

May 2009



ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA CATHOLIC CHURCH
AUSTIN, TEXAS

Mission to Mexico News

Special Needs: PRAYERS

By Rachel Fannin
Mission to Mexico, Ministry Director
St. Catherine of Siena, Austin TX

We estimated 3,000 men, women and children showed up for the April trip distribution. These were the same numbers we got for December's Christmas trip! Many of the men are out of work. There are lots of moms raising kids on their own. Our brothers and sisters in the colonia need our prayers and our support.

Thank you to our volunteers for working hard to provide some relief to our families in the colonia.

We were blessed with some extra cash donations which we used to purchase extra groceries. In the past we were distributing to 600 families. On the April mission trip, 750 families received dispensa. Deacon Mike Meismer brought with him a truck full of donations—some of it canned food and pasta. From his loaves & fishes, we made another 50 grocery bags to distribute. It was a blessed day and everyone in line went home with something. God knows that many of our brothers and sisters will come for help

during our mission trips, and He always provides.

SPECIAL NEEDS: Prayers

Recently, I received a letter from Bishop Aymond (Austin Diocese) informing me that until further notice, all mission trips from within the diocese will not receive endorsement or support to work in Mexico. He is concerned about the violence in Mexico and the swine flu. Bishop Aymond states in his letter that hopefully, in the future, after assessing the situation, he will be able to endorse mission groups returning to Mexico.



Please join me in praying for Bishop Aymond to gather the nec-

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May, June, etc.

Special Needs

- . Prayers
- . Prayers
- . Prayers

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Mission to Mexico Future Trip Dates

June 12-13, 2009 — **cancelled**

August 7-8, 2009

October 2-3, 2009

December 4-5, 2009

Special Needs: PRAYERS *(continued from page 1)*

essary information needed that might help us return to our brothers and sisters in Nuevo Laredo. At this time we have cancelled the June trip. We will continue to work on supporting our mission until Bishop Aymond says we can return to the colonia and to those we serve.

Please keep the needs of the people in the colonia in your prayers.

Amor y Paz,

Rachel Fannin

How may I contact

Rachel Fannin?

(512) 288-1621

or

rfannin@austin.rr.com

My Experience With Mission to Mexico

Hannah LeBrun
Austin TX

I was first introduced to Mission to Mexico when Zach Serrano, a member of my PAL class (Peer Assistance and Leadership) at Austin High, suggested doing the Mission to Mexico project, and the majority voted for it to be one of the yearly service projects. When we chose our community service project groups, I chose to be in the Mission to Mexico group, because it sounded pretty interesting to me. Zach became the chairperson of the project, and initially suggested it because his grandmother, Deixter Serrano, was involved with Mission to Mexico for quite some time. However, when he changed schools, I was left in charge of the project and ensuring its success.

After numerous emails to Mrs. Fannin asking her every question I could think of, I made flyers for the trip and gave them out to all the PAL



Sandra Guzman, Hannah LeBrun and Roberto Rodriguez with children in the colonia.

members. I was confident that the trip would happen, hearing from multiple people that they would be able to go. However, it didn't take very long for me to hear some pretty upsetting news from Mr. McWhirter, the PAL teacher. He told me that after reading the handout I prepared, a parent called the principal telling him that she didn't want us to go on the trip representing Austin High, because she felt that it would be dangerous. This meant that if we were to go, it had to be independently. I was still determined to go, even if it meant going without any PAL members.

Luckily, I didn't have to do that. My good friends Sandra Guzman and Roberto Rodriguez, who are also in PAL, joined me on the trip. Even though the trip was no longer affiliated with PAL, Mr. McWhirter gave us \$300 from a PAL fundraiser

to use on the trip.

The night before the trip was so much fun—I basically went around Wal-Mart filling my cart full of washcloths, towels, candy, small toys, and a few balls, without having to worry too much about the price. I was worried, however, about the trip falling through because of the violence occurring at the time. I was afraid another one my friends would back out. Once we checked in at the hotel, I became extremely excited, because everything was going fine and as planned. It seemed like nothing wrong could happen to ruin the trip.

