

Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage



Building Hope for Boys Without Families and Families Without Homes

LITTLE STEPS, BIG LIVES:

School Days at St. Innocent Orphanage

By Charity Thatcher, Orphanage Teacher

Most of us who have survived school can recall it as something challenging or difficult at one time or another. At St. Innocent Orphanage, we're attempting to *use* these pivotal moments as a time for assurance, healing, and learning!



It has been our delight, every day, to observe the transformation these resilient boys are making in both academics and character. Here, we not only struggle through math problems, dissections, and building simple machines, but we also spend time learning values and setting long-term goals. Through this, we witness much growth in one another. Some of this year's answered prayers are: 4 elementary school graduates, 3 middle school graduates, 3 high school graduates, 7th and 8th grade homeschool classes, an expanded teaching team, avid readers, and joy in learning.

At the beginning of the school year, I recall trying to implement exciting science classes and thought that dissections would be the COOLEST for our budding scientists. When dissection day arrived, one of the boys was entirely grossed out, while the other three were pretty apprehensive. As one of my students left class unwilling to participate, I was boggled!

Well, maybe that biology class didn't work out as I had planned, but little did I know, a conversation had started. As we made a valiant attempt to finish lab, this student was sharing his early upbringing with Madi Franck (St. Innocent Orphanage's Program Director). He had continued on his path of healing and learning. Today, as we watched a short documentary on sound and the anatomy of the ear, this same student leaned over for a high-five and asked if I remembered how he didn't make it through the first science lab of the year but *had* however managed the others (labs) and could definitely handle the inner ear.

We grow and learn. Every day the boys point out a variety of plants, constellations, clouds, and even bring slimy, live creatures to the classroom that they know we can observe together and be in awe of God's creation. Together, we notice the small steps made in hand-writing, multiplication tables, and taking our time with projects, or bigger leaps such as helping one another accomplish something difficult or successfully taking tests, instead of anxiously leaving them blank. It is truly a joy for me to be a part of this journey. See what our boys have to say on page 2.

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

Three cheers for our extremely generous School Buddies who collectively donated over \$40,000 to support our boys' education this past school year.



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OUR BOYS' THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION

What are you proud of?

- ❖ "I can take tests without stressing."
- ❖ "I have learned to accomplish projects and homework without someone with me the whole time."
- ❖ "I got to perform at the Cultural Center of Tijuana with my school's dance team. Most wait 15 years to dance there. I'm proud of that."

What is something you have done in homeschooling that you will remember for your whole life?

- ❖ "We get to see advanced lessons."
- ❖ "We presented our [project] ideas to Ben, Fr. Nicholas, and John."

How do you feel about graduating from high school?

- ❖ "I would tell others, don't underestimate the opportunity that you have to be well prepared for high school."
- ❖ "I'm nervous and excited to move one step forward. I'm going to graduate without any problems and I feel good about that."

RECORD-BREAKING SUMMER!

Summer is here already, and we especially want to recognize Leadership 100. Through its generosity, we have been able to award 70 Home Building Scholarships to volunteers from more than 23 parishes across the United States and Canada who will be joining us this summer. Whether interviewing families to build for, getting our building materials

together, communicating with our interns, or preparing the ranch for visitors, it feels like we are quickly running out of time! But, thank God, we are almost ready for the over 540 volunteers that will come to Mexico and build 22 homes this summer for families in need. This is the largest Home Building Season thus far in our 28 year history, and we are very excited!



Our dedicated Spring Break group built a beautiful home for Jaime, Juana, and their four children.

After building our first home of the year during Spring Break with a group from Hellenic College Holy Cross and some other friends, we were able to see what could be improved on and what is already working well. By June, we will be all set to receive our dear friends, family, and friends-to-be for a new and wonderful summer of praying, building, fellowshiping, and of course, sharing a warm cup of coffee every morning!

HELP KEEP OUR PANTRY FULL

Thank God, our boys are growing bigger, stronger, and closer to Christ every day! In order to sustain our programs, we need your help in coordinating a Pantry Partners drive. Get your church, office, or neighborhood involved in collecting non-perishable food and supplies from our Needs List. Free pick-up and delivery are available if you collect 20 boxes or more. Help us meet our 2016 goal of nine more Pantry Partners for the open months of July, August, September, November, and December! For more information or to sign up today, contact Janet Felix at office@projectmexico.org.



Joyful faces filled our chapel on Pascha.

A CHILD'S PASCHA LESSON



Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

This year, I celebrated my fifth Pascha with my family at St. Innocent Orphanage. Since my main work is with the boys at the orphanage, my life lessons come essentially from orphaned children who are seeking relief from this cold world they live in. Recently, one of the boys approached me for nothing more than a hug. He wanted warmth and connection, and I could relate to this.

All humanity is hoping for assurance from God, that He exists and that He cares for us. We strive to feel His warmth, a warmth that comes from chasing away the earthly chill with the Light of the Resurrection that overtakes the darkness. We strive to develop a true connection with Him, a connection that is so apparent in God's sending His only Son to live among us and die on the Cross for us to live forever in His love.

God has done His part in the Resurrection, and now, it is time for us to do ours. This is where the children teach *us*! Christ said, "Unless you become like children you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). The guttural desire of a child for physical contact is a key characteristic for the process of salvation. We must strive to flee from seclusion, and rather, seek out healthy bonds with other Christian individuals who can lead us to the ultimate connection with God.

During the early morning of Holy Pascha, we did our part to reach out and receive the Light – to feel the warmth of God. With this same excitement, let us be like little children and pursue those God-given relationships that celebrate Christ who is risen from the dead.

In the Risen Christ,

Fr. Nicholas Andruchow
Chaplain & Associate Director



Top: Fr. Nicholas led the faithful in proclaiming, *Cristo ha Resucitado!*

Middle: Valentin, Moises, and Jose de Jesus present their palm crosses.

Bottom: Our church family welcomed the newly chrismated, Lydia, wife of orphanage counselor, Jesus.

TOP NEEDS

- 1. Orphanage Electrical & Propane Gas Upgrades \$3,500** – Recent changes in the Mexican orphanage registration process have mandated many electrical and propane gas upgrades be performed. Help provide the labor and materials needed to bring us into compliance.
- 2. Orphanage Stove & Grill Repair \$1,000** – Our commercial stove not only provides daily meals for the orphanage, but is used constantly during the summers to prepare meals for over 500 home building volunteers.
- 3. Boys' Summer Vacation Trip \$2,500** – Our boys always look forward to their summer vacation, which is seven days of camping, swimming, and exploring. Support the cost of this memorable trip.
- 4. Orphanage Twin Mattresses \$2,500** – Help fund the purchase of new mattresses for our orphanage property. Our current mattresses are over 10 years old and very worn out!

Project Mexico of the Orthodox Church



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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