



*In this issue: all about the recent delegation to San Marcos and the recent Transforming Encounter in Marydel.*

**Reflection by Delegate Avelina Hernandez, translated by Elvis Herrera**

(see next page for English version)

Nuestro viaje a Guatemala fue una experiencia verdaderamente gratificante que no voy a olvidar por un largo tiempo.

Aunque yo podía entender sólo un poco de la lengua, me sentí conectado con la gente, sintiendo su fe en Dios y con sus semejantes, y su esperanza para el futuro.

Por todas partes que íbamos la gente nos recibía con un gran entusiasmo. Yo estaba especialmente emocionada con la gran recepción que recibimos de una de las escuelas, completas con banda de música y el canto y el baile de los estudiantes.

Un incidente que cambió mi actitud hacia los inmigrantes ilegales en los EE.UU. fue cuando nos encontramos con un grupo de jóvenes que tenían previsto cruzar el río para México, con la esperanza de llegar a los EE.UU. con el tiempo. Mi corazón lloró sobre todo cuando me enteré de la historia de los dos hermanos en el grupo. Podía ver el miedo y la esperanza en sus ojos. Todo por su deseo de mejorar sus condiciones de vida. Si pudiera hacer algo por ellos! Desde entonces he estado orando por ellos para que pudieran cumplir con sus planes y alcanzar

su destino con seguridad. Y le pedí al Señor que perdone mi error.

Cada día que pasamos en Guatemala fue una experiencia diferente,

enriqueciendo nuestra vida espiritual. Con la misa diaria y compartir la fe, sentí una vinculación especial con el grupo.

Estoy agradecida de que me dieron la oportunidad de ser parte de este viaje.



*Photo above: Wilmington delegation with Sor Bernarda and Celeste Orozco from San Marcos at a cross located on the Guatemalan border across the Sushette River separating Guatemala and Mexico.*

*Below: Delegation with local Guatemalans who greeted them every day.*

**Recent Works of Solidarity (January – July 2015):**

- St. Margaret of Scotland sent \$4,500 to the parish in El Quetzal.
- St. Ann School, Wilmington raised \$2,529 at a lively fiesta for their sister school, Santa Ana.
- St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Bear and varios benefactors gifted over \$2,000 for children’s scholarships at the Nueva Buena Vista planation in San Pablo.
- Resurrection Parish sent \$1300 for catechist and \$550 for medical needs to . San Jose, El Rodeo.
- Various benefactors gifted \$1,950 that was shared between the Maryknoll sister’s clinic and the parishes in El Quetzal and El Rodeo



### Reflection by Avelina Hernandez

Our Guatemalan trip was a truly rewarding one, an experience I will not forget for a long time.

Although I could understand only a little of the language, I felt connected with the people, feeling their faith in God and with their fellow men, and their hope for the future.

Everywhere we went the people welcomed us with great enthusiasm. I was especially touched with the grand reception we received from one of the schools, complete with marching band and singing and dancing of the students.

One incident that changed my attitude towards illegal immigrants in the US was when we met a group of young men planning to cross the river to Mexico, hoping to reach the US eventually. My heart cried especially when I heard the story of the two brothers in the group. I could see the fear and also the hope in their eyes. All for their desire to improve their living conditions. If only I could do something for them! Since then I have been praying for them that they would be able to fulfill their plans and reach their destination safely. And I asked the Lord to forgive my mistake.

Every day that we spent in Guatemala was a different experience, enriching our life spiritually. With the daily mass and faith-sharing, I felt a special bonding with the group.

I am thankful that I was given the opportunity to be a part of this trip.

### Reflection by Christine Bauer, Christ the Teacher School, Newark, Delaware

Guatemala. It was an experience that I will always keep close to my heart and it has changed my life in many ways. I went into this trip not entirely sure what to expect but walked away with more than I could've ever imagined. Not only were we able to meet many of the Guatemalan people and communities that the diocese is in solidarity with, but it was their faces and their stories that touched me.

Something that struck me deeply was in our visit to the Migrant House near the Mexico border. I had always been a little indifferent to immigrants into the United States; never had a strong opinion either way about their entering into our country. But my visit to the Migrant House that day has changed me forever. In visiting the Migrant House we were able to meet a few immigrants who shared their stories. One woman was traveling alone and although petrified of what might happen to her along the way, the hope of providing a better life for her daughters back at home was enough for her to risk her life alone. There were also two brothers that were traveling together in the hopes of making it to Georgia. They shared their story with us and once Fr. Hynes went to give them a blessing, they began to cry knowing what a tremendously perilous journey they had ahead of them. It was the emotion on their faces and their stories that completely changed my outlook and my heart breaks for them. I will always wonder what happened to them and where they are now.