The moment we got in line to cross the border, I whipped out my phone and took pictures of practically everything—signs in Spanish, the man in the booth, the Rio

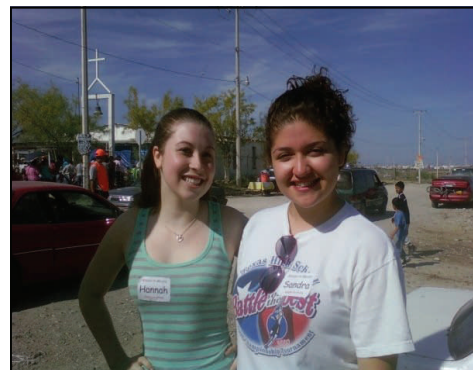
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How may I make a monetary donation to the Mission to Mexico effort?



Checks can be made out to "**Mission to Mexico.**" Put in the collection baskets at Mass or mail to:

St. Catherine of Siena
Attn: Mission to Mexico
4800 Convict Hill Road
Austin, TX 78749-2202



Hannah LeBrun and Sandra Guzman

My Experience With Mission to Mexico *(continued from page 2)*



Hannah LeBrun working the distribution line

Grande. It was my first time leaving the U.S., and I could barely contain my excitement, saying, “Oh my God, I’m in Mexico!” practically every ten seconds. Even though I was right across the border, it seemed like I had stepped into a different world.

What really amazed me was the fact that people were already forming a line down the street, and we weren’t going to give out supplies for another day. Though the first day mainly included sorting clothing and setting up, it was exhilarating just to be in another country knowing I was about to help people along with being able to practice my Spanish. Later that night, Sandra, Roberto, and I still had about \$75 to contribute so we went to a Wal-Mart in Laredo and decided to buy some toiletries for teen boys. Cherie Guy graciously helped us pay for some of it so we could buy enough to make bags of shampoo, deodorant, and toothpaste for thirty boys.

The second day we left for the colonia even earlier and the line of people was even longer. Though I was quite occupied helping to sort clothing and bag food items throughout the morning, I was able to talk to some children on the other side of the fence a few times. Because I’m a lot better at speaking Spanish than comprehending it, Sandra and Roberta had to help me understand what the children were

saying back to me. It was amazing how I would just start talking to one child and many would come over right after. They really seemed to like talking to us and even though they were destitute, practically all of them were cheerful and had great attitudes.

Being able to walk around outside the churchyard was one of the most enjoyable parts of the trip for me. Peggy Gornik was nice enough to take us all around the block so we could see how many people there were. There were also many vendors—it was like a festival. I loved being able to go and talk to people that I was about to help, and at one point I even jumped rope with a few girls. It still astounds me not only that thousands of people lined up just to receive a sack lunch along with a few bags of clothing and food, but also that so many poor people can live in one area receiving barely any help.

When the distribution began, Sandra, Roberto, and I handed out wet washcloths to some of the elderly, because it was so hot outside. We also helped hand out lunches after we ran out of washcloths. I was astonished by how many people came through the line and how grateful they were for everything. They took whatever we gave them



Hannah’s having a fun time jumping rope with a girl from the colonia.

with a smile without even looking at what it was.

Sandra and I were also able to talk to the young women’s group that got started. I even sang “Happy Birthday” for them because quite a few of the girls had birthdays coming up.

Overall, I couldn’t be happier that I went on this trip. The experience really put things in perspective for me, and helped me value every opportunity and personal belonging I have. This was an incredible experience; I met so many amazing people committed to helping others and was inspired by the dedication of all the volunteers along with the good spirit of the people. I absolutely cannot wait to be able to go back to Mexico and do it all again.

