



Matthew 25

*...whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine,
you did for me.*

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We are all Called to be Missionaries

by Rachael Cadena, St. Mary's Campus Minister

**The Second Vatican Council sought to renew the Church's life and activity in the light of the needs of the contemporary world. The Council emphasized the Church's "missionary nature," basing it in a dynamic way on the Trinitarian mission itself. The missionary thrust therefore belongs to the very nature of the Christian life, and is also the inspiration behind ecumenism: "that they may all be one...so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21).
John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, No. 1, 1990**

St. Paul points out to the people of Corinth, "For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (I Cor 9:16) As baptized Christians we have been commissioned to participate in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. We are all called to be missionaries – to share our faith with others. Christ tells his disciples (that's us!) to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." (Matt 28:19) Last month a group of students and two staff from St. Mary's had the opportunity to be missionaries on foreign ground. I was blessed to be a part of that group as we worked with a group called the Missioners of Christ and headed to the mountains of Honduras to minister to the people there. The Missioners are a Catholic community "centered in prayer and united by covenant that evangelizes, disciples and sends forth youth and young adults on domestic and foreign missions to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ." After going through the state-side preparation course we were ready to go be the voice of Christ, and let Him use us in whatever way He wanted. When we got to Honduras we found out that our mission would take us up into the mountains to put on a four day program for two of the villages on the Honduras/El Salvador border. The Catholics in these villages are visited by Padre Max (the local priest who lives three hours away) only once a year at the most. This is their only opportunity to receive the Sacraments unless they walk the three hours to Padre Max's. Delegates (ministers and leaders) of the village preside over the Liturgy of the Word every Sunday. Realizing the need for more catechesis and contact with the people, Padre Max had the idea to send out missionaries to some of the villages in his parish on a monthly basis. The two villages we went to were the first in which this pilot program was started. The trip was amazing and life changing for everyone who went. Here, Sean and Carolyn will tell you a little about their experience....

The Honduran mission trip was fun, exciting, and adventurous. I was completely immersed in the Honduran culture. St. Mary's worked with the Missioners of Christ based in Comayagua, Honduras. St. Mary's sent [two staff and five students]. Driving through the Honduran countryside one learns quickly traffic laws, signs, and road lines are only suggestions. It was exciting riding in the bed of a pickup. After arrival, one day was devoted to introducing me and the other members from St. Mary's with the culture and daily life of the Honduran people. Americans and Hondurans comprise the Missioners of Christ and they devote their lives to [the] plight of the Honduran spiritually and monetarily poor.

A vibrant and energetic young priest, Fr. Max, selected southern mountain villages, Kukinka and Masula, for Catholic Christian ministry outreach. I was part of the Kukinka mission team. This was my first time out of the United States and my first time in the mission field. The Kukinka residents were very welcoming to the team. Some had never met Americans before. Not only was I a missionary, I was representing the United States. The villagers brought their own beds and blankets for us to sleep on.

This was one cultural aspect repeated throughout the mission. The people would give out of their necessity and not excess to provide me with food and shelter. Every home I visited, the wife or husband would invite us for coffee, fruit, honey, or a small meal.

There were 70 children in the village and they would come down and gather around the Church before walking up the hill for school. The children loved climbing in our pickup truck bed. Even if it wasn't moving, they would take turns climbing in and out of the bed. Zach, one of the mission team members from Franciscan University, brought a Frisbee. The kids had never played before and they took a day to learn. By the time we left, the children had made a Frisbee from a trashcan lid. Soccer is the Honduran sport of choice and with the Honduran soccer team in the World Cup, it was even more popular. Once the children learned the missionaries could play soccer, it became a daily event, playing for two hours every afternoon before heading off for dinner. At one point, a U.S. mail truck servicing the U.S. Army base near Comayagua drove into the village. The driver had relatives in Kukinka. He was surprised to see a small group of Americans there.

During the day, we would travel from home to home discussing Fr. Max's plan for the Catholic community there. I would listen intently to the conversations even though I spoke very little Spanish. Walking from house to house gave me the perspective on the distance families would travel on a weekly basis for Church. Many families would walk or hike three hours one-way to attend Church.

