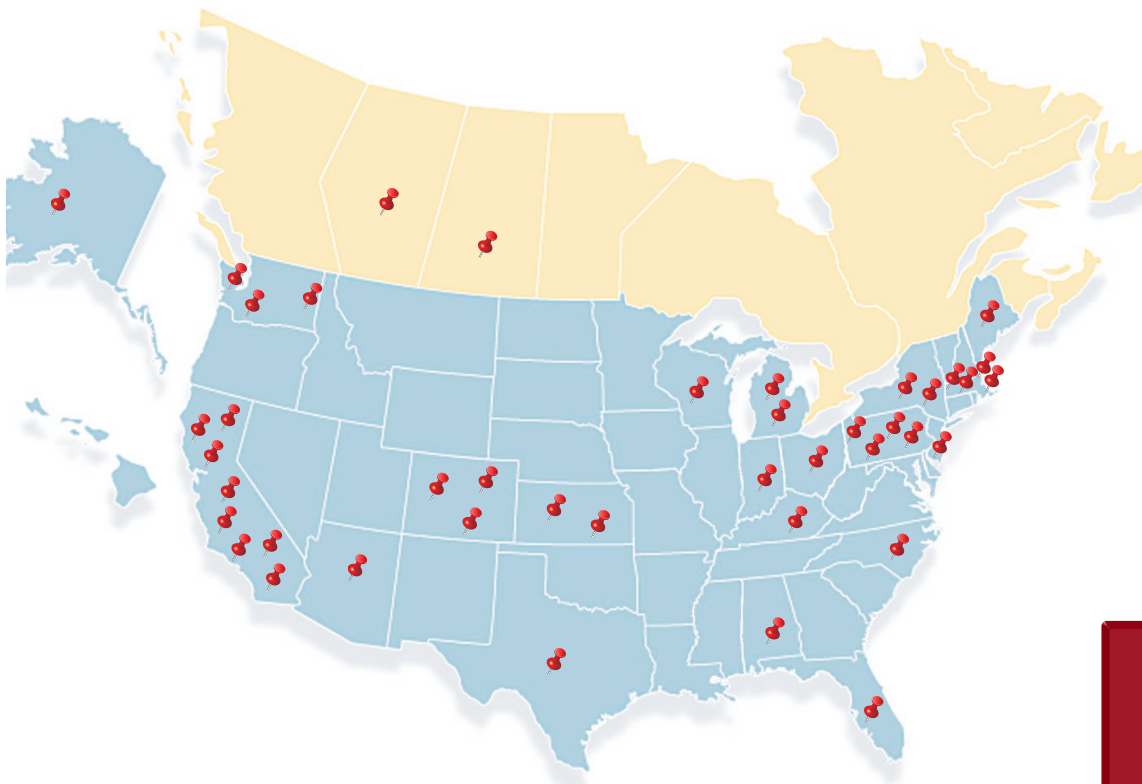
– Zachariah Swanson,  
Work Trip Coordinator



**Congratulations to  
ZACH & SOPHIA  
on their new baby!**



## *Willing Hearts and Hands Volunteered from Across the Country*



"I am changed forever. In one week, I have been able to see myself in a different light and become the person I want to be. Best week of my life."

- Work Trip Volunteer

## VOLUNTEER GROUPS

- St. Innocent Academy, Kodiak, AK
- St. Symeon, Birmingham, AL
- St. George, Prescott, AZ
- Resurrection, Castro Valley, CA
- St. Mary Magdalene, Merced, CA
- Gaelic Football Club of San Diego, CA
- Orthodox Young Adults, San Diego, CA
- Greek Orthodox Metropolis,  
San Francisco, CA
- St. Nicholas, San Francisco, CA
- St. Katherine College, San Marcos, CA
- St. Athanasius, Santa Barbara, CA
- Holy Theophany, Colorado Springs, CO
- St. Luke, Erie, CO
- St. Spyridon, Loveland, CO
- St. John, Jacksonville, FL
- SS. Constantine & Elena, Indianapolis, IN
- Holy Trinity, Overland, KS
- St. George, Wichita, KS
- Holy Apostles, Bowling Green, KY
- Hellenic College Holy Cross,  
Brookline, MA
- St. Mary, Cambridge, MA
- SS. Constantine & Helen, Webster, MA
- St. Mary, Worcester, MA
- St. Spyridon, Worcester, MA
- St. Demetrios, Saco, ME
- Holy Ascension, Albion, MI
- St. Mark, Rochester Hills, MI
- St. Basil, Wilmington, NC
- SS. Peter & Paul, Manville, NJ
- Annunciation, New York, NY
- Church of Our Saviour, Rye, NY
- St. Paul, Dayton, OH
- St. Nicholas, Bethlehem, PA
- Annunciation, Lancaster, PA
- St. Spyridon, Monessen, PA
- Greek Orthodox Metropolis,  
Pittsburgh, PA
- Annunciation, Houston, TX
- St. Paul, Brier, WA
- St. Innocent, Everson, WA
- St. Katherine, Kirkland, WA
- St. Nicholas, Cedarburg, WI
- St. Anthony, Edmonton, AB
- St. Vincent, Saskatoon, SK

## 2016 BUILD WEEKS

### Double Group Weeks

- Jun 08 - Jun 14
- Jun 17 - Jun 23
- Jul 29 - Aug 04
- Aug 10 - Aug 16
- Aug 19 - Aug 25

### OBT Weeks

- Jun 30 - Jul 06
- Jul 14 - Jul 20

# 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.

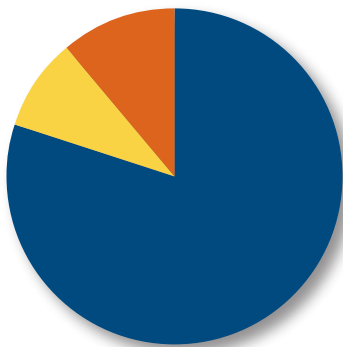


Acts of Mercy • Excellence • Education • Love & Compassion • Mission Work • Partnerships • Witness

## How Your 2014 Donations Were Put to Work

### FUNCTIONAL EXPENSE ALLOCATION

- Program Expenses 82%
- General Administration 7%
- Fundraising 11%



**VOLUNTEER  
HOURS  
16,957 hrs.**

### DONATIONS & REVENUE

■ General Contributions	\$858,554
■ Home Building Work Trips	\$185,696
■ Net Gains on Investments	\$23,979
■ In Kind Goods	\$122,621
■ Investment Income	\$17,541
■ Endowment Distribution	\$30,000
■ Other Income	\$14,888
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,253,279</b>

### EXPENSES

■ Project Mexico	\$478,531
■ St. Innocent Orphanage	\$572,477
■ General Admin & Fundraising	\$221,669
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,272,677</b>

### NET ASSETS

■ Net Assets, beginning of year	\$1,549,558
■ Net Assets, end of year	\$1,471,503

*Note: Because Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage conducts operations in both Tijuana, Mexico and the United States, we are obliged to sustain a broad range of duplicate 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 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.