

Update on Mission programs visited in January 2017

Religious education program: At a recent meeting Pablo, lead catechist, stated, "I feel happy because we are unifying the people with our Catholic faith." Pablo works now at the fish hatchery so has relied on the other catechists to help out more – which has worked out fine. Manual, catechist, thanked the people in Spokane for support (through supplies, prayers, and financial help) and said that it increases their faith. He also stated that they have no electricity or water in their building; but they are doing their best with what they have. About 250 children in the program are writing letters to children in the Spokane diocese. Four parishes/schools are participating. Another catechist, Marian, sincerely thanked everyone for our help – stating that they could not offer this program without the support of people in Spokane; and she asked God to bless everyone.

Bishop de Villa, who was recently elected the President of the Guatemalan Bishops, will be coming to the US for Fr. Stan Rother's beatification in Oklahoma in September and plans to visit Spokane at that time. He will be ordaining 7 men this year from the major seminary. The annual diocesan youth meeting was in Chimaltenango this year on Palm Sunday. He has encouraged parishes to have Chapels of Adoration and there are now 25 in the diocese. When the Bishop arrived there were none. A popular time for adoration is 3:00-5:00 am! Then people continue their work day!

Medical Clinics: The clinic in Nahuala was beautifully remodeled last fall, paid for by donated estate funds in Spokane. Sr. Marie reported that **Dr. Jose Miguel spent his vacation month of December planning and checking on the remodeling of the Nahuala Clinic. He did a marvelous job, she said, and the material used is much better than the old clinic, which had not been remodeled since it was build 40-50 years ago. She said, "Dr. Jose Miguel is a diamond! He really cares!"**

One young woman, who just completed her nursing degree, has been assisting in the Novillero clinic. Another young woman, native of Ixtahuacan, is currently enrolled in nursing school, and hopes to work in the Ixtahuacan clinic when she graduates.

Nawal Estereo : Lourdes, the Director of the radio station, explained that they now have internet access at the station. The radio station broadcasts from 5 am to 11 p.m. daily including women, religious, news, education, and youth programming. They broadcast Mass with Fr. Benjamin, Pastor in Nahuala each Sunday. Nawal Estereo is the most listened to radio in western Guatemala – to at least 1 ½ million people. A panel discussion about immigration to the US was broadcast recently. Broadcasts include many church and community activities. They interview community leaders and broadcast information on recycling and climate change: "taking care of our common house". Sr. Mary Bertrand, who volunteers at the radio station, is the only non-native person on the Board of Directors.

Radio station needs (in order of priority):

- Repeaters. They received a donation of \$20,000 for one repeater but need two more. "Pirate" radio stations (not licensed – therefore less expensive to run) steal signals so now Nawal Estereo needs to increase signals and keep expanding. They have two repeaters and need two more. They are losing contracts because of the interference from "pirate" radio station. They are totally blocked out of one district because the illegal stations have stronger signal. Repeaters will help extend their strength and reception.
- Replace old equipment – computers and receivers (receivers are about \$4000 each).
- New truck – the one they are using is 20 years old. Roads to the coast are much worse than road to Ixtahuacan. Seventeen miles takes 4-6 hours to drive. Any help here would be good –with a donation they could get a matching loan from the credit union.
- Fix up radio station building next door – then they could rent it out for meetings. It needs painting inside and outside, a fence, parking lot, and bathroom.

The funds sent from Spokane are banked and used for emergencies, such as vehicle repairs.

Colegio Nahuala: Director of the school, Juan Fernando Tambriz reports that there are 220 students in the Basico which is 7th-9th grades with fewer students in the Primario (grades K-6). They are in need of new computers, having 11 very old computers for the entire school. There are 15 Basico teachers and 8 Primario teachers. Fr. Benjamin, Pastor of the

Catholic church in Nahuala, stated that the building is very old with old equipment, also needing paint in most classrooms and areas. There are 3 younger priests (all from Nahuala) working with Fr. Benjamin, who visit the school on Fridays. They have well qualified teachers, some with Masters Degrees. Funds sent from people of Spokane are used for physical improvements, computers, and teacher salaries. Teacher salaries are not up to the national guidelines. Fr. Benjamin would like to increase them. A team from Spokane recently observed a typewriter lab, used for learning keyboarding, and a dusty ancient "library". School was in session, so we observed classrooms and met teachers.

Ixtahuacan Preschool: Fr. David Baronti and Sr. Marie have started a preschool next to the medical clinic in Ixtahuacan, supported by a private donor. The preschool operate two hours a day/five days a week, and has been well received.

Family to Family is developing a new agricultural and animal raising project at Xeul (on road to the fish hatchery near Ixtahuacan). For more information about Family to Family, please refer to the webpage:

<http://www.familytofamilyguatemala.com/>

Our Lady of the Highway Preschool continues its wonderful work with teacher, Elena working with students, who are extremely poor. These students would not be able to attend preschool without this opportunity. They are very needy, but respond to their teacher with energy and enthusiasm. The January group, visiting from Spokane, observed and participated in a counting lesson which involved an elephant mask, song, and movement!

The Minor Seminary : Presently, there are 44 seminarians in the Minor Seminary in Solola, under the direction of Padre Esequel Xicay. Funds sent from the mission to the seminary help with student scholarships. The seminary is in need of mattresses for the bunk beds and books and music for the library.

Catechists: Sr. Marie reported that communal prayer is held nearly every day in small communities in the mission. It includes saying the rosary, adoration, Eucharist or Eucharistic service, singing, and preaching. Pastoral meetings are attended by catechists as well as many others. **One community is in need of a monstrance.**

The Fifth Annual Diocesan Guatemala Celebration is being planned for September 19, 2017, to honor Fr. Baronti who is retiring this year. Bishop Daly, Bishop of Spokane, and Bishop de Villa, Bishop of Solola, will both be in attendance. Please watch for further information.