One other advantage we had on our trip included visiting a few local schools in the San Marcos area. I was struck by the extreme poverty level of some – from children showing up to school in whatever their parents had to put on them to not even really having a working bathroom. This seemed to be the norm in some



*Third grade class at Santa Ana school with (left-to-right) Christine Bauer, Fr. John Hynes, Nestor and Avelina Hernandez.*

areas. However, when visiting a school that has been supported by the diocese for some time, it was incredible the transformation that is possible for these children. We were greeted with thankful cheers, bands playing, performances by almost every grade, and many, many words of heartfelt thanks by the children and staff. It was a moving experience that both humbled me and showed me what massive changes and opportunities can be possible for the children and communities of San Marcos who may otherwise never achieve those opportunities.

I saw it in the faces of the children receiving scholarships, school staff members, students, communities receiving water filters for maybe the first time, and in the tear-filled eyes of Claudia who is receiving a scholarship so that she can attend college. They would not be where they are or doing what they are doing if it

weren't for us. Not a penny is ever taken for granted by our friends in Guatemala. Even though some did not have much more than a dirt floor one-room house they still made us feel incredibly welcomed and offered what little they had in order to make us as comfortable as possible. In all, my experience in Guatemala was extremely humbling, blessed beyond measure, and the Lord made Himself amazingly present in each and every person we met.



*Delegate Christine Bauer (right) with Claudia, a student on scholarship.*

**See last page for more photos from delegation.  
Next time read reflections from Fr. Glen Evers and Nestor Hernandez!**

### **Transforming Encounter in Marydel, by Gary Morton**

Angel Perez arrived well before a Guatemala Solidarity “Shared Experiences, Enriched Lives” program began at Immaculate Conception Church in Marydel, Md., in June. He had been involved in the Solidarity program before, but had not been active in recent years. He wanted to become involved once again in the program that links the Dioceses of Wilmington and of San Marcos, Guatemala.

During the meeting he said he enjoys listening to members of Solidarity pilgrimages to his homeland talk about their experiences and impressions. “When I hear the stories they bring back, I really want to go back to Guatemala.” Perez first came to the United States in 1994, returned home for a while, and returned to the U.S. about nine years ago.

He and Carlos Miguel Chavez sat in the foyer of Immaculate Conception’s church hall about 45 minutes before the program began, serving as informal greeters to the two dozen or so people who attended. Their smiles and greetings set the stage for the faith-sharing and story-telling that followed.

One thing that became clear as the program developed is that most of those attending were from neither Delaware nor Maryland’s Eastern Shore, which comprise the Diocese of Wilmington. Among the exceptions were Father John Hynes, who has been involved in the Solidarity Committee since its earliest beginnings, and Hector Lopez, 12, who was born in Easton, Md. The others migrated from other states or from Guatemala.

The event turned into a sometimes bittersweet celebration of the accomplishments achieved within the Guatemalan community in Delaware and on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Elvis Herrera, 18, recently graduated from high school, announced he would attend St. Mary’s College in Maryland this fall on a scholarship, bringing a round of applause.

Fausto Ortiz came to the U.S. in 1998, wanting to help his parents and siblings. Friends and his boss tried to talk him out of the journey North, citing the dangers of crossing across Mexico. “I said I didn’t care, I want to do more for my family.” He arrived with just himself and his faith. “Now I’ve got lots of friends but I don’t forget my family in Guatemala,” he said.

Chavez recounted how he left Guatemala 15 years ago, traveling first to Arizona and then Florida before settling in Maryland, without his wife and children. He described the trying journey on a work permit, especially a trip from Arizona to Florida where he and other migrants were crammed into vehicles and arrived “with no money and nothing to eat.” He and some coworkers shared three tacos one day for lunch.



*Fausto with his family.*

Now he has resident status in the U.S. and has even more cause to celebrate. He beamed as he announced: “I am so glad my wife has been here two years now,” along with their children, ending a self-imposed separation for financial reasons and paperwork that delayed her entry to the U.S.

An example of the progress made within the Guatemala Community in the diocese since the program began just more than a decade ago came when Chavez asked how Guatemalans could become more involved in the Solidarity program, as members of the diocesan committee and in other ways. It became clear that they want to continue their efforts to help their families and friends still living in Guatemala through the diocesan program as well as through their individual efforts.

It’s a sign that they now feel part of the Church in the United States, and want a more active participation in it.



*Photos left to right top: Fr. Glen Evers and Fr. John Hynes with Sor Bernarda at Cristo Salvador school; two schoolchildren; new stove with less smoke.*



*Photos left to right bottom: Wilmington Delegation with San Marcos Solidarity Committee and Bishop Trinidad. Guatemalan woman with water purifier.*



*This newsletter is published quarterly, with input from members of the Solidarity Committee in Wilmington, members of previous delegations, or other interested parties. If you would like to contribute, please email [Pat.Sormani@gmail.com](mailto:Pat.Sormani@gmail.com) or Brother Chris Posch at [chrisposch@gmail.com](mailto:chrisposch@gmail.com). If you have a question or comment about this newsletter, please email [Pat.Sormani@gmail.com](mailto:Pat.Sormani@gmail.com).*