The daily strong points occurred in the evening when we held a program for Kukinka including dancing, singing, scripture reading, prayer, and reflection. Every evening the attendance would double. Some people walked over an hour to attend every night. I did a lot of reflection, prayer, and thinking during the program. Being on the frontlines in God's army requires it.

After having spent four days hiking twenty miles, playing with 70 children, meeting over 200 people, and bonding with my fellow missionaries, I was sadden upon my departure. During the drive back to Comayagua, I decided I am definitely coming back. Reading and watching videos about missionary work and travel out of the way places doesn't have the same impact as being part of the action. Seeing how people lived, worked, and played in Kukinka and returning home was an eye opening experience. Walking into my apartment, I was greeted by the chaotic mess I had left behind. Things important to me had changed. My priorities had changed. I had served a village and nation with only God and my missionary family as guarantees and God supplied everything else.

Sean Goldberger, Electrical Engineering PhD student

[I went on this trip because] I just really felt like God was calling me to serve Him in a whole new way, on a different level than I ever had before. This trip pretty much fell into my lap, and I couldn't say no. God far surpassed all my expectations....

A New Day

The stars gradually surrender to streaks of red and yellow: A new day.
 The mountain tops scream of your beauty, reaching towards the Heavens and You.
 From you I draw my strength, oh Lord, my soul yearns for You.
 Up here on this peak your heart beckons me and sustains my fragile human nature.
 I close my eyes to look within- there it is: that deep beckoning that is louder than any other noise;
 The invitation to give your love away.
 The beautiful souls in the village below radiate Your splendor.
 Their simplicity and genuine hearts perfectly exemplify childlike love.
 When I look at them, You smile back at me.
 How my soul pleads with You to unite their hearts with Yours;
 I beg You, use every gift and every last ounce of strength that I have.
 Into Your hands I place mine and ask You to dance with me-
 Fill me with Your love so that they may know your magnificence.
 Your love, oh Lord, is life. Use me to beckon them to follow You.

By Carolyn Leatherman

This was my first mission trip but I'm ready to go back next year and am open to serving on a longer term basis, if that's what God is calling me to. The largest struggle was the language barrier - even though I am studying Spanish and have a fairly decent background; it was a huge challenge because of the people's accents and regional dialect. There were so many times when I wanted to help someone by talking to them, but I was unable to fully communicate what I wanted to say. God really taught me that I couldn't do everything and to completely depend on Him. [He] taught me to trust that just by giving love away and being there at those specific times, He

would do the rest.

The one word that I would use to describe the Honduran people is genuine. You look at them, and you see only Christ and that person...nothing false about who they are. Especially the kids...a simple smile and look into their eyes seemed to change their life. God really challenged me to be genuine and to trust in Him, not relying on my own strength. These are two areas that I feel that God has been trying to work with me on for a while now, and this trip was a definite straight-forward lesson that I will, to the best of my ability and by the help of God's grace, work on.

Carolyn Leatherman, English-Spanish double major

“Although the task of spreading the faith, to the best of one’s ability, falls to each disciple of Christ, the Lord always calls from the number of his disciples those whom he wishes, so that they may be with him and that he may send them to preach to the nations. Accordingly, through the Holy Spirit, who distributes his gifts as he wishes for the good of all, Christ stirs up a missionary vocation in the hearts of individuals, and at the same time raises up in the Church those institutes which undertake the duty of evangelization, which is the responsibility of the whole Church, as their special task.”
Ad Gentes, No.23, 1965

- ➔ To see pictures of the Honduras trip, check out the Honduras photo album on St. Mary's facebook page.
- ➔ For more information about the Missioners of Christ or to donate to their mission, visit their web page at www.missioners.org.
- ➔ If you are interested in going on the Honduras Spring Break Mission Trip next year contact Rachael Cadena at rcadena@aggiecatholic.org or keep a look out for information in the bulletin.
- ➔ For more information about other Catholic Missionary opprotunities visit the Catholic Network of Volunteer Services at www.cnvs.org, or pick up one of their magazines from the student center lounge.

Don't forget about Stampede for Need, the 5k organized by Aggies Serving Another Person, supporting the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Register at the front desk or go to www.stampede4need.com. The race is next Saturday, April 24th. Registration the day of the race will be at 8am in Lot 50 on campus. Runners and Walkers start at 9am.