Hannah LeBrun

Website for Mission to Mexico

Check it out for more information on this ministry.

www.stcatherine-austin.org

Select ***Community Ministries, Organizations***, and then ***Mission To Mexico***

Information includes:

- ***Video: See the Mission in Action***
- ***Recent Mission to Mexico trip photos***
- ***Newbie Guide***

Confessions of an MTM Greeter, “Wal-Mart” Style

Mike Fannin
St. Catherine of Siena, Austin TX

Prior to the April trip, Rachel asked me (in addition to preparing the dispensa bags and lunches) to also participate by taking the tickets from the adults going through the line. I must say, that was one of the most rewarding jobs in my 13 years of missionary work. I had the privilege to personally greet, welcome, and shake the hand of almost every one of the estimated 3,000 people in line. Even though I speak very limited Spanish, a smile and a kind

word or two went a long way to dispel any anxiety or other negative emotion that they may have been feeling. I especially noticed that the men in line did not seem to be as embarrassed to be receiving once I greeted them with a *bienvenidos* and a hand shake.

For me the afternoon was a humbling experience. I, who have so much, can and do learn so much each and every time from my broth-

ers and sisters in the colonia. But it was also fun. To see the excitement on their faces, to see the new babies, to see the relief that they would have something to eat made my afternoon worthwhile. Jesus was alive and well in each and every one of them.

Mike Fannin

Baby Department in the Colonia

Mary Moreno
St. Catherine of Siena, Austin TX

Several years ago, we started a BABY department during our mission trips. Due to the fact that we had so many babies being born in the colonia, we felt a need for helping out these mothers.

We are very thankful for the monetary donations, baby clothes and especially strollers. We see so many mothers that have been standing in line for several hours—many times overnight, just waiting and hoping that there will be a

stroller for them. They either have one or two children in their arms, and are expecting another.

If you happen to have a stroller, you can donate it to MTM. If you happen to be at a garage sale or a thrift store and you find one, think about these mothers that are in need of this item.



Many times we have a lot of baby items and sometimes just a few, but they are very much appreciated by our mothers at the colonia. We need infant sizes and up to 3 years old.

May God bless you for your donations and especially for your prayers for our families in the colonia.

Mary Moreno

MTM Newsletter

Do you want to add someone to the *MTM Newsletter* list, have you changed your e-mail or mailing address, or, are you having difficulty receiving the newsletter?

Notify **Jeanette Terrell**:

jeanetteterrill@austin.rr.com
or
512 444-3179

New Jersey Volunteer's Mission Experience

Jane Williams
Hillsborough, NJ

I wanted to thank you (Rachel Fannin) for the opportunity to volunteer on your recent mission trip. The experience was amazing in so many ways, and I plan to come down from New Jersey again—perhaps in August, to visit my daughter, Shannon Williams and volunteer again. It was truly a faith experience!

As a result of my trip, I was asked to speak about my experience in the colonia to my Parish Council at Mary, Mother of God Church in Hillsborough, NJ. They are very interested in Mission to Mexico

and would like to help—perhaps in setting up a "sister" parish commitment to MTM. You may be hearing from Fr. Sean Broderick from my church.

I hope this explosion of interest in supporting MTM is OK. I cautioned the Parish Counsel to proceed *slowly*, contact you, and find out how they can best be of assistance. People are very enthusiastic and want to rent a truck to ship items, volunteer for future mission trips, fund raise, you name it! For now everyone has been told to just wait, remember the mission in their

prayers, and be patient as we explore with the mission needs and our options.

Once again, thank you for letting me volunteer and bless you for all you do.

Jane Williams



Changes in and Around the Colonia

Peggy Gornik
St. Catherine of Siena, Austin TX

If you haven't been to the mission for awhile, you would notice a few changes that have occurred. The church is now surrounded by many small homes, and in the distance, a developer is building small homes constructed of stucco. It won't be long until all the open fields that surround the church will be populated with small homes.

Another change is the corner intersection closest to our church. It has become a very busy intersection. It seems to have become the

major thoroughfare in the colonia—at least on the day of our mission!

An unfortunate change I have noticed this past year is a bigger group of men that are standing in line to receive our donations. We use to see a handful of men; now, there's an estimated 100 men. They are the most humble and appreciative people there. My friend and helper, Arturo, tells me that the unemployment for these men is horrible; every family seems to be struggling.

I encourage any man reading this to donate your clothes, jackets and shoes. Men there also appreciate tools and bikes used for transportation to/from work. It would be nice to recognize our men down there and try to meet some of their needs, even though they never ask for anything for themselves.

Peggy Gornik

